

Bittles' Magazine | Interview

Dinky, real name Alejandra Iglesias, has over the years, produced some of the most sensual and exciting house music around. Releases on *Cocoon*, *Truam*, *Crosstown Rebels* and *Wagon Repair* have moved clubbers everywhere with their lush tech-house grooves. Single *Acid In My Fridge* thrust her into the limelight in 2005, and since then each release has been eagerly anticipated by an ever growing batch of clued-up listeners who have fallen for **Dinky's** versatile and ever-shifting sound. Previous albums *May Be Later*, *Anemik* and *Black Cabaret* were all strong records that somehow managed that tricky task of working as club music just as well as for listening at home. By **JOHN BITTLES**



Now **Dinky** is treating us to brand new album *Dimension D* which is an amalgamation of her previous electronic influences. It keeps both the funkiness and depth of production which has always made her tracks stand out from the torrents of identikit 'minimal' releases which have bored us senseless over the years. What is new about this album though is that her strong, melodic vocals feature heavily on the records twelve tracks to quietly devastating and mesmerising effect.

The vocal-led feel of *Dimension D* seems like an entirely natural progression as the songs are still allowed space, texture and room to breath. In fact her voice confidently emerges on the album to form a wondrous bond with the trademark deep production to help create the most enjoyable listening experience of an illustrious career thus far. Tracks such as *Falling Angel*, *Xanax* and *Almonds* are more than strong enough to

rock any club, yet feature vocals that really allow the songs to shine. *Measures*, *La Noche* and *Heathrow* explore more ambient singer-songwriter type worlds and are absolutely perfect for getting lost within.

Overall the record is a smooth, sophisticated listen that will appeal as much to Granny as to your cool as fuck friends. The fact that most tracks are quite far removed from the thump, thump, thump of the nation's dancefloors might put off some listeners. Yet I can't help thinking that this type of narrow-mindedness will mean missing out on a real aural treat. This is a soft sensual record. Its subtle mixture of house, ambient, indie and pop should (hopefully) introduce **Dinky's** music to an ever expanding demographic of would-be fans.

And for those of you who still might be un-convinced I can only recommend a slap to the face, or having a read of the short interview below. Enjoy!

Can you tell us a little bit about your new album Dimension D?

Five years ago I was touring so much I got burned out by it , I needed something spiritual in my life, the whole club/party thing was making me feel empty and numb. I wanted to become a Yogui , and was about to go to India for a long retreat of Yoga teaching and take a break from Club music for good. Just before that, I injured my back really bad and I had to put the Yogui dream aside. There was this guitar lying lonely in a corner of my studio, I picked it up and felt like playing but I couldn't do it well. I went to Craigslist and found a guitar teacher, he turned out to be amazing but was very strict and made me take things very seriously.

I became really into it, it was very difficult at the beginning, my fingers were bleeding and my brain was burning but I felt I had found this instrument in my life that was making me reach my spirit again. The classical music and the training was an experience that opened my brain and my senses, I had to be so disciplined but could make this beautiful sounds if I worked hard and trained every day. Soon after I started singing and realised the spiritual things I was missing in dance music were so close.

So that's how *Dimension D* started, by finding my spiritual side with music, singing and learning instruments to express myself in a more tactile way.

I Saw is a stunningly beautiful opener! Was this always going to be the first track?

Thank you! *I Saw*" was an experiment, Matthew (my husband) made a sequence on the synth and I started playing my Moog Guitar and a Rhodes Piano through a pedal, it was a one take improvisation, it was a really nice moment and one of the only pieces we did together on this album. Is quite calm but felt that it can set the mood right to open the story of the album.

When you started recording, did you have a specific idea of how the album would sound?

Not really. I knew what I liked and I knew what I could do with my voice and guitar, I had many technical limitations at first but since 3 years passed from the first song to the last one, my voice and my guitar technique changed so much that the vibe of the album did too so it was all a development.

For example I was really shy with my vocals at first, that reflects in *La Noche* where I whisper the song. Later on I wrote *Blind* where I sing looser and upfront and one of the last songs I wrote which is *Dimension D* I am belting out chants really loud. In a way that was good because I could become different characters on each song.

