

Bittles' Magazine | Interview

You know how every once in a while an album will come along that completely defies all your expectations and quite simply blows you away? You press play, sit down, and give the stereo that certain look which signifies that you are going to be very hard to impress. Within minutes though you've climbed up onto the table shaking your skinny little ass while waving your hands in the air with something approaching unbridled joy. By **JOHN BITTLES**



Smell the Coffee, the brand new album by acid house legend Mr.C is a perfect example of this phenomenon. Previous releases such as Change and The Birds & the Bees were pretty damn good, hell, some were even great. Yet this new release sounds like something of a massive progression to indicate a producer at the very top of his game. The record can only be described as a groovesome collection of funky goodness that is perfectly suited for dancefloors everywhere. This is music that simply commands you to move. Yet it's the old-school electro and acid house influences that really shine through on the album. Hips will swing, heads will nod, and before you know it you'll find yourself body-popping in delight.

Opener Open Up (see what he's done here) sets the album up nicely with a lovely warm bassline that mixes

perfectly with the lush vocals from former Soul 2 Soul and Shamen vocalist Victoria Wilson James to create a gospel-tinged neck tingler that simply resonates with positivity. The Future follows with its scrunching acid squelches and vocals by Mr.C himself. It is something of a state of the nation address and has oodles of funk and attitude. The acid theme is pushed even further in War Games which sounds like vintage Phuture or Hardfloor, but given a 2013 like twist.

For me though the real star of the show is Step it Up which makes me want to start Djing in clubs again just so I can witness the elation it will cause on unsuspecting dancefloors. It's deep, it's dark, and it has a bubbling early electro feel that moves the heart as much as the feet. There isn't a duff track on the whole album though with each tune possessing enough club destroying powers to fuel a raft of warehouse parties.

The album is out on the 22nd of April on Mr.C's own record label Superfreq. If you are into house music in any of its varied guises then I would highly recommend checking it out. Also keep an eye out for Mr.C's fabulous remix of Joint Custody's Lights and Buttons which is out now also on Superfreq.

Mr.C very graciously gave his time to answer some of my questions. And I have to say that it was great to witness both his enthusiasm and energy, something all too rare in today's somewhat tired and cynical music scene.

Hi there, and thanks for taking the time to answer my questions.

My pleasure, thanks for the interest in what I'm doing.

First up can you just tell us a little bit about your new album Smell the Coffee?

Smell The Coffee is one of a rare breed of concept albums in the dance music world. Most dance albums these days are a collection of instrumental dance tracks & the ones that do have some vocals are rarely with a solid theme throughout. This album is about people smelling the coffee & waking up to what's actually going on around them. Too many people bury their heads in the sand that is the rave community & are extremely apathetic to politics, social issues & even spiritual development. This album is a wake up call to the rave community to get involved. There's a good balance of vocals & instrumentals on the album, 5 of each & there's a real acid house vein running throughout, even though the album contains garage, house, acid, techno, tech house, electro & even soul.

Why should everyone rush out and buy Smell the Coffee upon release on the 22nd April?

Well firstly it's digital only so no need to rush anywhere, people can buy it online from all digital outlets, however I will do a limited run of vinyl for the enthusiasts in the summer. The reasons to buy my album, is because to download illegally is bad karma. Also it's good to support an amazing label that is a platform for new talent like Superfreq. Smell The Coffee is a beautifully crafted album that really crosses the genres of cutting edge underground dance music, yet has a solid thread running through the whole thing. Anyone into quality forward thinking dance music really does need this musical journey in his or her collection.

The album was made with both hard & soft synths so there a nice analog feel to it. The whole album was mixed down in a multi million-dollar studio in New York by Francis Harris & Jordan Lieb so the production standard is just about as high as it gets.

If you had to choose one track to sum up the album which would you choose and why?

