

EROL ALKAN

Have you heard the one about Erol Alkan? The humble 12 year old maestro-in-the-making who sneaks out the window of his parents flat to play gigs for a tenner? About the bearded studio-sorcerer worshipped by bands and DJs half his age as a living electronic idol? About the kid in his early 20s who's founded that Trash night in London where they're playing Bowie and basslines at the same time?

I heard that he invented the mash-up. I heard that he created the second coming of French Touch just by remixing Justice's "Waters Of Nazareth". I heard he bought guitar music back from the grave. No, it was electronic music. Or was it reggae? I heard he once revived a Roland 303 just by looking at it. Didn't you hear? He's bringing psychedelia back? Wait ó I heard he's bringing Disco back? Didn't you hear?

That's the thing about Erol Alkan ó hearing is believing. Until you've borne witness to one of his legendary live sets, poured headily over one of his meticulously crafted productions, or been catapulted to a sudden sonic nirvana by the dropping of one of his remixes, you might be justified for dismissing his existence as an extremely elaborate myth of the musical underground. After all, how can one man, still in his early thirties, have kept so many kids dancing for so long?

Look no further than the well-worn T-Shirt: L.O.V.E. is the answer. What kept Erol on the cutting edge of the independent and electronic scenes for the decade he ran Trash until its final night in January 2007, and at the forefront of bold new territories in the musical cosmos in the years that have followed, is his unwavering devotion to the music he plays. His studious interests across the sonic spectrum made it inevitable that at some point he would cross the boards and start to create music as well as play it, and in 2001 he took his first steps under the nom-de-guerre Kurtis Rush. His alchemical fusion of George Michael and Missy Elliot resulted in 24 carat party gold, and õbastard popõ was born, with Erol its founding figurehead, reaching its apex with the colourful õ21st Century Bodyrockersõ night where Erol was resident alongside Soulwax and Damian Lazarus. Coupled with the electroclash earthquake that was rippling through London (epicentre: Trash, Monday nights), Erol found himself at the forefront of both movements, and with a gamut of notable new admirers and friends.

It wasn't long before Erol was lending his magic touch to increasingly higher profile releases, with his remixes of Alter Egos' "Rocker" and Mylo's "Drop The Pressure" proving unavoidable on the dancefloors of 2004. Remixes for Bloc Party, Death From Above 1979 and The Chemical Brothers ensued, followed by Erol's first truly legendary contribution to dance music's canon: The Glam Racket Rework of Franz Ferdinand's "Do You Want To" which impressed the band so much that they incorporated elements of the remix into their live tour.

Erol's profile was rapidly ascending, Trash was packed every Monday with a baying crowd of technicolour admirers and celebrity exotica yearning to witness the signature

Alkan marriage of the electronic and the independent, but that didn't curtail his quest for innovation. 2006 would see him take the covers off the mega-yacht he had been secretly building in his studio ó his 'Balearic Trilogy' of remixes; The Klaxons 'Golden Skans', Hot Chip's 'Boy From School' and The Scissor Sisters 'I Don't Feel Like Dancing'. Those expecting saturated rock fuzz and thumping electronica were confounded; finding instead a trio of blissed out, spectral and unapologetically ambitious responses to the original material. All three remixes would become dance floor hits, despite the adventurous new sound, and compromise to Erol's favourite remix work to date.

2006 also saw the beginning of studio collaborations with The Long Blondes, and in the producer's role for the first time in his life. Asked to work on their debut single for Rough Trade, the session yielded 'Fulwood Babylon', a melancholic disco gem that found its way to every corner of the interweb. Among its many admirers were The Mystery Jets, who approached Erol to collaborate on a few tracks, resulting in a series of B-sides. These first tracks were to be only the very beginning of a long and fruitful recording relationship.

With such a studio intensive 2006, you might be forgiven for thinking that Erol's live presence had taken a back seat, but you would be very much mistaken. The year saw him support Madonna (at Koko) and Daft Punk (at Global Gathering), and to cap it all off he was voted Mixmag's prestigious DJ Of The Year award, as well as Best International DJ.

Fast forward to 2008, and the first Alkan studio alumni had released their own sophomore albums, with The Long Blondes critically acclaimed 'Couples' and Mystery Jets pop opus 'Twenty One' featuring the UK hit singles 'Young Love' and 'Two Doors Down', both produced by Erol. Outside of those two carefully nurtured albums, Erol found time to unite with Franz Ferdinand to produce a cover of LCD Soundsystem's 'All My Friends', record a couple of b-sides with genial art pop mavericks and Mercury Music Prize winners Klaxons, and to harness the mysterious powers of prodigal psych-prog rockers Late Of The Pier in the form of singles 'Bathroom Gurgle', 'Space And The Woods', 'The Bears Are Coming' and 'Focker'. The full Alkan produced debut album drops in late 2008.

And in truth, that's only the half of it. For more than two years, on the odd nights of the year that he's not duty bound to be Erol Alkan, he has been known to don the mantle of 'Mustapha 3000' and dabble in the mysterious rites of 'Beyond The Wizards Sleeve' ó a warped balearic psychedelic brotherhood consisting of Erol and The Grid's Richard Norris. Part folk astronauts, part electronic necromancers, they have reanimated songs by Midlake, Findlay Brown, Goldfrapp, and Tracey Thorn into beautiful, searing moments of euphoric bliss. Each remix wildly different to the next, The Sleeve (as they are known to their fans) continue, like Erol himself, to be impossible to pin down, having recently completed their first major work, a four part series of EP's.

Whether he's playing the latest in hardcore thrash or producing delicate anthems of spectral beauty, one thing's for sure; music, truly fertile music, is never very far from

Erol Alkan, and his sound can surely only continue to grow in the future. Haven't you heard?