



**JESSE SAUNDERS**

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The legend that brought house music it's very first record 'On & On' in 1984



Interview : Dan Prince

**Jesse Saunders is the architect of what we all know as House Music, using a blueprint of old school funk, disco, R&B, early pop and hip-hop. He wrote, produced and released the first documented House record titled 'On & On' in 1984 through his own label Jes Say Records. He went on to pen hits including 'Funk U Up,' 'Real Love', 'Body Music' and the platinum selling single 'Love Can't Turn Around', which served as the foundation for a funky and soulful new sound in electronic music. Jesse has appeared in countless documentaries, magazine publications, books and conferences (WMC, ADE, RBMA, among many!) over the years and has also written his own semi-autobiography "House Music...The Real Story". He has released countless successful singles and albums on his own labels Jes Say and BrokenRecords and has worked with and influenced key DJs such as Grammy Award winner Roger Sanchez, Marshall Jefferson, DJ Pierre, Farley "Jackmaster" Funk, Steve Hurley and Frankie Knuckles, among others. This Chicago cat continues to maintain his status as the head of the House. To read up further on Jesse's history, pump his name into your Google search and you'll receive a phenomenal 5,000,000 results! Now, Jesse Saunders joins the Good For You Records family in grandiose style; 'Jesse Saunders Presents The 30th Anniversary Of House Music', compiled and mixed by Jesse and GFY label's Kenny Summit, is a milestone for House fans worldwide. This bumper package boasts 2 hours of dance floor heat from seminal house heads Eric Kupper, DJ Meme, Inaya Day, Chuck Love, Terrence Parker, Ross Couch and more, alongside dance-floor gems from Jesse and Kenny themselves. This stellar double album features 2 heavenly DJ mixes from Jesse and Kenny, designed to bring nations and decades of jackers together...for the love of HOUSE!**

**Wow wow wow! The legendary Jesse Saunders in da house! Welcome to DMCWORLD young man, where on Planet Earth are you today?**

"Well hello Dan. Glad to see you're still keeping the good word alive! I'm living back in LA again after 8 years in Las Vegas! Just can't resist the beach and the perfect weather everyday!"

**Massive news for you right now with the release of your 'Jesse Saunders Presents the 30th Anniversary Of House Music'. Man you have been doing some press for this, you been enjoying it all?**

“Yes, it’s nice to see this milestone for House Music being recognized by so many headz around the world. You know how long I’ve been fighting to spread the truth! There is someone in particular right now that is trying to distort it...”

**To the music! It’s been called a “milestone for house music fans worldwide”, a stellar double album mixed by yourself and GFY’s Kenny Summit. When did the whole project begin?**

“Well, I’ve released compilations and remixes on the 20th and 25th anniversary, but this time I thought it would be nice to bring Kenny in on it because he, like myself, is pushing hard to bring “quality” House Music to the world – and he’s having amazing success with his GFY Records label! With his relationship with Eric Kupper and Frankie Knuckles (RIP) it was the perfect marriage to complete this project!”

**How difficult was selecting the 14 tracks on your mix, what were the records you JUST HAD TO HAVE ON THERE???**

“It wasn’t difficult at all. The tracks I selected were already licensed to my label Broken Records. Of course I had to put a new version of ON & ON (the world’s 1st House record) on it, the rest were just revving their engines and ready to go! Chuck Love’s “Hands Go Up” in particular was a favorite of mine, and he’s one hell of a producer and seriously nice guy. My “Now That We Found Love” is a worldwide anthem and always the first in my performance and newcomer Christi Mills with her “Spoken Deep” just defines the LA Deep underground sound right now.”



**One of the things we love about Mr Saunders is how you have made such a huge impact on the world but it has never changed you. You are still the humble man you always were, what do you put that down to?**

“Good family values, a strong spiritual connection, the love of family, friends, my fans and of course the music! Nothing matters more than the love returned from those you are entertaining. One thing I always want to express to the new crew of Super Star DJs is that we are all one in life and the industry, and you meet us on the way up, as well as the way down – and believe me no one stays on top for ever. So be nice to everyone. It takes less muscles in your face to smile than it does to frown...”

**Let’s rewind for a moment. What is your earliest musical memory as a child in your household?**

“My Mom playing the piano and singing to me. Also, my Mom playing The Jazz Crusaders and Minnie Riperton. What beautiful melodies and the most beautiful vocals I’ve ever heard even to this day! Minnie was a Chicago native and her music resonated throughout our household almost from the time I was born!”

**You started playing instruments at a young age...5!!! Most kids are usually pushed into learning an instrument at that age...I get the feeling you were dying to get hold the trumpet, drums and piano?**

“Well, I was definitely fascinated by what my Mom could do on the piano. She was flawless and just being around her mesmerized me musically. I was drawn in even as a baby. But it was not a natural thing for me to want to learn or take lessons. I’m naturally a doer – a take charge type person who doesn’t like, nor have the patience to be taught. So long before she hired a piano teacher for me I was bangin’ out one note melodies on the piano. My mother actually had to hire a piano teacher because she said I would not listen to her at all! lol Once I started taking lessons, it came to me naturally, but just like everything in my life I saw beyond the boundaries on lesson planning and institution. The worst part about taking the lessons was I always had them right before dinner which, meant that what ever I was doing prior – like playing softball, football or hide and go seek – had to be interrupted, and I was upset because sports were my passion at that time. That’s where my Mom put her foot down and I’m oh so glad she did, because once I got used to the musical discipline, I tackled all the other instruments with fervor. I owe everything I am, have been and will be to my Mother, Lois M. Saunders (RIP – November 3, 1930 – March 6, 1998). I truly know that without her wisdom, financial backing and her best asset – understanding that I had to be free to fly – we would not have House Music or EDM as we know it today!”

