



Interview With DJ Skribble [EDM Sauce Exclusive]

BY ALEXIS CARDOZA ON JULY 26, 2013

After hanging around Phase One studios at the premiere of Dance Mix USA vol 3, I ran into the man who produced the album, DJ Skribble. We went into one of the many recording studios, and began a very intense interview about his life, the new album, the future as well as the history of dance music, and where the world stands currently with dance music. I did not do much talking because when you're interviewing a veteran like DJ Skribble it's better to just sit back, relax, and enjoy what one of the greatest dance music producers/DJ's of all time has to say.

We started off by talking about where he produced his latest work, Dance Mix USA Vol 3. After hurricane Sandy swept through the Northeast, DJ Skribble's in home studio was damaged. Luckily he got the studio up and running in time to produce Dance Mix USA, and that's where we begin.

DJ Skribble: The first thing we did was this compilation album and the "I can't Remember" track.

EDMsauce: How long did it take you to produce this album.

DJ Skribble: You know it took a couple of months because we were trying to pick the right records and be ahead on a few of them and because you know house music is becoming so big especially more of the electronic stuff. A few of the labels were smaller and some of the other labels wanted more money for the bigger stuff, which is fine and they deserve it cause it's been a long time coming especially in the states, but now it seems like it's pretty much parked here and parked here for good. So coming from the background that I have which is hip-hop and being down with house music since the early nineties which I wanted to be at that time the first DJ to do both, and I wanted to play house music on MTV. You know Anna Morales was doing that with the Club MTV. But then to do it live by combining the hip-hop with the house and having a DJ in everyone's living room every weekend is a great accomplishment. So seeing this progress into compilations, and this compilation is my twenty-sixth which has left me as the either fourth or fifth most sold electronic records, tied with Tiesto, and you know that's pretty cool. I also think I have eleven number one's.

EDMsauce: What were some of those number one's?

DJ Skribble: Total club hits, total band hits, and there was this one time where we had three on the top ten dance charts. So I was pretty lucky, but it's been years since I've done one and now the market has changed. Which is good because I feel like the DJ thing is so strong that people are now more down to listen to a cool mix in there car. With these mixes it's not brain surgery, but we try to get ahead of the game and predict what is going to be good or what will be a big hit. But I always put one exclusive thing that we did, our own production. By we I mean me and my brother. We go by the name of Distorted Reality, and we used our record "I can't Remember" which is the exclusive on the album.

EDMsauce: What kind of feel does "I can't Remember" have?

DJ Skribble: It has that hard electro, buzzy, bang your head up, big room festival stuff. You know the whole album has a tone, it has really groovy chunky house, and then it gets into the harder more aggressive electro, and then more trancey and stuff, and then it brings you back and tries to give you in seventy eighth minutes what I would normally do in eighth hours. Which is tough but I want to give that experience. So whether you're a soccer mom who wants to go workout, or you're a club kid who just wants to jam out in your car, it gives you that energy and that club experience. It's something that I always try to do. I want to leave you on that high note.

EDMsauce: What are some of the more popular tracks on the record.

DJ Skribble: We got the Iona Pop record which is a really big record to get. We have "Apollo" from Hardwell. So there's definitely a few major major festival records that we have on there so that it takes you back to EDC or Miami.

EDMsauce: Wow, I am already excited for it. You just talking about it is getting me excited for it.

DJ Skribble: Well I attack each one of them the same way, whether it's a hip-hop compilation or dance compilation, it's all in the way I program it to give you that little journey so you forget about your daily life while you're listening to the music.

EDMsauce: Speaking of your hip-hop background. Have you worked with anyone recently or have you pushed away from that genre?

DJ Skribble: Hip-Hop is my roots, I will never turn my back on hip-hop. I used to work with Ghost Face a lot, Wu Tang Clan and helped them produce in the studio. But I love living in these two worlds because they're so different, even though they're kind of coming together now for whatever reasons, but you know Chuckie just came out with "Get Paper" and that's rocking.

EDMsauce: Have you thought about getting into the Trap scene at all?

DJ Skribble: I've done a few mash ups with the trap, and I knew this was going to happen, more hip-hop kids getting into it so there's more of a song structure. Because now they're taking more of the dirty south beats, and electro with some synths and mashing them together to make a beautiful marriage.

EDMsauce: So you enjoy the songs that guys like Carnage and Mayhem are doing?

DJ Skribble: Oh yea, I live for guys like Flosstradamus, they're dirty. Who have helped trap progress to become its own genre. And the dance community does have the hip-hop community to thank for making this music so big in the states, because they've taken the whole urban market and flipped it upside down. Cause five years ago if you tried to play a house record at a hip-hop spot, forget about it, the dance floor would scatter so fast like roaches and they'd look at you like what the hell are you playing? Now you can drop it and everybody is having a great time. The house music that is out now has the same sound as the old school, New York, underground house with the tribal drums and big synths that bring you back to the times of Junior Vasquez. And you see it in everything now.

