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Interview with Chris Hampshire

Reported by [AshAttack](#) / Submitted 13-12-06 22:12:01

Chris Hampshire has certainly been around the block many times, gracing many dance floors with stomping tune after stomping tune. 'Breathless' as re-mixed by **Tony de Vit** injected **Hampshire & Weatherly** to the front of the line and certainly beyond. A few years later Chris Hampshire's purchase of **Recover Records** and **Recoverworld** have certainly paid off, not forgetting the sub labels under the umbrella of all things Recoverworld.

For the very first time in **HarderFaster** history we get to learn more about the man behind the helm of Recover as well as hearing about his steady climb up the ladder of the dance music industry working alongside some of the industry greats. **HarderFaster!** Welcome to the world of all things Recover and Chris Hampshire!



Hi Chris, many thanks for taking some well deserved time out to answer some questions for the HarderFaster readers. I believe this is your first interview for Harder Faster?

It is indeed — and it's a pleasure to be here.

Just how did the transition into the club scene happen for you way back in the early 90s? Have you always been musical?

Yes I have — my early influence/background was the post punk scene and I remember going to see Killing Joke and it was the first time I had ever really seen a band like that using synths. They made all these great noises and I knew I had to have one — that's really where it all started — me in my bedroom with a Yamaha CS15.

Underground bands like Cabaret Voltaire and DAF together with the more commercial side of it, Depeche Mode and New Order, were what I aspired to and then BANG!! Acid House arrived.

I was lucky enough to live in Brighton by then and by 1988/89 the Zap club was absolutely rocking with it. Clubbing was strange at that time — from 9 in the evening the Zap was a stand up comedy club, then the comedy fans would leave and the clubbers would move in. I used to do both — made for a very surreal night I can tell you.

For the next few years I just immersed myself in it as a clubber. They were great

times and around 1994 I met John Weatherley who was a new resident at the Zap. Dave Randall, Eric Powell and John OO Fleming were also residents at the time and over time I have ended up working with all of them, but John W was the person who I got my first serious dance music project together with.

So how did your paths cross with John Weatherly and what was the key behind the mighty successful, Hampshire & Weatherly classic, 'Breathless'?

I tried to meet John on three separate occasions but each time it was in the Zap and by the time he had finished playing I was too twatted to get it together to say what I wanted to say. In the end I wrote him a short letter which I took to the club with me. He remembers very clearly the day some idiot stumbled out of the dry ice, stuffed a letter in his hand and said, "can't speak right now — read that and give me a call."

He rang me the next day — stupid sod!! Lol!

Our first track 'Heaven Can Wait' was released 6 months latter. 'Breathless' was the follow up and yes, that was the biggie. The original mix was cocked up big time in the studio and we thought it was going to be shelved. Back then even small labels put you into studios and they weren't cheap. After we fucked it up the first time we had pretty much blown the label's budget so I ended up taking out a bank loan and buying a mixing desk and all the gubbins — and doing it myself. That's how my career started as a sound engineer.

Anyway, the label loved it and managed to get a Tony de Vit mix and the track just sold and sold. The original mix was the biggie when it was first released on Shift but Tony's mix was the one that stood the test of time and ultimately went on to become a classic.

Names like Dave Randall, Eric Powell and John OO Fleming can only be summed up in one word, 'Legendary'. How does it make you feel that you have had the honour to work with such names in the past?

Its nice to have "legendary" mates for sure! Engineering for Dave was always a great laugh and the early 'Interflow' releases I had on his label Chug and Bump I am still very proud of. I got to know Eric and John OO properly a lot later than the old Zap Club days. Eric's label Bush is without doubt my favourite label of all time and it is a real shame that it isn't still going. I have never actually produced anything with John but I have mastered his last couple of albums and he is such a positive bloke — and you're right too — all three of them are classed as industry legends and rightly so.