Technically style wise I listened to a lot of different music to get inspired and learn from arrangements and singers. I started with Folk and Dream Pop and then I got really into Jazz music. I knew I liked Nature, Jazz, Folk, Surf and Dream Pop, etc so I guess all my influences and my own style became what the album ended like. I knew I wanted to create a story, but that was more of putting the tracks together and making the album flow as a whole.

With your previous albums being largely electronic and instrumental where you nervous about creating such a vocal-led record?

I was and I still am a bit nervous. Its always the same! A humbling experience to put of an album, the feedback you get in the reports or reviews can be hurtful but you become immune to them after some years. Taste is subjective. I hate Pizza for example!

People are so sensitive to vocals specially in the dance scene, many do not like them and are put off by them, I think it has to do with feelings and communication, because vocals evoke feelings and sometimes in the club people want to forget that. Since my audience is mostly into dance music I was a bit nervous that they were going to hate my voice and my singing but so far they have reacted well to it. I was expecting so much hate when we got the *Falling Angel* report but out of all the press and DJ feedback only one person hated the vocals.

At the end I sing because I love it and I feel is a very spiritual experience so I do it very honestly. I hope that comes across in my music and people sense it .



What came first, the words or the music?

This time it was the music, It was mainly improvisational, I created a chord or baseline I was happy with, went to the vocal booth and started bursting out whatever came out of my mouth. I wrote down what I liked, re-sung it or re-improvised it and created the lyrics quite fast on top of the simple element I wrote before. Later on some of the songs where re-sung and re-recorded and some of them edited but the words were written extremely fast. I didn't want to overly think lyrics too much, like when you think what will you say in a conversation and it doesn't feel natural, so I felt this time for me it was better to be as natural as possible with my words and my brain.

The track Falling Angel is a real ear-worm which has been swimming contentedly around my head since the first time I heard it. Can you tell us a little about the idea behind this song?

This was as many of the other songs started as an improv over my music. I had in mind a „heaven / hell“ image, so I got inspired by the dark and light that we all have inside us.

The „light“ angel sings angelic and high pitched „Light is so bright/ day is so mine“ is too bright for her and she is not comfortable, then comes the dark angel and sings, „No room for tomorrow, here only your eyes“. The two voices talk to each other, the light angel complains about brightness, the dark one tells her she needs to come in terms with her darkness now.

Later when we did the video for the album version I was inspired [by] my Grandmother. We shot the video with no song in mind but it was the day she passed, we where in this cemetery and my sister was dressed like a

weird angel dancing on the graves. It was all surreal and the video ended up perfect for the song, we dedicated it to our Grandmother who was a bit like an angel but had her dark side too. She died at 101 years.

What type of listener do you think will especially appreciate the album?

It seems to appeal [to] women which is a good thing as I feel my audience is very male, Is too soon to tell but I am hoping it reaches anyone that feels the music in their heart. I think an important thing of being a musician is to make music that will bring the right audience for you and your persona, you want to see the right faces on your shows, so again honesty plays a huge role.

Tracks like Xanex have such a depth that it almost seems possible to get lost within their grooves. Do you have any tips for aspiring producers wishing to add depth to their music?

Technically harmony is specially important, 7 chords and substitute chords instead of only working with triads can make the mood of things deeper as is more jazzy, sound wise layers are extremely important, and also harmonising things, for example doubling a keyboard or a vocal part and tuning drums to the key of the song. Is important to think of music as a picture, and see the layers of sound like colours, if u have a high vocal, don't play the keyboard on the same part of the scale so you can make room for the vocal, if you have a low bass, don't play the guitar too low so you can hear the guitar and the bass.

A human element always adds depth and warmth to the music, specially in electronic music.

Now as a more soulful approach I'd say if the music brings an image to you and you can feel an emotion, then you already have a sense of depth that is more important that anything else.

After working with Traum, Cocoon, and many other labels what made you decide to release with Visionquest?