EDMsauce: What do you think has changed in the world to bring house music to the limelight.

DJ Skribble: Well it was spoon fed over the years to a market that was totally closed minded to it. Even when I was a little hip-hop junkie, I was like, "House music? F*** that!" Until I saw Junior Vasquez in 95' in the Tunnel, and I was instantly hooked. But now the audience has gotten a lot younger and the generation that is into it now listens to everything, because it was spoon fed to them over the radio through artists like Rhianna where you can sense the house sound in the background. But it has now changed where DJ's used to become producers, now producers become DJ's. So the live show quality on some of it is gone because it's prerecorded, it's synced, it's big lights, and these festivals are great and everything but they're no different than the raves we used to have back in the day. We used to have a dope ass light guy who knew what you were gonna do, and you had to have skills in order to know where you were going to go and if something didn't work then you had to know how to get out of it. There was no, "Well that was my two hour show, time to call it a day." And that's what I think is missing from the dance scene now. But the young kids don't understand it because they never knew how it used to be, and I'm not saying live in the past because you always evolve. But if you're going to get into a craft, DJing is a craft, and I respect everybody who touches a record or turn table, but it's how you use it and what you do with it because there are so many fun things that you can do with technology now. So if you're a producer and you make this great record but don't know how to DJ, then it's like Aerosmith going into the studio making a great album then going on stage and sucking. Then what good is it.... what good is it hiding behind lights and artwork and big screens.... And there's nothing wrong with it... but there's no journey. There's no more going to see a DJ and being there for five, six, seven, eight hours and you would park your ass there and he would take you on a fucking ride.... that's what's missing. Atrak and I were having this same conversation a few weeks ago, and we were saying that we wished that someone would take some more risks. Just because you played your record, doesn't mean you impressed me, and then you went to the next record, and then you threw your hands in the air.

EDMsauce: So who is someone that is impressing you right now?

DJ Skribble: Well I mean he has always impressed me, but I saw Carl Cox a few weeks ago. and you won't know one record that he played, but you'll love him. And that's my point! Before song sharing, you would have to go see someone specific to hear a record and that's what made it special. You'd be like, "What is he going to do? What is he going to play? Is he going to play something I don't know?" But the way it has become now is that it's not special anymore. Everyone is playing the same fifty records. I don't know if it's because they don't care because the money is out of this world, which is why people do it, but you have to love the music first.... I guess that's what it has become.

But blowing people's minds without playing the same top fifty songs on Beatport can be done, you just gotta dig a little bit. That's what I enjoy. I enjoy getting up there and having the audience, those kids, rock out to songs that I play, that they may not know. Whether it's to fifty people, or five thousand people, I don't care because it's what I love to do.

EDMsauce: I don't know how anyone could argue with that. That really was inspiring. I don't mean to change the subject completely but we should talk about the mix a bit more. Did you produce this by yourself?

DJ Skribble: Nah I worked with my brother, he's twenty five. I put him through the trenches when he was younger but he has come out an amazing producer, even better DJ. And I see him slowly getting that buzz, he's got Fedde shouting out to him every week on the radio, and he's got a lot of blog play. So it's happening for him, and I get to enjoy watching it happen for him. I mean it doesn't suck being Skribbles brother but he's worked super hard. He's been to hell and back and deserves it.

EDMsauce: That's probably very fulfilling. Now what's next for you?

DJ Skribble: I've got a few records coming out one called "Bro-bot" another one on Cedric Gervais's new label called risque. There are also rumors of me and Dave Navaro touring. I plan on pushing him to see how we can work out a trap and rock, or electro and rock sound.

EDMsauce: Do you plan on producing any trap records of your own?

DJ Skribble: Yea I want to work on one with Dave definitely. I'm just waiting for him to finish Ink Masters.

EDMsauce: Do you see your career winding down now, or do you plan on pushing even further?

DJ Skribble: I like to keep my hands in everything. I'm not done yet. People say to me, "Oh you've done it all." I look at them straight faced, "I'm not done yet." The dream is to keep on doing what I'm doing, to get better, to evolve, to educate, and to show the kids that they still have to learn. I'm not trying to sound like an old man who used to walk eight miles to school every day, I'm just saying that I come from a different time where we respected the craft that we were into, whether you were a welder, an actor, or a poet, you would respect that because that was your love, your job, and your passion. Don't get into it for the wrong reasons. I call it the craziest, wildest roller coaster that I never want to get off. Every time it pulls me into the station and I think I'm about to be done with this ride, it just takes me right back up that hill again.