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For many people Darude's **Sandstorm** is one of the biggest dance tracks of all time. It is a stand out record which never fails when you hear it on your headphones, on the radio, or the dance floor. Darude is just about to release his third album so I thought it was time we found out more about him.

1. How did it start for you back in 1999?

I've loved dance music as long as I can remember, but it wasn't until I was 19-20 years old that I made music of my own. I started by just playing around with free shareware on a PC. I did have some dreams of the local djs playing my tracks and being in a corner of the club to see the reaction, but I never really had an idea that my music had any kind of bigger potential.

I handed out demos to djs and sent them to labels in Finland. One night I was listening to Jaakko Salovaara aka JS16 dj at a club in my home town Turku. I handed him a demo (for the third time!) and the cd had Sandstorm on it - at that point still untitled. A week later he got back to me and asked if I was interested in working on it with him.

He signed me to his 16 Inch Records as the first artist and we started our relationship, which obviously was mentor and the 'nobody' but soon turned into a great friendship and - of course - a production and business relationship as well.

He produced my first two albums and we also did several Darude vs. JS16 remixes

2. Did anything in particular inspire Sandstorm?

Well, around that time I was listening to acts like Sash!, Scooter, Faithless, Antiloop (to name just a few), and I heard all sorts of Dutch and German trance at the clubs I went to. I used to run back home in the early hours of the morning and turn on my computer to start making music after getting inspired by what I heard.

3. The reaction to Sandstorm and your second single, Feel The Beat, was incredible. Sales of Sandstorm alone have reached 1.5m-2m. What was it like having almost overnight success?

Sandstorm spent 17 weeks on top of the Finnish Dance Chart. It was signed and released by Neo Records in the UK in June 2000 and went to #3 on the UK singles chart. By that time I guess it is fair to say I wasn't exactly an unknown bedroom musician. It all happened so suddenly. I was very quickly pulled out of my old life being a student and a part time worker at an Apple store, but obviously I wasn't and I still am not complaining!

4. In 2002 you did a marathon 7 week Tour De Trance in the US. How did you cope?

Well, the before and after pictures tell it all - NOT pretty. But it was so much fun! I think what saved my life and the crew was the 3-4 weeks of tour done by bus, so at least we got to sleep those long trips from city to city. Had it all have been by plane we would have had like 4 hours sleep a night and that might have done permanent brain damage over the 7 weeks of the tour!

Touring is something I think I have learned to cope with over time. You find the time to sleep on the off days - like Monday and Tuesday - and learn to turn your brain to hibernate mode when waiting at airports or hotels.

On the other hand you can always read music magazines or produce music on your laptop > make good use of time.

Also, these days as travelling and performing have become more of a routine everything is not so new and exciting all the time. I have started taking advantage of the travelling to arrange a few days holiday here and there. Often it is just one day or night per city but sometimes it is possible to see the sights or do something not work-related and fun as well. I have also limited the touring a little compared to the early days and that makes it easier to plan stuff in a more logistically reasonable way.

5. After the success of your second album you started to focus on dj-ing. Why the switch?

It was quite natural since technically some parts of my live shows were based on dj-like usage of cd players so beat-matching and mixing was something I did.

I first started extending my live performances with little dj sets every now and then, if the crowd was up for it. At first I didn't really consider myself a dj but the more I 'spun', the more I loved it.

What I also found was that some clubs didn't want live shows. Some of them simply didn't have a stage, others just didn't think the live show was worth the extra money that bringing more tech and people demanded.

I was blown away by the fact that scaling down the live show to a dj set opened so many more doors for me. I can still do the live stuff on special occasions if I want. I can sell a show as a dj set and then sneak in a little keyboard plus some other gadgets and do stuff live anyway.



6. You travel the world playing prestigious festivals - such as the Electronic Music Festival - and some of the world's best clubs including Slinky in Bournemouth. Which event has been particularly memorable?

It must be the MTV Ibiza 2000 party - my first big outdoor festival outside Finland. It was surreal and simply mind-blowing to do the sound check before Underworld. Later that night I went to watch them and Armand Van Helden perform then jumped on stage to play for about 15,000 people - pure goosebumps still!

I also remember one set in Ibiza that I actually want to forget. At that time I wasn't really dj-ing professionally. I was asked to do a little guest appearance at a party hosted by this fella called Dave Pearce. Pretty much all the stuff that can go wrong did go wrong. I didn't know the mixer (old Rane or Urei) and I couldn't see the cd player displays in the bright sunlight. It was not pretty. Then, in the middle of my set, I turned back to get the next track from my cd case and my headphones were blasting. I didn't notice that the cord had pulled the master almost all the way down. I was wondering why people were staring at me in a weird way. Well, I got over it eventually but I was rather embarrassed.

7. Your third artist album - Label This - is due for release in the UK in May. How has it been completing this one?

It has been slow but good fun. It took 4 years after Rush to get this album out. Obviously, I haven't been working in the studio all that time. I have been on the road quite a lot doing 50-70 gigs a year so that adds up to at least 20 weeks a year outside Finland. Add jetlag and sleep deprivation to that and at least a couple of days adjusting before you can get anything done when you are at home. I had some good friends contributing to the writing and production side but I am mainly responsible for all the production. It took time for me to be comfortable letting the tracks go and it has been a huge learning process.

Label This is an artist album consisting of my own tracks mixed together like a dj mix. I did it this way because I wanted to bring out the dj side too. The dj-ing has affected my production a lot. It has given me a new angle and an invaluable chance to field test my productions. Nothing tells you better whether a track works or not than playing it to a live audience.

I think the new tracks definitely have the same kind of energy - simple beautiful melodies, breakdowns, and builds that the earlier albums have but there is more variation in style and sound.

The album starts with lower bpm tracks with some rocky elements like guitars and real drums and advances to higher bpm with uplifting trance towards the end. There is a chill out track too and throughout the album there are more vocals. A lot of the old fans have been really excited about the new but still recognisable sound and that is something I have been very happy to hear.

darude

8. You are also doing a world tour to promote the album. Where are you going?

Right now I am afraid I can't give you specific dates. As soon as the album and singles get released we are planning to tour. I'll let you know as soon as things get confirmed.

In the meantime, you can check out some of my new tracks and videos at:

www.darude.com

www.myspace.com/darude

www.youtube.com/darudevill

Interview by Daniel Slipper

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