I needed a label that was open to release my songs in this direction, I am not known in the indie scene so getting signed on an indie was not an option. VQ has a more open approach to music, they love Folk and Jazz and they loved my music since day 1. They did not want to change anything, we left a few slow songs out but I was ok with that. I had the freedom to be myself and I also felt that since I was singing in English it was good to have a UK or US label to present my music. There where other labels interested and they were great but wanted me to change things like make things more dancey and I was not ready for that .

*I am a big fan of your **Miss Dinky** albums which take your music into a more ambient direction. Have you any plans to release any more music like this?*

I love ambient music so maybe in the future, I recently compiled all the sounds I made in the last 10 years and I feel like a whole ambient album can come out of that, so lets see.

*Similarly your **Miss Dinky** ambient podcast for Allez Allez is still one of my favourite mixes ever. What do you listen to when you want to chill-out?*

I have a varied taste in music, but I do like vocal music a lot, as a singer I like to listen to other singers and improve my singing by learning from them, so its usually vocal Jazz. One of my fav Jazz singers is **Sarah Vaughan**. I do listen to a lot of dreamy alternative music like **Cocteau Twins, Portishead, Kate Bush** and early **Goldfrapp**, or alt Rock like **Anna Calvi, Chris Isaak** and punky things like **The Cramps** and **Bauhaus**. But I can listen to Jazz all day though!



You are a trained dancer and choreographer. Do you feel this helps with how you create music in any way?

Dance is related to rhythm, music and feeling, same with music. They are strongly tied together, a dancer can usually become a musician and vice versa. There might be limitations but there are so many things in common. Since I had to feel music and learn rhythm so young I think it definitely helped me to have a dancers approach to create music, like I had a sense of movement and space which we often do not think so much as musicians.

Are you planning on touring the album? If so, will you be working on a traditional live show?

I am, its been a little bit of a tricky one, on one hand I am so looking forward to do live shows, on the other hand promoters know me well in the club scene, they want me as a DJ and there are many offers but all as a DJ. Agencies push for DJ sets because they seem more profitable, easier, longer, less hassle. The world is full of DJs! I think is time for people to realize that live music has to be brought back as an important part of culture we are slowly forgetting. Some of the Live agencies we contacted, where like, ehmm „but you are a DJ, errr, no, we don't want you“ or „no we cant do it because is too much work, we also need you as a DJ to get more money“. I felt like I was starting again from scratch and could not put a live album tour together before the album was out.

Now finally the album is out and people are getting interested in booking me live, but very slowly. People are petrified by change in general and it will take time for me to be accepted as a live act. I am rehearsing now and might have to take a break from DJing to be able to fully concentrate on my live show. For me there is nothing more rewarding than performing live and having a great show. DJing is fun and is easy and a good time but for a musician usually playing live is where the real fun is.

If a DJ plays a fantastic set yet no-one is dancing, have they really played a great set?

Of course! Sometimes depending on the situation people just wont dare to dance so that doesn't mean the DJ did a bad job. I prefer someone that dares to play a brave set, yet people don't understand that [to] someone that plays „music“ which consist on hyper compressed noise and heavy break downs but has everyone with the hands on the air.

I recently experienced something similar, I had to go after this act, he was a nice person but he played the most loud and formulaic set I ever seen, 128 BPM, full on break downs, white noise, up beat baselines and every thing on the red. I had to go after him, I had to fix the levels and make it quieter and people looked at me like I was a strange fish so it took me an hour to make them understand the change, now, is that my fault? There are too many factors too consider to judge if a DJ was great or not.

Finally, for me Dimension D is a sonic progression from Anemik which in turn was an advance from May Be Later. What can we expect from your next record?

Another progression I believe, I plan to make something a bit more sparse and slightly emptier than *Dimension D*, maybe this time I'll write everything on guitar or piano and I do some lyrics before. There is a saying in songwriting that says „if it works on acoustic it will work everywhere“ so I'm thinking to take that approach and later add sounds to it.

I would just like to thank **Dinky** for taking the time to answer these questions.

House Music With vocals? Oh, Go On Then!

Photos: Thomas Braun Promotion

| JOHN BITTLES