



Spotlight: Behind the Mixing Desk with Steve Dub

Description



Last week we chatted to the award-winning mixer and producer **Steve Dub** after the release of **The Chemical Brothers**'s album **??No Geography??**. Over the past 20 years Steve has worked with influential artists such as **Leftfield**, **The Stone Roses**, **Depeche Mode**, **Nitzer Ebb** and **Renegade Soundwave** just to name a few. However, some of his most exciting work has come from collaborating with The Chemical Brothers. **??I am their sort of third ear??** he says, explaining his integral role in shaping this electronic duo's iconic sound.

Read the interview below in full..

Best to start from the beginning, so how did you come into music?

Steve: One day when I was about 17 I went into college and I thought no, no more Geology man, not today. So I got the bus home and looked up recording studios in the yellow pages, rang up loads of

studios in London, got a few interviews and finally bagged a job at a place called Radio Luxembourg as a kind of assistant radio producer. It was here, working with a guy called Mike Allen on his hip hop show called National Fresh, that I realised I wanted to get into music production. After a stint there, I got a job at a studio called Konk which was owned by Ray Davis. It was amazing â?? I got to work on the first Stone Roses album, with Depeche Mode, Nitzer Ebb and Renegade Soundwave. There was all of this left-field music coming through that studio, plus lots of pop stuff.

And how did you start working with The Chemical Brothers?

Steve: Around 1998 I was making a track called â??God Is In The Houseâ?? with this guy George, and our record deal with Pete Tong paid for us to build a studio in his garage. A label called Hard Hands also started using the space, and this is when The Chemical Brotherâ??s came in to do a remix and I was the studio engineer. Thatâ??s how I got my start with them.

And you have worked on The Chemical Brothersâ?? records ever since?

Steve: Every mix I have done apart from two or three. I have worked on every album of theirs.

Wow, so you are really an integral part of their sound.

Steve: Yes, I am their sort of third ear. They have a situation where they work together, and then I can come in at the end and help deconstruct it and then reconstruct it as an engineer. Quite often I will go in and Tom & Ed will have written some drums and I might just mix the drums. Then 6 months later I will mix other sounds to go with these drums. We have a very open way of working. It remains quite fluid until the very end, especially on this last album where there was a lot of room for experimentation. For the first album we only had 3 weeks to make the records in a little studio which was great fun, but now we donâ??t have this time constraint. Thereâ??s lots of different version of tracks, samples that donâ??t go on one but maybe on another, a baseline from one track that goes on to another â?? things move around a lot. Obviously modern technology makes that a lot easier!

And itâ??s not just the Chemical Brothers you have worked with, there have been a bunch of others such as New Order, The Prodigy, Leftfieldâ? What are you working on at the moment?

Steve: Yes lots of others, so doing a lot of stuff for a guy called [Ali Love](#) at the moment, which is more disco-y with lots of vocals. I just mixed a track with him where we had 200 tracks of choir and I had to condense it down to 8 or 10 tracks of mixed vocals. I hate working with massive track counts â?? I like it to be concise.

You have also done some compositions for film and adverts, can you tell me a bit about this?

Steve: Yes, so I did a film score a couple of years ago which was great fun! I also did some ads for Toyota in America. This was an interesting pitch because they wanted it to sound like computer game music. The image had a big wrecking ball swinging between two cars and a voiceover saying â??he loves me, he loves me notâ??. In the end I did these weird Moog noises that sounded like a swinging ball â?? so it wasnâ??t really music, it was more like sound design. But they loved it! Sometimes doing something a bit odd works out.

The Chemical Brothers also did the [soundtrack](#) for the British-German thriller ‘Hanna’. What was this like?

Steve: You need to be open when working on a film as often scenes and music get cut or edited out. You need to think carefully which sounds will dominate in a scene, for example dialogue is always king in these scenarios and is mixed above everything else. It’s also interesting to see how budgets and producers shape a film. I believe that necessity is the mother of invention and that limited choice and resources make you more creative. So when you have two or three synths and a couple of drum machines you exhaust them and use them in different ways.

And finally is there an ad that you think stands out because of its soundtrack?

Steve: The [Guinness Surfer / White Horses ad](#) which is soundtracked with Leftfield’s ‘Phat Planet’ was brilliant. The tagline ‘Good things come to those who wait’ was a perfect parallel between the product and music. It was a very symbiotic, clever hook-up.

Listen to ‘No Geography’ by The Chemical Brothers: