



The Rough Guide to House Music

By Sean Bidder

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Rough Guides presents a unique, pocket handbook to the world's most incessant dancefloor groove, featuring all the key players and hottest labels from the music's disco roots and Chicago birth, to its Acid House manifestation and world-wide diversification. Includes career biographies of more than 160 producers, artists, and DJs, and discographies for each reviewing the best on vinyl and CD.

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Editorial Review

Review

No gaps...well balanced between appreciation and criticism...excellent for dipping into. -- *Straight No Chaser, Summer 1999, UK*

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Introduction

From its roots in Chicago and New York clubs, House triggered the biggest musical revolution in the UK since punk, and subsequently spawned a welter of electronic genres that have altered the face of modern music and popular culture. The Rough Guide to House traces the route that this propulsive strain of dance music has taken, while pointing towards the elements that may shape its future direction. Presented in an encyclopedic format, The Rough Guide to House covers both the innovators and crucial exponents of House - whether they be producers, DJs, bands or record labels. So what exactly is House? Originally (some would argue it still is) a mutation of disco, House can be widely defined as electronic music with a rhythm set in a 4/4 tempo. While this definition neatly distinguishes House from the abstractions of Techno and the breakbeat foundations of Trip-Hop and drum 'n' bass, it fails to acknowledge the genre's most compelling attribute: its fundamental ability to inspire by bonding emotive, synthesised melodies to locked rhythms. It's this marriage of melody and groove which has formed perhaps the most exciting dancefloor proposition since the birth of disco itself.

House music's roots reside in the hedonistic gay club scene of mid-'70s New York. Manhattan-based DJs such as Walter Gibbons and Larry Levan provided the initial platform for disco to mutate into House by extending and recreating singles from disco labels like Salsoul, Prelude and West End to construct repetitive, hypnotic mantras built to fire up the dancers at clubs like The Paradise Garage (the club which would give House's R&B-soaked cousin its name, garage).

But House music was truly developed in Chicago, initially as a result of Brooklyn-born DJ Frankie Knuckles' residency at the city's Warehouse club in 1977. Like the DJs in New York, he began to alter the raw material of the music he spun at the club by adding pre-programmed drum rhythms from his Roland 909 to the mix to keep the groove constant, thus forming the blueprint for the 4/4 tempo of House, whose name derived from that of his club.

By the early to mid-'80s elemental cuts by Knuckles' disciples, Jamie Principle and Jesse Saunders, began to distinguish themselves from disco with a sound characterised by its raw synthesised energy and simple, skeletal drum patterns. By the mid-'80s Knuckles and another deck virtuoso, DJ Ron Hardy, had influenced a core of talented young kids who seized upon the relatively cheap and easy-to-master range of synthesizers, samplers and drum machines to create their own sonic inventions. Marshall Jefferson, Larry Heard, Adonis, DJ Pierre and Steve "Silk" Hurley created the blueprint for Acid House and Deep House with singles released by Chicago's two main independent labels, Trax and DJ International.

Mainstream America was never likely to accept music born from black, gay disco, though, and it was a youth culture bored to death by the materialist aesthetic of the Thatcher era in Britain which catalysed the Acid House explosion. Oh yeah, there was also a little something called Ecstasy, but club music and drug consumption have almost always gone hand-in-hand. Pioneered in the UK by DJs such as Paul Oakenfold, Danny Rampling and Mike Pickering, British technicians like A Guy Called Gerald, Baby Ford and Bang

The Party emerged to stamp their own style on the genre and irreversibly set in motion House music's domination of British dancefloors. It's a combination of all these factors that led to House's mainstream acceptance and subsequent diversification.

But this is only an outline of the music's history. There's no room here to detail the further importance of New York and Chicago, of Ibiza, Manchester, London, Italy and Paris, of the countless other producers/DJs whose contributions have been pivotal. Instead, that's all broken down into individual entries and detailed inside, providing a comprehensive, but by no means detached, guide to House music.

Thanks goes first to all the writers who pencilled entries for The Rough Guide to House and to those who imparted information, photographs and time. A special thanks to the following: Vince Lawrence, Ashley Beedle, Joe Clausell, Dimitri From Paris, Little Louie Vega, Kenny "Dope" Gonzalez, Glenn Underground, Crispin J. Glover, Dave Lee, Omid Nourizadeh, Charles Webster, Sally Jones and Steve Rodgers, Harvey, Kevin McKay, Abacus, Rob at Guidance, Billie and Dave at Nuphonic, JBO, Karen at Twisted, Rob at Pagan, Francesco at Irma, Isabel at Deconstruction, Simon and Richard at Reverb, Jennifer Dempsey, Nicky B, Miss K, Jo Lee, Chris Sodring, Jim Waite, Ben Harrington and Ted Cockle. Sean Bidder

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