**True or false : Farley Jackmaster Funk didn’t make ‘Love Can’t Turn Around’ – it was Darryl Pandy’s vocals and your production?**

“Mostly true, but I honestly feel that it takes all of the elements coming together at one time to create an unstoppable force to change the world. I produced and published “Love Can’t Turn Around” and co-wrote it with Vince Lawrence. It was Farley’s idea to do a remake or cover of “I Can’t Turn Around” based on his “break up” with Steve Hurley who had his own version. I was never interested in doing Covers, so I said that I would do it if I could make a new song out of it. On a side note, Darryl Pandy (RIP) was never intended to be the vocalist on that song. Believe it or not, we went through about 5 other male vocalists before we had to settle on Darryl. Thank God we found Darryl Pandy, because without him we would not have the “Love Can’t Turn Around” that made a worldwide impact and took the UK by storm!”

**How have you done from the publishing from that record over the years?**

“One thing I do need to mention is that the infamous **Pete Tong**, along with Farley and Rocky Jones did their best to keep me from collecting my Publishing royalties on that song. If it weren’t for my diligence and having the best lawyer in Chicago I would never have been able to collect them, albeit 12 years later. I found it quite funny that my name was taken off of the London Records release, and I inquired directly to Pete with no answer. To this day I have not received one pound on the sales of the London Records release and subsequent licenses from around the world. Someone made a name for themselves and is still riding it today. **I call out to Pete Tong to explain himself.** I’ve already spoken to Rocky and Farley. Pete is the one who still remains silent on this issue.”

**What are the 5 big records in your box right now?**

The Light – Jamie Lewis ft Michelle Weeks

Now That We Found Love – Jesse Saunders

Don’t You Know – DJ Spin

Fall For You – Kings Of Tomorrow ft April

Dance The Night Away – Jesse Saunders ft LeA

**Where have some of the great DJ gigs been this summer?**

“Northern California @ Pure Vision Festival

Arcata, California

New York @ Pacha (30th Anniversary Celebration)

Madison, Wisconsin @ Jolly Bob’s (Mad town House Headz are insane)

San Francisco @ UndergroundSF (one of the best residencies I've ever had)

Chicago for our Chosen Few 24th Annual House Music Reunion.”

**House music has been an important part of music culture in the US for 4 decades, but it has always been on the underground side of things. Dance music has now hit the overground thanks to EDM. There are festivals in every State every weekend, DJs are earning millions of dollars in Vegas, clubbers spend weeks getting their outfits ready for a big event. Are you excited about this new music sweeping your homeland, or do you think it is just a passing phase?**

“I'm ecstatic about it! To see guys like Calvin Harris making 8 figures is something I never thought I'd see in my lifetime! The only problem I see with it is these guys aren't DJs. They are using software programs. But I don't blame them either, because again, they are not DJs!”



**The last time we spoke I asked you how you like to chill. You said hit the beach, go for a hike or get on the water. Anything change since then, any new ways to get away from music for a while?**

“That will ALWAYS be the way I chill! I'm a Pisces and water is my salvation! Nothing has changed! I have added going from pier to pier (Venice to Santa Barbara), taking in the beauty of the Pacific **Ocean and experiencing being on top of the water.**”

**A quote from you from back in the day : “DJing is an ART! You don’t just learn how to beat match-Anyone can do that! You have to understand and read your crowd and immediately interpret where you want and need to take them...through the highs and lows and buildups.” What are your views on the current crop of 18 year old bedroom producers who make a record on their laptop, it goes to No.1 and a week later they are headlining Ultra with no experience?**

“They definitely doesn’t fit into what being a DJ is all about. As I stated earlier, they are producers, not DJs. But if you consider what being a DJ is in 2014 and beyond, maybe it does fit...lets ponder that one and revisit next year!”

**What is the record that...**

**...reminds you of your childhood?**

“ABC – Jackson 5.”

**...always gets you dancing?**

“The Light – Jamie Lewis ft Michelle Weeks.”

**...reminds you of being broken hearted?**

“Hmmm, have I ever been broken hearted?”

**...you wish you would have made?**

“The Light – Jamie Lewis ft Michelle Weeks.”

**Another quote from you... “The biggest problem I have is the listener, the dancer on the dancefloor...they are listening and not saying anything, not complaining, not giving any feedback.” Discuss...**

“I think that has changed in recent years. The listeners/dancers are much more involved now. But what I meant was that they were just dancing and socializing back then. Not giving you as much energy, not very involved in the exchange of energy a “real” DJ needs. DJs that were programming music based on a pre-conceived set and not playing very good music were able to get away with having a DJ career!”

**And finally, an interview with Jesse Saunders would not be complete without a few words on the late great Frankie Knuckles. A man close to your heart for many years. What did he mean to you, what did he mean to the world of music...?**

“Frankie was the gatekeeper to my professional career. Going to the warehouse for the 1st time and experiencing a DJ that could control the mood swings, joy & pain of the crowd was something I had never seen or heard before. With his passing it’s the end of an era. Steve Hurley, Farley and myself were the new generation that took that vibe and added the skills and mastery of the turntables (we called it re-editing and mixing a record live) to the Soulful experience of “Disco” thereby originating what we know today as “HOUSE MUSIC!” There would be no name for House Music without the Warehouse where Frankie performed his magic! May he rest in paradise in that Warehouse known as heaven!”

***Jesse Saunders presents The 30th Anniversary of House Music’ will be released worldwide September 7th 2014 on Good For You Records***

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