

Tim Westwood
By: Stewart Dalley

With twenty years in the hip hop game under his belt Tim Westwood is recognised as the leading DJ of the genre in Europe and beyond. All the major players know its Westwood you call if you want to secure maximum exposure. Gearing up to drop his new album 'The Eminem Show' Slim Shady knew that he had to get long-term pal Tim Westwood over to the States for an exclusive interview (which will be broadcast on Radio 1 on 7th June). An experience Tim says was "a lot of fun...we went to a strip bar and hung out 'til six in the morning." Now that's what I call sacrificing for your art!

Tim started his radio career on LWR, moving from there to help set up Kiss FM, of which he was one of the owners when still in its pirate incarnate. Following that he cemented his position in London with his show on Capital from where, in 1994, Radio 1 poached him. Once there Tim quickly expanded his audience but by the end of that decade the knives were out for Tim, with many commentators asserting that he was the inspiration for Sasha Baron-Cohen's, Ali G character, which ultimately saw other DJs receiving far more favourable attention by the station. And it's a position Westwood is happy to say is being redressed. "I think there is definitely a feeling I was left behind, but now I'm back. I'm going to Ayia Napa with the station, I'm really squeezing Radio 1 to get me to Ibiza and I'm on the bill for Homelands. So yeah things are really good at the moment, I'm really enjoying life just trying to make it happen for hip hop."

The thing that makes Westwood's shows stand out from his Radio 1 colleagues' is that they are big in all senses of the word. The energy that comes through the speakers from the music, the 'A' list guests, to the man himself intoxicates his listeners, making it by far the best specialist show on the station. Radio 1 has also recently acknowledged this power itself, which has seen Tim's Friday night show being rewarded with a new earlier timeslot of 9pm. Out is legendary house music DJ Danny Rampling, in is Westwood and hip hop. A sure-fire signal that Radio 1 has awoken to the change in musical tastes that is sweeping the country, as Tim continues. "Coming on after Pete Tong is going to be tremendous. I'm not really talking about this but there is definitely a war going on between Westwood and house music. I'm really trying to battle house music and make people wake up to the power and strength of hip hop."

His celebrated 'Westwood' albums have proved that he is in the premier league of DJs – ones who can shift records as well as selling out clubs. "The albums have all gone gold they are Def Jam's biggest selling albums behind Ja Rule, which I think is really helping hip hop." States Tim in his a typically unassuming manner that leads you to believe he's about promoting the music first and himself second; an ideal, which his latest album project seems to bare witness to. In putting together a collection of UK hip hop talent for the Trust the DJ label, budding musicians are being asked to log on to www.timwestwood.com to submit their demos from which Tim will make the final selection for release. According to the label the album should be twelve tracks in total but talking to Tim about the abundance of quality tracks he's getting through that initial number may just swell. "I'm really trying to support and represent the UK scene, so that's the next step to get some UK talent up there. I want to make it a double album, I'm going to speak to them [the label] about that, there is so much talent out there that I want to give some exposure to."

To maintain such a hectic lifestyle and to push himself and hip hop forward Tim has also got all health conscious putting aside any distractions in favour of "working hard and paying attention." Adding, "I tend to be vegetarian. I eat fish, but I don't really eat meat 'cause I don't think its right the way they treat animals. There are a lot of people in the game now who don't drink, don't smoke and don't get high. Obviously there are a lot of people who spend a lot of time and really love getting high. Puffy loves drinking and I know Puffy was fucking with ecstasy for a long time. And people like Method Man and Redman are well

known for smoking [dope] but with me, man, I'm really trying to stay focussed; I'm really trying to pay attention."

Tim Westwood is appearing at The Tunnel on 2nd June and he wants you all there, as he says. "Ain't no party like a Westwood party!" And here was me thinking that was S-Club 7.

Tim Westwood @ The Tunnel, Glasgow. Bank Holiday Sunday 2nd June. Doors 11pm-3am, £13 in advance.