That's a very tough question as all of the tracks are integral to the feel of the album. If I had to pick one, it would be Synchronicity. This is because musically it's very celestial, the chords & pads are ethereal & warm & the rhythms & bass are so dope, proper electronic house music. The vocals are what really sum up the album as I did a spoken word on this track, which is about meditation & creative visualization & with a combination of those things, along with hard work, they can bring about the most amazing Synchronicity. This is what the whole album is about, Human evolution & if the whole world started using the concept of this track as a kind of blueprint for life, there would be no more war, anger, corruption, greed, we would all be extremely happy, bathing in bliss & living in a world of only love.

To me the album is made up of some incredible body music. Was this a conscious decision, or was this how it came together naturally?

What you in Germany call Body Music in the UK & USA it's called Electro but not the cheesy electro house nonsense, but proper electro, like that which was started by Kraftwerk. I love Kraftwerk & also the American electro that followed it from artists like Afrika Bambata & the Soul Sonic Force, Egyptian Lover, Nucleus & Cybertron to name a few. When I was a kid I used to do Robot Dancing & then after that body popping & early break dancing, so electro has a huge influence on my music. It wouldn't be possible for me to release an album without some modern electro with an old school influence, so to answer your question, it came together naturally.

I'm loving the acid tones of the record. Is it time for an acid comeback?

Acid never really went away, it's always been bubbling under & has always been a real part of my Mr.C DJ sets over the last 25+ years. It's great to see that the acid attitude is coming back but with a modern twist, slightly more refined & stripped back & better produced than back in the late 80's but still with good subtle yet twisted use for the 303, 101 & other acid machines like the Mini Moog, Jupiter 6 & 8 & the Sequential Circuits Pro 1.

Have you any plans to tour the album? And can we expect you in Germany anytime soon?

Yes, My UK tour starts on 3rd May for 6 weeks & I already have 12 shows confirmed, just 2 more to fill. I then start my North American tour, which starts on 14th June & then my EU tour starts on 19th July & finishes at the end of August. After that I'll do a string of South American shows & then hit Asia & Australia to finish the world tour off towards the end of the year. At the moment I have only one German show booked at Suicide Circus in Berlin but I'd love to do some more dates in Germany. The young ravers in Germany have no clue about Mr.C or what I've done within electronic music over the last 25+ years, which is a shame as they're really missing out. I have my own unique style of spinning that's very cutting edge & underground & a lot of fun. No doubt over the next year or so, the younger German crowd will find out a lot more about me due to my album release & Superfreq releases in general which is already now getting a lot more attention. Of course the older German crowd know me very well from my Shamen days & my many visits to DJ all around Germany in the early & mid 90's.

New single I'm Gonna Give You Some has had some amazing feedback and has been rocking my boat over the last couple of weeks. How come it wasn't included on the album?

I've been working on my album for 3 years as a concept & my new single wasn't a part of those original album tracks. Also the recording process was different so it may have sounded a little disjointed on the album. I'm

glad you're enjoying the track, it's been an absolute favourite at the Superfreq parties.

Do you have any tips for making a track that will make people move?

Yes, first it has to really move the person making the track. You must really feel it in the studio, feel it in your heart. Of course the production must be great but I always say if you can make the heart dance, the feet will surely follow.

You've recently re-established your Superfreq label with your single, the Superfreq EP, and your upcoming album. What else can we expect from the label in 2013?

Wow, we have so much music to come. Superfreq is releasing 2 EPs every month & we have that music all programmed until the end of 2013, so much amazing music. Many of my artists are unknown or just becoming known & I have a few established artists as well. We'll be releasing 1 vinyl EP & 1 digital only EP each month & artists on the roster other than myself include Jordan Lieb (Black Light Smoke), Brett Johnson, Jay Tripwire, Affie Yusuf (House of 909 etc.), David Gooday (Nitzer Ebb) & newcomers my partners David Scuba & also Luke vB, then Dance Spirit (Android Cartel), Joint Custody, Xo Chic, Class B Band & I have most of the roster on remix duties too but also Alexi Delano, Satoshi Tomiie, Just Be (Bushwacka), Inxec, Francis Harris (Adultnapper), RadioNasty & many others to follow.

