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Mutate Design - Music

Gregor first contacted singer Billie Ray Martin to conduct an interview he was writing for Scottish lifestyle guide The Skinny.

Billie Ray Martin

by Gregor Laird

I'M THE ULTIMATE UBERDIVA

Billie Ray Martin first found fame as the vocalist with early house outfit Electribe 101 in the late Eighties. After the band imploded Billie struck out on her own, releasing her debut LP 'Deadline For My Memories' in 1996. The record contained several dancefloor smashes including Your Loving Arms which was a worldwide mega-hit and went on to become a club classic. A second album '18 Carat Garbage' was released in 2001 to rave reviews and re-instated Billie as the high priestess of electronic soul. Since then, she has collaborated with the leading lights of the Electro New-Wave including DJ Hell and Glasgow duo Slam. Her voice is unmistakable - ridden with drama and soul - sounding like Marlene Dietrich by way of Diamanda Galas. She spoke to The Skinny in advance of her DJ set at Death Disco on June 17.

There are a fair few singers making money playing records on the side. When did you first start DJing and why?
"I talked to a friend about how good it would be to hear the kinds of records we wanted to hear ... and that no-one played them. By which I meant Cabaret Voltaire, Human League etc. At that point I really didn't have much intention to learn to mix and play real good sets, but as soon as I started I realised I had my own sound. Now I play almost exclusively new stuff and I mix some old ones in, like some acid house and some old classics. I am loving it."

Your career as a singer shows that you draw from a wide range of musical influences - from Europop to Motown, Soul to Electro, Punk to Disco. Does this reflect in your DJ sets or do you stick to a particular genre?
"No, I am interested only in electronic music of a certain kind when I DJ. I can't really put a label on it but it's not electro trash and it's not minimal stuff. It's music with lots of sounds, Kraftwerk-influenced I guess, but hard enough to work on the floor."

You run your own club night in London - KOMPUTERLIEBE - what kind of music should people expect to hear there?
"We call it electronic music for the connoisseur, ie people who really know and like their music. Posh stuff."

You've worked with Slam, who are native to Glasgow, on the Sunset Boulevard-esque Bright Lights Fading. How did this collaboration come about and is the song about anyone in particular?
"The band contacted me. The song is about an ageing pop or rock star - I modelled her on Holly Woodlawn, one of Andy Warhol's transsexual superstars, who ran out of money, and works on the streets. She doesn't care what she does as long as it pays her. I find her very funny. She'll do anything for cash."

I heard your demo of Reality TV which has a Muriyn Production - the people



Billie Ray - The Ultimate UberDiva?

behind Britney's biggest hits. This is a rather more mainstream route than, say, your duet with DJ Hell. Can you tell us a bit more about this project?
"Muriyn did the demo backing track only and will not be producing the song. However I really like the style and will certainly go that route when I record it properly. It's not really that mainstream. I mean, listen to the lyrics. I'd love Britney to sing it, but let's face it, she won't. I believe Reality TV is going to be a big hit and can't wait to get it finished. But yes, my album will be my ultimate popfest. I'm not going to mess around with inaccessible stuff."

Your new single, Twisted Lover, seems to be about a bored housewife finding excitement through leading a double

life as a glamorous phone sex worker. Does phone sex tickle your fancy?
"I would never. How disgusting. Sorry to people who call these lines, but get a life. I just love for my character to do all these things."

The gays love you. Why do you think this is?
"Cause I'm the ultimate uberdiva, that's why."

Do you still own the 'Imitation' tarr you wore in the video for Imitation of Life? If so, do you wear it round the house whilst vacuuming perhaps?
"I have it. Good idea. Putting it on now."

BILLIE RAY MARTIN WILL DJ AT DEATH DISCO, THE ARCHES, GLASGOW ON JUNE 17. WWW.BILLIERAYMARTIN.COM

A couple of months later, she performed a live set at Glasgow's Karbon nightclub and being a huge fan of her music, he travelled through and got to the front of the stage, camera at the ready. During the first song, she accidentally tripped over a monitor and cut her leg.



After taking this shot and emailing it to her, the image found itself on a limited edition white label remix of 'UnDisco Me', the single she was then promoting.



A few months after the photo of Billie had been circulated around the internet by way of her website and mailing list, this publicity shot of Tori Amos appears, in support of her album 'American Doll Posse'.



This photo by Blaise Reutersward, and despite having religious connotations, seems to be 'influenced' by the shot of Billie. The stance, shoes, dress and blood bearing a remarkable similarity to Gregor's photo.

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