

I was listening to **Hot Chip's** excellent *Late Night Tales* set the other day when it struck me that I haven't heard a decent DJ mix in ages. Apart from **Jupiter Jax's** sublime *Dee-Life Mix* for *100% Silk* earlier this year, there seems to have been a dearth of great sets recently. With clubs closed and most commercial DJ mix series having given up the fight, it almost seems as though the art of crafting a journey through other people's records has died as an art form. By **JOHN BITTLES**

Stunned by this realisation I set out on an epic quest to sort through my old CDs and cassettes to rediscover the joys of listening to the DJ Mix. In this missive I highlight some of my long-time favourite ever mixes, those which I have listened to so many times over the years that I know every blend, peak and crescendo. Most of my picks were released in the 90s, a fact which probably says more about me than you might ever want to know. Release dates aside, these are the mixes which helped get me through some of the best and worse times of my life. A personal selection as always, strap yourself in for epic voyages from **Andrew Weatherall**, **Paul Van Dyk**, **X-Press 2**, **Harri**, **Colin Dale**, **Alex Smoke**, and more.

So, get your ears warmed up, pack a good, hearty lunch, and let us begin...

X-Mix 1: The MFS Trip by Paul Van Dyk (MFS 1993)



We open with a mix so good that upon release I purchased it in both vinyl and CD. Before *For An Angel* **Paul Van Dyk** was best known for this blistering mix of ambiance, trance and techno grooves. Starting out with the gorgeously melancholic *Skysoaring* by **Gemini 6** (seriously, if this song doesn't hit you in the sweet spot then you will never know love), *The MFS Trip* really is a journey in all the best possible connotations of the word. From here the set builds slowly but steadily, with **Effective Force's** deep, rhythmic *Diamond Bullet* and the driving trance of *Oh Supergirl* by **Cosmic Baby** warming us up nicely. After this the album hits the type of peak most DJ sets can only dream about with the three-song sequence of **Humate's** *Love Stimulation*, **Cosmic Baby's** *Heaven's Tears* and **The Visions Of Shiva's** *How Much Can You Take?* so good it was copied by other DJs for years. Beautiful, heartfelt and euphoric, *X-Mix 1: The MFS Trip* is, for me at least, an undisputed highlight of our times.

Back To Basics: Cut The Crap by Andrew Weatherall (Back To Basics 1995)



The good people at UK clubbing institutions *Back To Basics* were well known for playing chunky house grooves and following the hedonistic lifestyle. Released as a triple CD set, *Cut The Crap* aimed to showcase the sound of the club. Hence, we have jackin' Chicago house from **Derrick Carter** and some dirty funk-filled swagger from resident **Ralph Lawson**. The star of the show though is the deep, dub-heavy electronics of **Andrew Weatherall's** mix. The sound of having smoked too much weed but still trying to dance, the master's set even now sounds like nothing else around. The mix opens with the warped dub delights of *Lucy And the Mango Man* by **Is**, before the beautifully heady *Ijakk* by **Nangpa** enters the fray. Further in we have the drum heavy techno of **11:59's** *Freeman*, the head-melting electronics of **The Sabres Of Paradise's** remix of *Indigo* by **Skylab**, the cool as fuck sample strewn hip hop of *Floot* by **Wagon Christ**, together with any number of jaw-droppingly good electronic grooves. If you only ever buy one twisted funk/dub DJ mix make sure this is the one.

Sci.Fi.Hi.Fi 3 by Alex Smoke (Soma Records 2006)



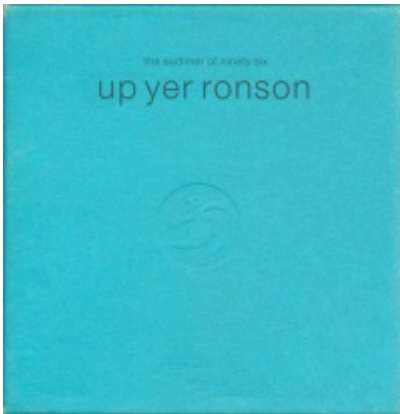
A superb mixture of dubstep, techno, strange electronics and house, **Alex Smoke's** entry for *Soma Records'* sublime mix series is dense, cinematic and deliciously deep. Early on *Najat Library Card* by **Porn Sword Tobacco** merges seamlessly into **Burial's** *Gutted* before the deep dub rhythms of *Radiance 1* by **Basic Channel** enters the fray. From here we get the echo-laden techno crunch of **Model 500's** *M69 Starlight*, the woozy hedonistic thrill of **Troy Pierce's** inappropriately named *25 Bitches (Gaiser Remix)*, **Thomas Brinkmann's** epic *Xenia*, the swoon-inducing electro groove of *Peace Of Mind* by **Claro Intellecto**, and lots more. Gorgeously trippy and revealing new sounds and layers with every play **Alex Smoke's** *Sci.Fi.Hi.Fi* mix is dirty, dark and contains just the right amount of sleaze.