I could not agree more with you Chris. I expect you like many of us 'industry foundations' have seen many changes. Many though have simply thrown the towel in. What is the winning formula that keeps your spirit alive?

Yep, I have seen many changes and it is changing all the time. But as an industry we are not unique in that respect and not all change is a bad thing — quite the opposite in fact. I haven't thrown the towel in because I like what I do, I believe in the music we put out and the artists that produce it and quite simply, I love my job. That is not to say that I don't have down days — but everyone does — not just people that work in this industry.

I guess there are many reasons for "throwing the towel in" as you put it. For some people it has run its course, it's time to move on and good luck to them in whatever

they do next. What I have a problem with is the people that stay and then moan about it (says me having a moan lol). Especially the "its not as good as the old days" crew!

I have got producers, barely out of their teens, producing tracks at home on a PC/Mac with a set of small speakers, that blows material out of the water that was produced in studios costing a six figure sum 10 or so years ago. How can that be "not as good as the old days?"

The main difference between then and now was of course that the whole scene was newer then and for those of us that experienced it, it was very exciting and I am particularly proud to have seen it evolve from the very beginning. But it is very patronising to assume that people experiencing dance music now for the first time are not just as excited as we were then, and I still get to go to clubs where people are hanging off the walls and the place is rocking just like it used to be. These tend to be typically smaller, more underground venues, which again, is just how it started. I have never been a huge fan of big events anyway so for me, that's ideal.

As for winning formulas — I don't really have one of those, but what I will say is that with the rapid pace of change within the industry that we are experiencing at the moment, it pays to be able to react quickly to these and the fact that we are a relatively small tight knit unit, makes it easier to do that.

Well said Chris, the underground scene is certainly stronger than ever! In your own right as a producer you have remixed and been remixed by some of the music industry well known such as Sinead O'Conner, Tiesto, Tony de Vit and so on. What has been your own personal favourite so far within your career and who have you enjoyed working with?

The three projects are so diverse that it is hard to compare them really. The Sinead O'Conner track was a remix that I was offered by Tommy Boy in the States that I did with Keith McDonnell (Innate) as part of our SDM Soundclash guise. It was the most amount I have ever been paid for a remix and it enabled us to spend a whole week in the studio doing that and nothing else. Even though I say so myself, we did a bloody good job but the track didn't get the promotion it deserved. I have never quite understood why as the other mixes were by Paul Van Dyk and Junior Vasquez so it wasn't as if they wouldn't have had anything to work with promotion wise, but the track came and went and I don't think it even made it as far as these shores.

Recently we have stripped out the vocal and we are now working with a new guest vocalist called Kate Walsh (www.katewalsh.net) and it is going to be released as our own single later this year. Kate is on the verge of great things so we are very excited to be working with her and that our hard work is finally going to get the release we think it deserves on Baroque.

The Tiesto remix was a bit of a bummer to be honest. I produced a track with Vince Nysse and our singer, Nikita and it got signed to Blackhole. Next we found out that Tiesto was remixing it and we were all made up. Unfortunately the remix he did was a kind of hybrid breaks track. It was cool enough but it was an album track in my opinion not a 12" club track and not what we were hoping for. Airwave did a pretty good job and I turned in a dark twisted interpretation of the original so taken overall (including the Tiesto remix) the package was pretty cool. However it does come down to expectations, and at that time if you had a Tiesto remix on your release you could reasonably expect to rinse loads of compilations and unfortunately that never materialised.

The Tony de Vit remix of 'Breathless' catapulted Hampshire and Weatherley forward and helped put my first label, Interflow Sounds on the map. It's a great mix and still one of the tunes I most get asked about. When it was first released in 1996 on Shift, it sold pretty well but it wasn't until I re released it in 2000 on Interflow Sounds that it really took hold. I think that just goes to show that it was way ahead of its time as of course he was and both myself and John consider it a privilege to have had one of our tracks not only remixed by Tony, but to have had a track catapulted to near legendary status by his genius.

