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Ten Minutes with DJ Alex Cohen

10.27.06

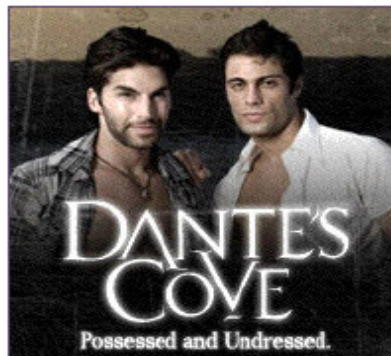
By Bryan Ochalla

To hear [DJ Alex Cohen](#) talk about his early experiences in the club scene, you'd think he was pulling one over on you. He grew up in the Mediterranean (Rabat, [Morocco](#), to be exact), had a brother who bartended in that city's most popular nightclub (Club Amnesia) and, thanks to the lack of an age requirement, tagged along with his big bro beginning at the ripe old age of 15.

In 1991, while taking in the action and atmosphere of that same [bar](#), Alex requested a tape from that evening's DJ. "I started listening carefully to the transitions between songs—and the progression from one style to the other as the night went on," Alex says. "Then I started practicing using a double-deck [tape player](#), which is something I still think of to this day and laugh about! I started to get to know other DJs, and I eagerly started covering for them when they needed a night off. That's how I got started."

Fast forward a few years and Alex is living in the U.S. and working his first residency at a small venue in [Washington](#), D.C.'s Dupont Circle. It obviously went well, since the 27-year-old still calls the nation's capital city his home and workplace.

Alex recently took a few minutes from his busy schedule at D.C.'s Apex (where he's remixing "This Time Baby" by former [Madonna](#) backup [singer](#), [Niki Harris](#)) to chat about his beginnings, his transition into production and the [music](#) he listens to when he's away from the club.



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What was your style at the beginning, and how did you develop it?

DJ Alex: My first style back home was old school R&B and [Euro](#) dance/techno. When I came to the U.S., I switched to house and anthems. In the early 2000s I found myself hooked on [house music](#) in all its varieties.

What was your big break—the event that really pushed you forward?

DJ Alex: My big break came when I started a residency in Philadelphia. I was introduced to [Al Bagget](#) from The Cherry Fund, who invited me to play the Host Event that year. He also booked me to headline their opening night the next year.

Another break came when I did a [remix](#) of [Pebbles'](#) "Mercedes Boy" for a friend. When he played it at this club in L.A., [Manny Lehman](#) heard it and liked it a lot. That weekend

Manny asked if he could have it and I sure agreed! A few months later my original track "The Music" was released on Manny's "Freedom Party" compilation on Tommy Boy Records. He also asked me to remix his [single](#) "Action Anthem," which came out a few months later.

Both exposures really pushed me forward and helped me gain recognition with bookings and remix work.

You recently jumped into the production side of the business. What caused you to move in that direction?

DJ Alex: I have always been creative in my life. I enjoy creating things of all kinds with a unique signature of my own. I knew it would be just a matter of time before I started producing, too.

Sometimes when I would play in a club I'd get ideas of music elements that sound good together. I thought, why not and take it to the next level and transform my musical ideas into reality so I can play them in dance floors all over?

You've played a lot of venues and worked with a lot of great singers. Where would you still like to play, and who would you work with if you had the chance?

DJ Alex: I'd love to play at the new Twilo in Miami, Stereo in Montreal, Sonic in Toronto, any **Jeffrey Sanker** event, just to name a few...

As far as singers, I've always wanted to work with **Jeanie Tracy** because of her ongoing talent and amazing voice—and last year I did! It was a gospel project called "Grateful." This year I got to remix another song of hers called "Party People" that will be released from Brazil. I'd love to play an event with Jeanie performing.

I'd also love to work with **Diana Ross**, **Tamara Wallace** of Funky Green Dogs, **Inaya Day**—and definitely Madonna and **Kylie Minogue**!

Can you list a few of your favorite experiences thus far as a DJ and producer?

DJ Alex: My favorite experience as a DJ is when there is so much energy in the club that you feel the records are spinning themselves. I also enjoy playing a lot of vinyl, just because I'm such a vinyl junkie right now.

As far as a producer, I always get the chills when I'm in my studio working and I come up with different ideas that make my whole project flow towards a different direction. It is an indescribable feeling!

What's next for you? Where do you see your career going from here?

DJ Alex: I have to say that I have been getting busier lately with a lot of studio projects. As far as gigs, I'm looking forward to playing a lot of upcoming events!

I see my career taking a very good path; things are falling into place at the right time!

Last question: What kind of music do you like to listen to when you aren't creating your own?

DJ Alex: Believe it or not, when I'm home alone I listen to a lot of oldies, mostly classics and disco. When I'm cooking I prefer Latin jazz, but definitely no dance music because my ears need a break.

Alex's current Top Ten:

1. Jeanie Tracy "Party People" (Alex Cohen Party Anthem)
2. Alex Ocamp "The Klam" (Original Mix)
3. Adam Freemer "Underground"
4. Madonna "Get together" (Tony Moran Remix)
5. Superblaster "The insane" (Casstelli & Perazzoli Mix)
6. Mad Machine "Waste my time" (Angelo Kortez Remix)
7. Dennie Christopher "Soulshakin" (Maroda Vocal mix)
8. Sun "Gone" (Ralphi's Fierce Dub)
9. Richie Santana "Feel U"
10. Alex Cohen "The runway track"

For more on DJ Alex, visit www.djalexcohen.com.

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