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DAVE CLARKE's "Red" trilogy has been the most eulogised piece of vinyl of the past year. With the last chapter finally set for release, Clarke reveals why he's glad it's all over



Dave Clarke



LUB MUSIC HAS NEVER BEEN THE SAME SINCE DAVE Clarke dropped the first part of his "Red" trilogy. At the beginning of last year, when Bush Records unleashed "Red 1 (Of 3)" on lipstick-coloured vinyl with a pressing louder than Concorde, the track was considered to be a work of "techno" genius. But many people failed to notice that the track had a house tempo, and this at a time when the house and techno scenes were heading off in different tangents.

Some six months later, the house kids latched on to "Red 2 (Of 3)", the crisp production and metronomically perfect backward drums of which took the old-style Kevin Saunderson sound to a new level. It confused the fuck out of everyone, as every night, in every club, in every town, in every DJ's set, "Red 2 (Of 3)" exploded like a bomb. It stood out a mile. There was no escaping from it.

There's been endless talk about "Red 3 (Of 3)" in the interim period. When is it out? What will it sound like? What happens afterwards? Well, the final chapter has at last been delivered. And this time it's going to take a little more listening and a little more coaching.

Dave Clarke premiered "Red 3 (Of 3)" at the Bush night in Zurich two months ago, to a crowd who were just doing their thang. But when the epic breakdown riff of the main track, "Thunder", melted in the heat of a faster, darker, more frantic techno kick, people saw Clarke on the decks and it registered. Like a punch in the face. "Thunder" is actually nothing remarkably innovative, but it's unquestionably razor-sharp. And it will make all the house kids think and party that little bit harder.

Flip the record over to "Dangerous Storm" and Clarke goes wilder, slowing his own voice down to make it sound incredibly sinister. His words are taken from a 17th Century text by a psychic called Dr Francis Rabelais and the effect is like Li'l Louis' "Blackout". It's weird, trippy shit, with all the reversed sounds of "Red 1". And when that break drops, it's like being caught in a thunderstorm in the middle of an open field. There is simply no shelter.

As "Blackout" stated, "You can run, but you can't hide". It doesn't even need the machinations of Clarke's financial backers, deConstruction, to help sell it.

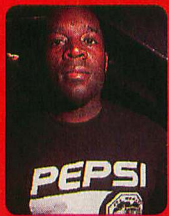
THE "Red" trilogy always seemed to be a masterful theory. Arriving at the right time and presented in the right way, it was as if Clarke had made the series years ago, but had waited until the world needed it most – when techno and house divorced each other. It was too bloody perfect.

"People keep trying to put a deep meaning into it," says Clarke. "But it wasn't like that at all. It just happened."

Renowned for his hard work and lack of sleep, today Clarke seems jaded and tired. But talking about "Red 3" is the only subject he doesn't have the perfect answer for. His black eyes disappear deep into their sockets – punishment for his gruelling lifestyle of touring around Europe every weekend. He seems glad that the "Red" series is finished. And that people will soon be turning their attention to his forthcoming album, where the

KEVIN SAUNDERSON ON DAVE CLARKE:

"Dave Clarke is one of the better producers in Britain. He's so familiar with Detroit music and he has every right to take it the way he has. The 'Red' sound is a great sound. It's raw and full of energy, and these are the elements that I used to bring to my early productions. As for people failing to recognise me as the instigator of this sound, I can only say that it's a different time and different era. Clarke is making everybody more aware of my work and now people in Britain ask me for my early stuff, which they haven't done for a very long time. The best of luck to him."



deeper musical soul of Dave Clarke can be discovered. It will be released towards the end of the year.

"I am glad the series is over because now people won't be able to keep asking me when "Red 3" is coming out. The moment it's out, that question has gone. I want to move on and talk about other things."

Do you feel that people have ignored you and...

"Ripped me off! I don't think I was ignored, it just took me a long time to

come through. I think it's harder to prove yourself in your own country. It's great for building character, but it can sometimes be very frustrating."

EVERYBODY likes to talk about Dave Clarke's character. Some have perceived his opinionated manner as being arrogant, as not helping to further the scene. Clarke, however, chooses not to mingle on the scene. He just plays his dates, drops and makes killer records, and keeps absolutely everyone on their toes with his totally outspoken comments. Nobody escapes his line of fire. But although it's about time someone made certain people think harder about what they do, it means Clarke is often perceived as not having a sense of humour.

"That's the best joke I've ever heard," he laughs. "The people who say that shit don't know me and a lot of the people who say that shit have tried to hold me back. As Tone Loc

"It's the adrenalin, man. When I get behind the decks, it all comes back at me. It's like an orgasm which lasts forever. Who says men can't have multiple orgasms?"

said, 'I've been held back for many years/Had a few squabbles, never shed no tears'. Everyone has an opinion, but I'm just more vociferous than most. I have always spoken my mind and my mind doesn't necessarily agree with other people's. But at least you know where I stand.

"I'm a very black and white person. Maybe I should try to be a little more grey. But when somebody asks me a question, I always give a very straight answer. I'm not trying to dictate to people or say that I know better. It's just that I'm honest about what I think."