Unfortunately you don't usually get to meet the people that you are remixing or that are remixing for you, but other than a couple of annoying little f*cking upstarts who I have had the unfortunate experience of getting involved with down the years, I have enjoyed working with pretty much everyone I have encountered.

And of course a few people have gone on to become good personal friends like Dave

Randall, John Weatherley, Keith McDonnell and most recently, the ungovernable force that is John Askew.



You have just mentioned a name that springs to mind, Nikita, who was behind the vocal work for 'Silencer' that was featured in the massively huge CSI TV series. When it comes to quality you know exactly what quality your looking for!

Nikita has done loads of good vocals including those for John 00 Fleming, K90 and Blackhole together with projects for myself, including SDM Soundclash, Chin Chiller and Interflow. She has a brilliant voice and so I recommended her to the guys behind the 'Silencer' project. Next thing the track has been licensed to CSI — cool stuff huh?

I have been very lucky with the vocalists that have come my way. Usually good ones are very hard to find but I have worked with some really good ones.

Stefano Lo Presti and Pablo Gargano are two names that you yourself Chris will not forget in a hurry, the duo who formed Eve Records. The very platform, that transpired so many fantastic releases. How did the involvement start for you with Eve Records one of the oldest independent dance music label groups in the UK?

I started as an artist on the label. The first thing I did was remix Pablo's classic 'Trance in Saigon' with John Weatherley for Recover. I then did a solo trance project for Eve Nova called Dream Deluxe followed by collaborations on Recover with Tom Harding (*2) and Phil Reynolds.

Also, because I owned my own label, Interflow Sounds, myself and Steven used to chat on the phone a fair bit and one day out of the blue, he announced he was thinking of moving on and would I be interested in buying the business.

At first I laughed it off, but Interflow Sounds had finally died a death after two failed distribution deals and I had always admired the way Steven and Pablo had run their business so I knew what I would effectively be buying was a ready made label(s) in a box.

"Every journey starts with a single step" as they say, and I was just about to make mine...



So what is the Recoverworld brand all about? What are the full offerings from the Recover stable?

Basically it's the collective name for everything we do. All of the labels come under the Recoverworld banner, the publishing company, the studio, the online shop, the website and the live label nights.

Our labels are Discover, Discover Dark, Discover Digital, Flux Delux, Flux Delux Digital, Recover, Delux Grooves and the soon to be re-launched Eve Records.

There is a bit of cross pollination between labels with artists and remixes but by and large each label has its own identity and sound.

However, having everything under the one global banner does simplify the marketing side of things and the recoverworld.com site is the centralised information point for everything we do including our merchandising, physical product and MP3/WAV download sales.

The live side of things has also changed since its earliest incarnation as 'Recoverworld Live'. This was originally set up in conjunction with Antiworld a little before my time. It was effectively the club night that was associated with what was then our biggest label Recover. At that time Recover was probably the leading hard trance label in the UK and the club nights reflected that with the line ups, and there were some great nights first at The Fridge and then later on to SE1. It was something that we continued for a while after I took over but gradually our music policy has changed and Recover is no longer our largest label by quite a way.

Not only that but we have loads more labels now and so our live nights are now more label showcase nights with the line ups being drawn almost exclusively from within our own producer rosta. We have recently taken the concept successfully to Japan and Italy and UK dates are now starting to come in.

Because so many of our producers are now sought after DJs, we are saying that if you are thinking of booking one of them then consider a label night where we can

usually get you several DJs, often for less money and you get the label branding and the full weight of the Recoverworld marketing machine.

We also have the 'Live As' nights which is where we choose a club and record our DJ's sets, which get released as a live album with all the crowd noise and ambience recorded on the CD. We are not claiming that this in itself is an original concept — live albums have been around for years — but it is a unique one at present as nobody else is doing them.

