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## Jesse Saunders: "On and On"

Rush Hour, 2013

In the history of Chicago house music, there are three important early singles. Jesse Saunders' "On and On" (Jan 1984) was the first self-published release, showing young people they could make their own records. Chip E's *Jack Trax* (July 1985) established a unique sound for house and its offspring, techno. J.M. Silk's "Music Is the Key" (Aug 1985) was the first national hit, attracting major-label attention and opening the floodgates for nearly a hundred records the following year.



Famously, Jesse based his A-side on a white label medley thought to have originated from Miami, but it was the beat tracks on the B-side that received the most play. This was the era of DJ tools, beginning with *Jive Rhythm Trax* (1982) and spreading to Europe's *Faces Drums* and *Mix Your Own Stars*. Jesse's rhythms are simple yet effective. Based on surviving recordings, DJs like [Ron Hardy](#) sometimes played them raw—not even mixing in a cappellas or other songs. This was evidently the source of the stripped-down style we now associate with underground dance music.\*

Apparently only 500 copies of the original black label record were pressed, though it's unclear how many white label ones were printed. In recent years I've seen copies as low as \$50 at retail in Chicago. Nevertheless, I applaud Rush Hour's efforts to remaster and spotlight this release. It is, after all, where house music began.

\* If the date on Deep House Page mix 735 is to be believed, Hardy was playing Farley's "Funkin with the Drums" from tape before "On and On" was released.

Jacob Arnold, Mar 15, 2013 in [Reviews: House](#)

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### 4 Comments

Funkin With The Drums was not created nor released until late summer of 1984. On & On was released in January of 1984.

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The 1st big hit was Funk U Up by myself in April of 1984. It was #1 on WBMX and WGCI and most major Midwestern Radio Stations as well as Record Pool Charts and Dance Music Report... Music Is The Key was not released until the Fall of 1984.

[Jesse Saunders, Mar 18, 2013 3:58 PM](#)

what jesse just said is all true.

[scott K., Mar 22, 2013 11:46 AM](#)

Hi Jesse, thanks for your comments. I'll add change "first big hit" to "first national hit" for clarification. I stand by the August 1985 release date for "Music Is the Key" based on Chicago Music Magazine. It entered Billboard's charts in July:  
<http://bit.ly/ZJ5cHT>

Jacob Arnold replied to [Jesse Saunders, Mar 22, 2013 11:57 AM](#)

Perhaps Jesse means a cassette or demo version of "Music Is The Key"? Also of note, the rhythm track "119" from the B-side is a sweet 808 homage to "119" from Adams & Fleisner's "Mix Your Own Stars".

[BMG, Apr 6, 2013 2:26 AM](#)

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