Late Night Sessions II by X-Press 2 (Ministry of Sound 1997)



Described on the sleeve as 'A superb mix of laid back, deep, jazzy tracks specially selected to set the mood for those late night sessions' **Late Night Sessions II** contains two CDs of the type of house music you might hear in a club after all the tourists and part-timers have gone home. Deep, dreamy and decidedly funky, **X-Press 2's** selection for this sadly short-lived series is the stuff of dreams. Formed of **Diesel**, **Rocky** and **Ashley Beedle**, the trio showcase their immaculate record collection on a set guaranteed to make you move. Highlights are aplenty, but the deep house delights of **Dirty Jesus' Don't Fuck With My Shit**, **Ballistic Brothers' ethereal A Love Supreme**, **Paperclip People's Steam** and **Carl Craig's** divine refit of **Incognito's Out Of The Storm** are fully deserving of your love.

Up Yer Ronson - The Summer Of Ninety Six by Jon Marsh (Hi Life Recordings 1996)



In the mid-90s it almost seemed as though you weren't a proper club unless you had a signature compilation of upfront tunes. One of the best was **Up Yer Ronson's The Summer Of Ninety Six**. Over three CDs DJs such as **Brandon Block & Alex P** and **Marshall** took us through the sounds you would expect to be dancing to on the hallowed floor of the club. Star of the show though was **Jon Marsh** of **The Beloved** fame taking the third CD and leading the listener to the chilled side of the Balearic Isles. Over 60 plus minutes we feel the lap of the waves, the caress of the sun and are indulged with some of the most sumptuous music known to man. **Ben Chapman's** remix of **Hypnotone's Dream Beam**, **An Ending (Ascent)** by **Brian Eno** and **Rainer vs. The Grid's** transcendent **Nod To N20** all stand out in a mix so beautiful you never want it to end.

Subculture - A House Music Experience by Harri (BMG 1997)



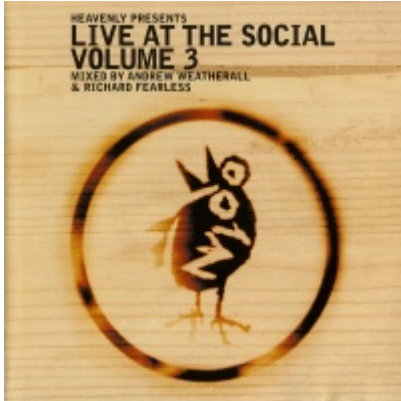
Sub Club residents **Harri** and **Domenic's** names are spoken in quiet reverential tones by those who have been lucky enough to hear them play. With a deep and seemingly innate understanding of all things house, they recognize simplicity and groove like no-one else around. With clubs here in the UK still in lockdown as I write, what better way to escape the confines of your own head than with this stellar mix. Starting out smooth and chunky, it's not until the hands in the air anthem of *Rhythmix* by **That Kid Chris** hits that we realise just how great this journey is going to be. From here we get the deep techno throb of **DJ Camacho's** *Renegade*, **KC Flight's** evergreen *Let's Get Jazzy*, **Swag's** funk-filled take on **DJ Assassin's** *Jazz Journey*, and more. Can someone do the world a favour and do a repress of this please?

Colin Dale's Outer Limits by Colin Dale (Kickin Records 1994)



For most of us, *Kiss FM* was **Colin Dale**. He played the tracks that mattered and introduced a whole generation of kids to a whole swathe of music which we hadn't even realised we needed until we heard him play. A bona fide legend, his **Outer Limits** show was taped and shared among only the closest of friends. The inaugural compilation of the show was mixed by the great man himself and featured twelve gorgeously deep and funky electronic grooves. There are so many great songs on here that it is almost impossible to know where to start - the introspective majesty of **Florence's** *A Touch Of Heaven*, the heart-wrenchingly beautiful trance of *Clearlight* by **Mystic Force**, the deep, hypnotic rhythms of *200 FA* by **The Force Dimension**, and **Ongaku's** sublime *Mihon #2* have all more than stood the test of time. With each track given space and room to breathe, this is an excellent mix CD which I still cherish like a lifelong friend.

Live At The Social Volume 3 by Andrew Weatherall & Richard Fearless (React 1999)



By the end of the 90s the dance music scene was fragmenting and fracturing, new scenes and sounds were springing up and disappearing before even getting started. The end of the century saw a population realising that the future wasn't what was promised. *Live At The Social Volume Three*, a two CD set by **Andrew Weatherall** and **Richard Fearless** epitomises this time like nothing else. Containing house, techno, dub, electro, pop, post-punk, disco and more, both mixes are deeply introspective, containing the type of dance music which needs to be danced to alone. The first CD by **Andrew Weatherall** is a deep and funky groover, full of the type of house music you could settle down and start a family with. Even better though is **Richard Fearless'** filthy trudge through the underground that is the second CD. **Chicks On Speed's** superb and hilarious *Eurotrash Girl* opens things in style. From here the mix gets better and better mixing styles, beats and genres with aplomb.