You've managed to maintain a career that would make most people cry with envy. Is there a secret to your success? We promise not to tell!

The secret is to not get stuck in a retro time warp & stay ahead of the field. One of the reasons why I'm not a huge big name DJ all over the world is because I'm always a step or two ahead of the other DJs. I've always been known as an innovator & the sound I have has always been a year or more in front of what the kids are following & generally a bit more underground too. Because of this I've never been what I would call a „trendy DJ“. The good side to this is that people expect me to play music they've never heard before, to actually be a taste maker which means I can really indulge myself in the music that I love when I DJ & not play what all the other DJs have to play, as that is what is expected of them. Integrity is everything. Also, I get bored very quickly & I'm always looking for new & fresh sounds, which is why I'm always slightly ahead of the pack.

What motivates you?

Life, fun, the arts, fashion, film & music, it's also people that motivate me. Art is the agent of Human Evolution in all of its forms, so all of the arts inspire me. Meditation also motivates me, everyone should meditate, it's so inspiring & fills you with truth therefore filling you with creative ideas. Try it.

The End was one of my favourite clubs as it was one of the few clubs where you always had the impression that it was run by people who actually cared about the clubbers that went. The door-staff were knowledgeable and helpful, someone went round to make sure that those slumped in the corner were ok, and it had free drinking water. Would you ever consider setting up a club again?

I do believe that The End was the best nightclub that ever existed. The way it was built, the sound is still incomparable, the lights were amazing, fully air conditioned, springs under the wooden dance floor so your legs don't hurt at 7am, beautiful toilets, free drinking water, yes, it was amazing but sadly no, I wouldn't open another nightclub.

After having the best club in the world for 13+ years, I've done it already & crossed it off my bucket list. I'm also too old for the stress of owning another club as if I did, it would have to be the best in the world & that is so much hard work. I'm much happier doing my Superfreq events worldwide as it gives me more freedom to enjoy, a better quality of life.

What makes a good club?

So many things make a good club. Firstly the production needs to be outstanding, amazing sound, great lights & projections & then next the drinks need to be of exceptional quality. After that of course the music is essential & must be forward thinking, cutting edge but still fun, not too anal with playing so deep that it gets boring. The most important thing that makes a good club is the people that come to dance & celebrate life. To get the nicest people to come celebrate with you, it's vital to get all of the above right but also have amazing staff, friendly but firm security, polite bartenders that know their drinks & most importantly, the club needs to be run by people that do it for the love of music, celebration & human evolution.

What producers or DJs out there impress you right now?

Oooof, so many, where does one begin, OK, here goes with just a select few... DJs: Eddie Richards, Francis Harris, Alexi Delano, Bill Patrick, Damian Lazarus, Zip, Luke vB, Maayan Nadim, Xo Chic, David Scuba, Ewan Pearson, Andrew Weatherall, Just Be, Troy Pierce, Magda & DJ T. Producers: Jordan Lieb, Frank & Tony, Dance Spirit, David Scuba, apendics.shuffle, Onur Özer, Marc Antona, Audio Werner, Matin Noir, Lawrence & A Ceathair to name but a few.

Who or what do you listen to when you simply want to chill out?

I was brought up on Soul, Funk, Reggae, Ska, Disco & black music from the 70's & 80's in general. I love Ska & The Specials are my favourite band but I love real underground soul & funk from 70's America. I also like to listen to Jazz, John Coltraine is one of my favourites.

Finally, you've seen the dance music scene throughout its many ups and downs. What do you think of the current state of 'house'?

Is this a trick question? Lol. House & techno is in a fantastic state right now. There's so many new young DJs & Producers coming through, it's so refreshing & there's always so much choice of great tunes to buy when I go record shopping. On the other hand, there is a real trendy house scene happening where many of the DJs & producers are following each other round in little circles & copying each other which is boring as hell, as that's no longer artistic but copyist.

| JOHN BITTLES

Smell the Coffee is out on the 22nd April on [Superfreq](#)