

ALL DJS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL.

Re: Pascal @ Hush. 5 hour set)

By Jimi Fritz author of "Rave Culture; an insider's overview"
(www.raveculture.cjb.net)

To the uninitiated, one DJ may seem much the same as another: a shadowy figure hunched over two Technic 1200s, spinning record after record on a darkened stage. But to the seasoned and discriminating listener, there is a world of difference.

There are technical DJs that dazzle with knob-twiddling gymnastics, energetic DJs who leap around like demented deer on pogo sticks, and messianic DJs that use their musical mission to inspire.

They play a wide variety of different genres and offer music in a diverse range of mixing styles. All DJs, however, share the common goal to draw people onto the dance floor and keep them there. Yet it's not enough to simply play one pulse-pounding track after another; too many epic tracks in quick succession wear out the audience, often driving them from the dance floor altogether.

A good DJ must have the ability to read a crowd, to decide what to play and when to play it for maximum effect. You need a high degree of musicality and, as a quick scan of the world-class-DJ list shows, the quality they all have in common is a finely tuned musical sensibility which enables them to "program" their sets for the maximum effect for both the dancer and listener - essentially creating a two-hour long composition. Rather than a live musician (the oft-presumed DJ equivalent), the skills required are more closely related to the conductor of an orchestra.

An excellent example of this specialized musical ability is Czech-born Pascal, who will be playing a five-hour composition this Friday at Hush. Weaving a seamless blend of pumping progressive house, trance and techno, Pascal chooses his tracks for their musicality rather than popularity, favouring a more diverse, underground sound.

But it's not so much the genre of music played but the way the tracks are programmed which creates the characteristic excitement of a Pascal set. The effect is undeniable. When the lights go up, crowds of sweaty, exhausted clubbers are invariably left screaming for more.

Now a resident of Vancouver, Pascal's ten year history on the decks is intrinsically linked to the Victoria club and rave scene. Local promoter, Noble House Productions chose Pascal as their first resident DJ in 1993 when they

staged one of Victoria's first raves called Love Gone Insane. Around the same time, another local dance music pioneer, John the Baptist invited Pascal to play at his electronic music night called Berlin at Club California which later became The Limit and is now Plan B. The following year on Canada Day, Noble House started Victoria's first after-hours club, Back to Basics and once again, Pascal was there to fill the dance floor with his unique blend of progressive house music.

Since that time Pascal has toured extensively in Canada, the States and Japan, and has regularly appeared on the bill with the worlds best DJs. But despite his success over the past eight years, Pascal remains elusive and enigmatic. He has never made a mix tape or printed any promotional material. He has no web site and rarely makes himself available for interviews, preferring instead to let the music speak for him.

All too often, after hearing less accomplished DJs, many people leave with a diminished opinion of electronic dance music. In a musical realm that encourages experimentation and embraces both amateur and pro alike, DJs that really deliver are few and far between. But if you love to dance and want to experience the power, complexity and excitement of what electronic dance music can be, Pascal is as good as it gets.

- Jimi Fritz