

1. Most DJ's go through a series of musical phases in their development, whether it be Rock, New Romantic, Electro, Hip Hop, rave or whatever. What were your phases and which ones have been most influential on what you do today ?

As a kid, I always had a lot of music around me. My Mum was always a big Motown and Soul fan, as was my Dad, who also listened to just about everything else from Sabbath to Classical. We had a rule that Sunday nights were for music, we'd listen to the Top 40 then play other stuff after. No TV, just the radio, records etc. This definitely had a big influence on me, I think I first identified with early Hip Hop and Electro (The Streetsounds compilations were the blueprint), it seemed like the futuristic continuation of the music I'd heard most of as a kid. During my rebellious teens, I probably turned my back on that a little, embracing synth pop, Ska and Indie stuff a bit more, which thinking about it paved the way, for me at least, towards the early Chicago and Detroit stuff. There's absolutely no way you can get away from your musical influences, past or present, they manifest themselves in lots of ways in the music we're making now.

2. Who are the DJ's who you look up to, or looked up to when you started out ?

The first real clubs I sneaked into played quite slick, 80's soul and a little early Rap stuff, from there it was Hip Hop & Soul all-dayers, then warehouse parties. Sheffield and the North of England in general had a really healthy scene back then, DJ's like Graeme Park, Winston Hazel and Parrot held the same appeal for me as the early Hip Hop DJ's, the 'we'll play anything that rocks the floor' mentality, couple with an uncompromising approach to the quality of the music, which meant you'd get a real mixture of styles in a night, put together in a really cohesive way. I think the DJ's that impress me now are the ones who approach things in a similar way, making something out of nothing almost, using tracks creatively, without being afraid to take a chance, and adding a regular twist to proceedings. People like Harvey and Derrick Carter or Mr Scruff spring to mind. I think it's pretty easy to spot a DJ who has a genuine passion for the music.

3. What did you take away from the experience of being aligned with WARP ?

WARP, the label and the shop, for such a long time was the hub of the Sheffield scene, they succeeded by pulling together the most talented people and became the driving force behind a lot of what went on in the city in terms of clubs and music. I learnt a lot about the music business in a relatively short space of time, it seemed astonishing for me to see the kind of reaction they inspired, when it was genuinely just the regular 'sound of Sheffield' at the time, that they were releasing. I think the most valuable thing I took away from that time is the knowledge that going your own way is the most important thing

4. We don't hear too much about Sheffield these days. What is happening in the city's underground in terms of clubs and music ?

With WARP have such a controlling presence; their departure from the city seemed to initiate a second wave of creativity. People who had aspirations to start new projects seemed more comfortable and enthusiastic about doing it after they'd left. There's some incredible music being made here again, from Indie to electronic, as well as a return to that 'simple is best' approach to promoting nights and events, the infamous Gatecrasher has lost some of it's dominance and smaller events like warehouse and cellar parties are starting to happen regularly again. In short the industrial legacy of the city has finally been buried and provided the foundation for a surge in the creative industries, and there's a definite feeling of optimism that's been missing for a long time.

5. To what extent is your work as a producer a reflection of your Djing sensibilities?

It's hard to say exactly, I think I have a much clearer approach to Djing as opposed to producing which is still such an unpredictable process for me. I find if I've had a long spell of gigs I'm far more focused about what I want to do in the studio and vice versa, one definitely feeds off the other. Experimenting in an accessible way probably sums up what I try and achieve in both environments.

6. You have just released a mix CD, The Sheffield Mix Sessions (I think it's your first ?) How representative is this of what you would play in a club environment?

It is my first official one, although I've done hundreds for friends. It was a lot harder than I anticipated. When you're laying your reputation on the line, and producing something people are paying for, the responsibility to contribute something worthwhile, and with some longevity is huge. I really like the idea of the 'cities' theme that Turbo are doing with the mixes, and I wanted the tracklisting to reflect what were the important records t our Scuba night, combined with a few personal favourites. After a long licensing process & re-jigging the contents, I think the balance is just about right, in terms of reflecting a typical Sheffield Mix session. As for how well it reflects what I do every weekend, well it's a snapshot, 5 hours condensed into 74 minutes, so....

7. How would you sum up the SWAG sound and ethos? How do you feel you are developing SWAG? Are there any new projects on the horizon?

SWAG hence the name, has always been and will probably continue to be about stealing sounds and reassembling music from all different sources into something new, kind of 2+2=5. I think we both want the music to work in a variety of environments and situations; we're currently working on our second album, with the game plan, as usual being no game plan. As for other projects, well being as we've got the combined attention span of a gold fish and an incredibly low boredom threshold, there'll always be something new going on !

8. You are actually involved with a series of labels - Odori, Version Music and Primitive. How do they relate to each other ?

Primitive was the first thing I started and ran on my own. I was making all these pared down rhythm tracks, which I thought were handy to have for working into DJ sets. The first series has done really well and has an almost fanatical following ! We're lucky to get more than two or three releases a year out on the label, but it's really not trying to be anything more than it already is, simple, percussion based dance music. Odori came next, just because I was haring so many good demo's both at home and on my travels. I wanted to pick tracks that were more House in flavour but executed with a certain disregard for the established form. There's so much scope for bending the rules, standing out in the crowd and making a difference and so few people do. Version Music came about after we parted company with Junior Boys Own. I think the experience of running the other two labels gave me the confidence and desire to have full control of the whole process, it just didn't seem to make sense handing your music over to other people to take care of when the means to do everything yourself are so easy to access. People often compare and contrast the labels, and naturally there'll be some overlap, especially as tracks are seldom made for specific labels. We generally decide what to do with them when they're finished.

9. Do you feel there now exists a cultural and ideological rift between House DJ/Producers from the US (especially Chicago & Detroit) and the UK ? How influential do you feel the US guys are on the scene today ?

Despite having a completely different approach to the business side of things, the US DJ's and Producers will always have a big influence on what goes on. The UK however is such a fertile ground for new music at the moment, as are countries like Norway, Spain and South America, which is essential for diversity and completely healthy for the future of music. The whole point is that the music transcends those differences, and is either good or bad. Even though the emphasis has shifted at the moment, there's no way you can write off or undervalue the influence the US producers have, especially as four years of the Bush administration will no doubt do wonders for their creativity.

10. There's been a lot of talk about the so-called Broken Beats sound fro London. What do you make of this admittedly fairly nebulous movement ?

I think the whole scene is anything *but* nebulous. It reminds me a lot of when the whole Jungle & Drum N Bass thing started to happen, a few key players defining a new exciting sound. It's certainly raw and unformed, which is surely a big part of its appeal, especially in the current musical environment, flooded as it is with mediocrity and homogeneity. If you look at the producers who are defining what Broken Beat is, it's basically a logical progression from where they were before, a mish-mash of influences presented from

an alternative angle. The problem, as always with something new, is the media fuelled 'This week's trendy new sound' routine which hopefully won't get in the way of the important stuff.

11. Which aspects of music make you emotional ? Does your emotional involvement in music ever make it hard for you to look at it objectively in terms of career and a way to make a living ?

Music, for most people is an emotional tool, me included, it defines or adds to a given mood. Being passionate about it shouldn't really get in the way of my ability to view it as a (dream !) career. I realize how lucky I am to be doing what I'm doing and despite the business and financial side of it often stripping away some of the magic, underpinning everything for me is that fact that music, particularly House music, is release. People occupying, for a few hours at least a space away from their regular lives. Supplying the soundtrack to that is an enormous, but totally addictive responsibility, which I'm truly enjoying more than ever !

12. Roger Sanchez has a very personal song on his new album where he is accused of caring more for his music than his significant other. Do you think that it's necessary to be obsessive about music to succeed ?

Ask my girlfriend ! Really though, it depends on how you measure the success. Most of the first division DJ's bar a few notable exceptions, replace their passion for music with a desire for fame and fortune, often at the expense of the music they play, which I don't have a problem with at all, but I think a certain amount of obsession is a good thing, trying to be the best you can be is important whatever the job. It makes you try harder to find those special tunes, the amazing music to share with others and still have that belief in what you're doing, not where you're going.