AGED 26 ("I stopped remembering how old I was when I could actually get into a club"), Clarke was brought up in Brighton, where he lived until earlier this year. He now resides in West Sussex, sharing his home with his girlfriend, Laura-Jane, and their dogs. For a brief period he was homeless and slept on Brighton beach until he could find somewhere to stay.

Clarke says he knew he'd be a DJ from the age of eight ("Although I never wanted to be Jimmy Saville!"), but on leaving school he took a job in a clothes store and later worked for "the government" in a capacity he refuses to disclose. As has been noted many times before, Clarke doesn't take drugs, but he does enjoy a good cigar and an old-fashioned drink. His lifestyle is, however, starting to wear him out.

"It is very tiring," agonises Clarke. "Sleeping in departure lounges and on planes, grabbing a little bit of rest here and there. I tend not to have a hotel when I go abroad. I take the last flight out and the first flight back and then sleep properly when I get home. Travelling does get me down. The flights may only be an hour long, but having to wait 45 minutes for my bags really pisses me off. I can't understand that."

"I know that I take on too much work, but that's because I enjoy it. I'm a workaholic. It's the adrenalin, man. When I get behind the decks, it all comes back at me. When you get to a club and the vibe's there, it's like an orgasm which lasts forever. Who says men can't have multiple orgasms? I don't take drugs, but I think the adrenalin overloads that I put myself through are probably not very good for me."

To help alleviate the pressure of travelling, of flying to Europe every weekend as he has done since the "Red" records exploded throughout the continent, Clarke goes Club Class on almost all flights. He's a true aristocrat. And it's causing quite a stir on the DJ network.

"I'm claustrophobic and I don't like sitting next to other people," says Clarke in his defence. "I don't see that as snobbish. I see it as someone who travels enough miles to get easily wound-up by parties of fucking tourists, people who lose their passports and screaming children. I'd rather go straight into the fast track, sit in the lounge and have a bit of peace where my mobile phone doesn't ring, I can read the paper and have a cup of tea. For a few extra quid, I don't have to eat from plastic plates and I actually have left and right arms. And leg room."

All of which, of course, costs money. And brings us to the complaints that Clarke's DJ fees are too high.

"That's crap. I play at clubs such as Sativa in Edinburgh because they've supported me since the days when I wasn't such a big catch. I try not to be too expensive, but I have a living to make as well. I'm not a charity. I'm not going to play somewhere for £100 and have to sit on a bloody train in second class for the privilege. I did that eight years of that shit and I didn't even get the £100."

"If an underground club can't afford to pay for me, I don't necessarily have a problem. But when there's a big event on, why do the promoters stick everybody in economy? I just believe in spreading money equally."

CLARKE'S deal with deConstruction has finally set him up for a potentially prosperous career in music. He's already significantly better off financially, to the distaste of those on the purist underground scene who believe that artists should starve in the name of techno.

"Oh yeah, let's just make one record!," mimics Clarke. "I see every bit of the money I'm earning as a reward for working so hard for so long. Purism is fascism. Music is for people to listen to. It shouldn't be held back for only a chosen few.

"I understand things like the Sold In Detroit records which are only available in Detroit, because they want to make people go to the city and see it for themselves. That's not fascism, that's, 'You've been hearing about Detroit from the wrong people. Come over here and see it.' But what I don't agree with are the fucking purists who say, 'We will never sign to a major', when you know that, deep down, they wish they had the chance. 'No, no, no, no - we're real underground.' Bollocks. Fucking bollocks."

CLARKE'S music is getting better and better and, as yet, there has been no A&R infringement on his creativity from deConstruction. As an artist he's very happy with life, but he's very unhappy with the world he has to live in. He wants everything in life to be fast, and to be there when he wants it. Hence his fascination for driving speedy cars.

"People in this country don't fucking realise that motorway lanes are for overtaking and not for sticking there doing certain speeds. There's a parallel between us and Germany. Out there, you can be doing 140 kilometres an hour behind a car which is doing 130 and they'll spot you coming up behind them and pull in. It's like with their economy. They let people get on with the job. But in England, people see you coming and they refuse to let you pass. It's an indication of the general attitude of people in this country. That's why our economy is so fucked."

Clarke's attitude towards this country also taints his view of mixers, most of whom he considers to be not up to the standards required of someone who uses cutting, scratching and other hip hop techniques. His hands may not be as quick as a Jeff Mills or a Claude Young, but for a British white kid who hasn't been to the DMC school of mixing and who learnt how to scratch with the front wheel of a bike suspended from the ceiling, he does a bloody good job. Inspired by Red Alert, DJ Kool Here and Grandmaster Flash, he uses the Techniques like a sampler and is now set to take his phenomenal SM650 mixer on the road with him.

