

PERSONALITY PROFILE

Paul Oakenfold

British DJ/producer storms the States

By Douglas Desmond

Anyone who's into dance music has heard of Paul Oakenfold. One of the most successful DJs alive, he's spun his melodic progressive trance all over the planet. Although he's been popular in Europe and Asia for years—he opened some European dates of U2's ZooTV tour and plays for thousands of fans every weekend—it wasn't until the 1998 release of *Trancesport* (Kinetic Records) that he became known in the States. Now he's mixed a new double-CD specifically for the American market, *Perfecto Presents Another World* (London/Sire), to showcase more diverse material. It moves smoothly from underground trance hits to a brilliant remix of Led Zeppelin's "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You" to music from *Bladerunner* over the course of two superbly programmed sets.

Born in London, Oakenfold first gained exposure to DJ culture in New York, where he danced at trendsetting early '80s nightclubs like Studio 54 and the Paradise Garage. He then returned to England—where he popularized acid house and early techno after hearing it on a holiday trip to Ibiza—before embracing trance in the mid-'90s. He has enjoyed a second career as a producer, working with or remixing acts as diverse as U2, Snoop Dogg and the Rolling Stones.

Meet Paul Oakenfold

STS: You said several years ago that America lags behind Europe in the appreciation of dance music. Has America caught up?

PO: Absolutely. It was behind in the sense that dance music actually came from America, America started it—the English just took it and gave it a twist. Then dance culture became youth culture in England, whereas in America it was obviously more driven by rock and R&B and hip-hop. Now I actually think it's better here. It's fresh, it's exciting, it's fun—that's why I got into this business. In England it's very political, because it's a billion-dollar business. Here it's really young and exciting. In England they want to be a DJ because of the money. Here you're all into it for the love of the music.

STS: Do you have any advice for someone interested in getting into the industry either as a DJ or in promotions?

PO: Just focus on what you're doing, and try to be as original as possible. From a DJing point of view, get demos out. If you want to get into the record business, write loads of letters and follow them up. Be as professional as possible. And for producers, these days it's much easier because you can just burn a CD-R. So make it, and then burn it onto CD, and then give it to the DJs you want to hear it.

STS: What are you working on at the moment?

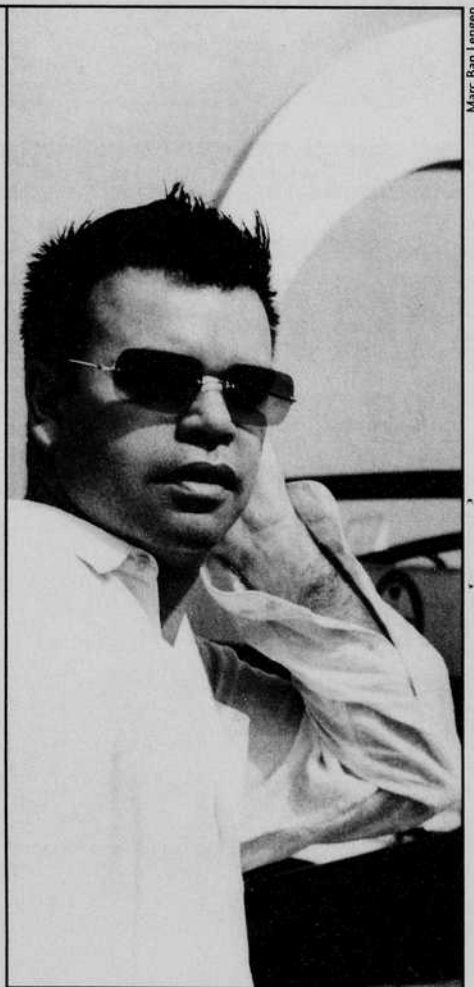
PO: I'm working on the score for a summer blockbuster called *Swordfish*, a \$90 million John Travolta film. And I've just done the remix for a Darren Aronofsky movie called *Requiem for a Dream*. I'm layering dance beats and various different things. At the moment we're using Pro-Tools [a computer-based studio]. I like to get in as many live musicians as possible, record what they're doing, then put it in Pro-Tools and start editing it. I also have a show that will be on university radio. It's going to be a mix show, not just underground dance stuff, but bands that I've worked with. I've just finished the dance mix of the new U2 record.

STS: How do you think that the Internet will affect the development of dance music?

PO: It's a very good medium for dance, and it becomes like an underground network. Brazil is a perfect example. I was actually in Brazil a month-and-a-half ago. I doubt if there is a single club that will be playing, say, speed garage, in Brazil. People in Brazil would never be able to listen to speed garage unless it was through the Internet. So that's why it's important. •

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Marc Ban Lengen

On success as a DJ: "Be as original as possible. Get demos out. Write loads of letters and follow them up. Be as professional as possible."

STATS

DOB: Aug. 30, 1965

Born and raised: London

College: Westminster Tech

Major: "I'm a fully qualified chef."

Favorite food: "Anything from a cafeteria to a plush restaurant. From Cuban food to Japanese, I like all kinds."

Favorite web sites: NASA (nasa.gov), the Four Seasons (fourseasons.com), the Chelsea football club (chelseafc.co.uk).

To students: "Thanks for the support. Universities and colleges have always been an important part of what I do. One day I would like to do a tour of universities in America."