We are in the process of releasing the latest one (it is available now from our website) which is Matt Hardwick and John Askew (recorded at Passion at The Emporium) with the next one being recorded at The Arches in Glasgow in December (John O'Callaghan and Greg Downey). We are looking at using Recoverworld Label nights to back up the launch of these albums with promotional nights at selected venues throughout Clubland.

So what is it that you look for in a track for you to say, "I want to release this?" You must get sent many promos, is it a hard choice these days of what to release and what not to release?

Our A + R is split between myself and John Askew, with Askew looking after the Discover labels and myself the rest. There is naturally some degree of crossover since when either of us receives a track the first thing we do is to think which label is it potentially right for and then pass it on if necessary.

It's hard to say specifically what we are looking for but when I am asked this question, as I often am, I say, "go to the website, listen to the samples of all the tracks and see if you can pick up the vibe of what we are doing and take it from there."

We do get sent loads of tracks, but there are surprisingly few that are bang on the money — those that are get snapped up!



Recoverworld also have their, own radio show on DI.FM. This must be a good platform to have to your bow? How did this transpire for you? At least this gives

You scope to 'Air' Recover material before releases.

We only recently moved to DI but we have had a radio show going back to the old Eve Records days. It's a simple format, two hours long — a guest DJ mix— usually one of our own artists for one hour and me for the other hour playing all our new material plus a little of anything else that is floating my boat at that time.

All the mixes are exclusive and we don't make them available for Podcast anywhere to push up the listener figures. It is the second Wednesday of every month 17:00 – 19:00 on www.di.fm. The next show is on 13th December — I guess that makes it our Christmas Special.

You recently joined TEK Management, how did this come about for you? Can promoters also book the Recoverworld club tour through TEK also, as well as your good self?

Myself and Tom (TEK) have been in contact for a few years now so when I decided to stop doing it all by myself and enlist the services of a management company, Tom was one of my first points of contact. I was impressed by his pitch and the fact that he (much like myself) has been around the block a few times, in dance music terms of course, hahaha and knows what it is we are after. And yes, both myself and Recoverworld label nights are available through Tom at TEK.

Before we finish, is there anything in the near future coming up that you want to tell us about and naturally there must be people that you would like to thank?

I am just putting the finishing touches to the very first 'Recoverworld Sessions' album that I am mixing. We should have finished copies by the end of this month and this is the first of a planned series of studio mix CDs that will showcase new

material coming up from the labels together with some current biggies. The plan is to do three a year of these.

We are recording the next 'Live As' album in December for release in February 2007, as I have already mentioned and John O'Callaghan's first artist album in the early part of next year so its all go on the album front.

Labels wise we are re launching EVE to bring the total number of labels up to 8 and I am particularly proud of all the material we have got coming up on all the labels at the moment. There's too much to mention here! Check the website on a weekly basis and come and meet the regulars on our forum whilst you are at it.

I'll leave the thanks for the album notes — people don't want to read about that stuff on here do they? Well not unless the interview come's hand delivered with a sick bucket!!

Chris many thanks for your time, it's been a pleasure chatting with you.

Likewise — be safe and lucky!!



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Comments:

From: [Devo](#) on 14th Dec 2006 11:29.06

Great read - some legendary tracks from the man.

From: [Jurrane](#) on 14th Dec 2006 11:43.59

Fantastic interview from the guy behind some of the best labels around today. Really interesting read: nice one! 😊

From: [James Nardi](#) on 14th Dec 2006 12:04.50

Legend mate. Good luck for the future.

From: [Jess the Cat](#) on 14th Dec 2006 14:05.37

Chris is quite simply a legend and such a nice chap!

From: [theviceroxy](#) on 18th Dec 2006 18:50.00

Top chap and a big supporter and help he has been, keep it up sir!!

From: [shezmetz](#) on 20th Dec 2006 17:50.11

Legend!!

From: [TEK-DJ Management](#) on 3rd Jan 2007 21:22.53

A true Gent, and valued credit to the World of Dance Music....!!! Keep it up Chris ;o)



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