"Basic mixers are piss boring," says Clarke. "I find them so limiting. I can't stand the American Uri. For fuck's sake, we've moved on 20 years from that shit. But, yes, I do find the general pace of life slow. I get frustrated queuing up in shops. I can't take that shit. When I ask for Häagen-Dazs, I want it in my hand by the time I've said 'Dazs'. It's a form of intolerance. I'm a very impulsive person. If I buy a sofa, I don't want it in six weeks. I want to take it back home with me in a fucking big taxi, or not at all. That's consumerism for you, I suppose."

But if everyone else has to put up with queuing and waiting, why shouldn't you?

"Why do people have to put up with it? It's such a waste of time. I find a lot of things are like that. This government, for instance. There's a lot of dissent about this government, but people must be into masochism because they still keep bloody voting for them. Things need to be sorted out dramatically. There's so much fucking technology and yet, when I was in hospital recently with suspected appendicitis, they told me to turn my mobile phone off because it would cause problems with their machines. Why can't they fucking shield them properly?"

"I'll tell you why. They don't have the money to do it because the government would rather spend it on war. There's this cruise missile which can blow every circuit in a city. Man, I'm encasing my Mac in lead. Why does technology have to be invented for the military first? Why can't it be used for the good of the human race rather than for blowing each other up?"

POLITICS have an occasional influence on Clarke's records, not only in the words but also in the dark and distant sounds of his music, where Public Enemy crash head-on with Underground Resistance and PJ Harvey. It's an apocalyptic meeting point, but one which Clarke pulls off with astonishing class.

And his opinions just keep on coming. He's now a vegetarian and he says that he and Laura-Jane are particularly perturbed at the culling of animals. He's concerned about the state of the environment in general.

"I know I drive fast and uneconomically - although I do have a catalytic converter - but people are still going on about how electric cars will make everything better. Are they thick as shit or what? Most electricity still comes from fossil fuel-burning power stations. What the electric car is doing is basically having a fart, shipping it in a test tube and then opening it up in the countryside where the power stations are. If I was in a position of power I would enforce wind-produced electricity.

"I'm sorry, but I don't feel proud of being part of this world. I see the human race as the biggest plague the world has ever seen. Humans are supposed to be so fucking intelligent and yet the majority of us can't see what's going on around us. There's a lot more to it than 'When's 'Red 3' coming out?' and fucking sequencers."

Is there nothing at all outside the club environment which makes Dave Clarke in the least bit happy?

"AND ANOTHER THING. . ." DAVE CLARKE ON:

Slam/Soma: "I don't understand those guys. All of a sudden they're into Kevin Saunderson. Have you heard that first Percy X shit? Fuck that. What's the point?"

Darren Emerson: "I've never heard him play. I'd love to, though. I saw his track-listing on Radio One and he genuinely knows his stuff."

Josh Wink: "Although I don't know much about him, I hated 'Don't Laugh'. I think it was just laughing at the people who bought it."

Neil Landstrumm: "He is very talented. But I'd rather see him on a major label getting loads of wad. He's certainly capable of it."

Richie Hawtin: "I don't hate the guy. But he's one of the few people who lives in Detroit and can't go there now he's being banned from America! His Fuse material is still mind-blowing, but I can't relate to that Plastikman shit. Every time I see a fucking Plastikman logo or a slipmat, I turn it over."

Justin Robertson: "He's really nice. I didn't know what to think at first because he's seen as being trendy, but he's another one who knows his shit."

Andrew Weatherall: "If I had him playing in a club, I'd only have him playing dub reggae, like he did when Magnetic North hosted Sabresonic. You still haven't done me that tape though, git."

DAVE Clarke is truly one of this country's more creative spinners. He is currently messing around with two copies of the new Method Man track and his love of hip hop is evident on album cuts like "The Woki" and "No One's Driving". But Clarke has also been accused of being a show-off for playing so many records in one set, with his fast and frantic mixing style destroying the nature of the music.

"I'm just doing something with the records and making my set a live event instead of simply playing from A to B," explains Clarke. "I'm interacting and that's what's supposed to be happening now, isn't it? We're all supposed to be interacting with each other. It's like with the Da Vinci paintings and the way you can now move them around on certain computer programmes. Some people call that blasphemous. But it's a way of putting your own character into it."

Did you ever imagine you'd get to this level?

"Yes. I always try my damned hardest to get what I want. But I need to set new goals now because I'm starting to achieve the ones I had set. Life is a mountain and you have to reach the very top before you die. And I'm nowhere near the top yet."

The album which follows "Red 3 (Of 3)" will push him closer, though. Clarke sees it as a true journey through what makes him tick musically.

"The album will surprise people who are expecting loads of 'Red'-type tracks. I couldn't do that because so many people have since done them for me! Thank you. Maybe it was good, maybe it made the 'Red' sound more of an anachronism all the more quickly, but all of a sudden your influences are their influences, even though they don't know jack-shit. There will always be parasites. I've had a lot of musical influences throughout my life and some of them are still part of me. But I'm not going to say what they are. You can listen to the album to find out."

Until then, "Red 3 (Of 3)" will do.

And Dave, when is the album out?

'Red 3 (Of 3)' is out on Bush/deConstruction in August. Clarke's album follows later in the year

