

## **Westlife**

Tim Westwood

By: Stewart Dalley

Tim Westwood, what can you say about the man? Well plenty actually. For instance you could talk about him part owning Kiss and working on *Touch* when it used to be called *Free* - or his time with Capital and LWR. Alternatively, there's his production days with the likes of Monie Love, London Posse and General Levy, or his label, Justice. Or maybe you could talk about the fact that he turned down the job at Radio 1 when he was first offered it because he thought Radio 1 "wasn't really blasting off as a station." Then there's the MOBO Award, the drive-by shooting and his appearance in the Radio 1 Christmas Pantomime as 'The Big Bad Westwolf'. Not forgetting the TV shows and the new album. So you see there really is a whole host of shit to wax about Westwood. So without further ado.....

### **How did you first get started as a DJ?**

I'd always loved music and used to hang around the sound systems. I started off carrying the boxes. And what used to happen when they strung up for a party no one wanted to play that early set, before anyone got there. So that's how I first used to get on the decks. And then from there I really got a love for it and decided that's what I wanted to do. I just wanted to be part of that scene and make a contribution and make it happen, man.

### **How did you get into radio?**

We were on a pirate station called LWR, which was one of the first black owned, black operated stations in London that was a real hot. There was a lot of street talent on there people like Derek B had a show on there; Rap Attack was real hot at that time too. Then I moved to set up Kiss. I was one of the owners of that. Then I left Kiss to join Capital and I was there for many years.

### **You went to Radio 1 after Capital to take up one of the most important DJ jobs for UK hip hop, was it something you took on with a certain amount of trepidation?**

Originally when I was offered that show I turned it down cause I was really loyal to Capital. At that stage they didn't really have a hot hip hop show and it wasn't really blasting off as a station. I think now it's definitely the hot place to present a rap show. But when I first joined we was doing our thing at Capital and we was real happy there so it wasn't like, this is a big gig, we just took a chance to go there and make it what it is. Pete Tong was there from early, but I joined at the same time as Danny Rampling and then Judge Jules came, Trevor Nelson came; you know a lot of cats jumped on board at that time.

### **What do you think is needed to push the UK talent to the next level?**

Investment.....the UK record companies earn a lot of money out of the UK rap scene by selling the American artists to them but don't reinvest that money into the local home-grown scene. I think UK talent has to keep aspiring to reach higher heights because when someone goes to buy a hip hop CD you really are competing with the likes of DMX and Wu Tang Clan. Its not enough to just have a couple of dope rhymes and a nice flow, you've got to understand how the industry works. You've got to be part of that industry and get a big record label behind you that is going to support you and your vision of yourself.

### **Hip hop is down the pecking order for labels right now, with R'n'B and Garage getting more attention, what's your take on that?**

You know R'n'B might be out there with Destiny's Child or whatever but at the end of the day it's all about the hip hop. You know you haven't got artists as big as Eminem and Dr Dre, or artists that have gone down in history like B.I.G and Tupac. Don't get me wrong R'n'B is cool, we do our thing with the R'n'B on the show but come on, its all about the hip hop. You know with a R'n'B record it might take you five minutes to say 'I love you baby, lets sleep together'. A hip hop artist can say that in one line and then move on to something more important.....that is if there is something more important. Its hip hop, its communication, it's about lyrics, it's about energy. It's where it's at.

**Hip hop is your life and a lot of people say Tim Westwood talks all kind of hip hop and with that a bit funny. Is that something you hear?**

Nah, no one really says that to me, but I'm sure people do say it (bursts out laughing). I mean this is hip hop I'm not a newsreader. You don't say to Trevor McDonald that he's trying to sound white. That's Trevor McDonald and he's a black professional newsreader. This is hip hop this is what I am, this is what I do and this is what I've done for the last eighteen years of my life.....this is how you get down, this is how you make it happen.

**'Westwood Presents' on UK Play was a great success, are you planning more?**

Yeah it was kinda hot for a minute and we trying to get that blasting off again. What's happening now with digital TV jumping off, is there's a lot more channels and opportunity. It's a really good time to get rap on TV. What you got to understand with hip hop is that they make the best videos ever, they often spend one or two million dollars on a three minute video, so in that time you are getting an incredible visual.....I think TV is starting to wake up to that.

**A while back you got shot. I know it's one of those things people always talk about, but do have you any idea why it happened?**

I don't know man. It was just one of those things. My attitude to it is we've moved on and it's not really a big thing in our lives. As I said at the time, if it doesn't kill you it makes you stronger and that's certainly how I feel about it now. It's the street, it's hectic out there.

**The new album 'Westwood', can you tell us a bit about it?**

It's a compilation of the hottest rap joints on the street. So the joints that I was playing last night will be on there – the tracks that rock the party. To be honest if you want a quote 'the hot shit' is what's on there, as simple as that. People who listen to the radio show or come and support us at the parties and enjoy what we do I want them to have a CD that reflects that - something they can play in the crib, the car or their truck when they wanna get their party on man. We're just clearing the tracks and getting ready to mix it. I just got some pictures done for the cover and I managed to get my ride in that so I'm real pleased.....A Yukon Truck that I brought over from the States – it's kinda big man, 20" rims, massive sound system and strobe lights which we roll in the city. When we're out and about the country we've got the Street Team van with PC's, videos and PlayStations.

**How does it make you feel to have the first release on Def Jam UK?**

It's a real honour man and I hope it does well so we can do some more. I feel real good about Def Jam coming to the UK, they've brought a hot cat over from New York called Jaha (Johnston) to head shit up, who is gonna bring some mad flavour to the UK.

**So what's next for Tim Westwood?**

This year I feel real good about things, I just want to keep it going. I want to get the TV blasting off and trying to get some TV going with Chris Goldfinger. You know definitely making a commitment to making some hot TV shows. And keep the hot parties going 'cause we're built for this. The radio is hitting real high numbers at the moment so I just wanna keep that blasting off as well.

**Special thanks to BBC Radio Scotland 'The Mix' – 92-95FM, Sunday 9-10pm.**

**And Esther @ Justice.**