



Robbie Rivera wants warm-up DJs to mellow out.

Interview: Robbie Rivera Hates It When His Warm-Up DJs Play 'Crazy' Hard

DENNIS ROMERO | NOVEMBER 5, 2009 | 2:36PM

The dance music underground might be rocking bleepy techno and dark-wave house from Europe, but the stuff that really moves the masses combines the synthetic strings of trance with the tough percussion of house. One look at the most popular DJs in the world, from Tiesto to Deadmau5 to Kaskade, points to the resonance of thick bass-lines dipped in symphonic candy.

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Miami's Robbie Rivera has the sound down naturally. A native of

San Juan, Puerto Rico, he taught

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only a few years later was making dance music with drum machines, tape decks and sequencers. He grew up on British new wave and New York freestyle and by the time he moved to states had fortified his big room sound.

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Malou Ericsson

Rivera became a go-to remixer (Madonna, Rickie Martin, Kylie Minogue) and top-tier super-club headliner who established his own [Juicy Music](#) label. He's a rare DJ who appeals to genres entrenched in separate corners of the dance floor - house and trance - with his muscular grooves and waify vocals. Rivera's alchemy is apparent on artist album, *Closer to the Sun*, released this week on [Ultra Records](#). (Check out the title track at [his site](#)). Before he got on a plane to Southern California to perform three area dates, including a Saturday night headlining slot at

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ask him a few questions.

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LA Weekly: *You grew up in Puerto Rico. Was there a house music culture when you were learning to spin and make beats, or were you dabbling in other music such as hip-hop?*

Robbie Rivera: No, I was definitely into dance music from the start. On the radio, jocks would play a lot of European house tunes and British electronic music, like Depeche Mode. Other stations would play Latin freestyle music from New York City. It was a mixture. There was a lot of dance music over there. Put it this way: If you listened to dance music, you were cool. If you listened to Latin or meringue or salsa, you were not cool.

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Were your parents accepting of your DJing?

Yeah, my parents were 100 percent super-supportive. They were the ones driving me to every club gig and every party when I was 15-years-old, before I could drive. My dad would take me to the show and I'd fuck up his car with all of my gear [laughs]. He'd go back home, and then he'd come pick me

until I got my driver's license.

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What was your impression of the Miami club scene when you first were exposed to it? How did it compare to what you experiences in terms of dance music in San Juan?

I got to Miami in 1992, and it was very different. They were into a lot of early-techno, punk, goth music, the Prodigy. I'd never heard that kind of music in Puerto Rico. That was really odd to me. I kind of got into it, though. When I was in school, I was not DJing parties or anything like that. I was doing music production in Ft. Lauderdale and they were very into freestyle like the people from New York City. I was not into that sound, but eventually, it grew on me.

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How has Latin music influenced your sound?

It's in my blood. When I started making music, I started making beats. When I make beats, it just naturally comes out, the Latin influence. I do listen to a lot of Latin music when I'm on my own, as well.

Are you ever surprised at how much Latin flavor there is in superclub

music from the sounds of Miami

Lawler and even Loco Dice and the German producers? Does it make you proud at all?

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Of course, man. Latin music has a groove, and Latin people just love to dance. It's in our soul. It's just natural, and everyone wants to have a groove on that tune. The Germans are going crazy with that [Latin-influenced] beat.

In producing your new album, what kind of gear and software did you use? Was there anything that really helped you to put a signature sound on the record?

I did all of it on Apple Logic, because it's just easy for me, and I use a lot of sounds. There are two particular software applications I use a lot: one is the Predator software synth that has all of the current sounds of electronic dance music to manipulate. The other one is the Mini Moog software with all of the classics leads from the 1970's up through today. You get that dirty, electro sound, as well.

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You're with Ultra, perhaps the biggest, most powerful label in American dance music. Has that

so, how?

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Well, I've had a few albums in the past with Ultra, and they do get a lot of love on radio. Their tunes get great promotion. Their albums also get a lot of good adds on iTunes. They're so popular, they get you into more places [at retail], which is very important. Black Hole Recordings signed my album for the world from my label, Juicy Music. Black Hole is the home of Tiesto for the last six, seven years, so of course a lot of doors opened when Black Hole signed the album. Black Hole licensed the album in something like 16 countries, and their team is so professional and they are really great to work with.

When you spin, how much of your own music do you throw into a set?

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I'd say my sets are 90 percent my own productions or music released on Juicy Music. If my set is over two hours long, I can go crazy with other people's music. But, I want fans to have the Juicy experience, and I'm the only one who can do that.

CDs or laptop?

I am a CD type of guy. Nothing

How do you like openers to warm up for you?

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That's a very good question you ask. Opening DJs sometimes go crazy, playing hard, peak-time stuff -- and I hate that. If you're going to warm up for a DJ, you should play warm-up music that's appropriate to the setting and set time. I prefer 126 beats per minute -- nothing too hard, no big breakdowns. Warm-up music, that's what I like.

On the road, what are the hottest, most-accepting cities for your sound right now?

Some of the hottest, most open-minded cities for me right now are Miami, Chicago, and Los Angeles. L.A. is truly one of the best places to play. I've been playing here for years. It's always so much fun, with fans from all backgrounds - Mexican, Asian, American -- it's really just everybody. And I get great feedback when I DJ in L.A. People are very open-minded musically.

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What producers do you find in your record box these days?

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Deadmau5. I
play Dero from
my label. I play
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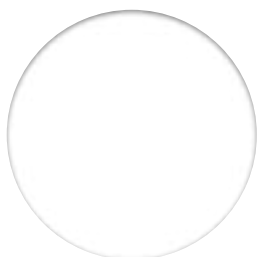
France. I'm also releasing music
from my new alias, DJ Spacecake. I
have a new tune coming out this
week that is pretty amazing, titled,
"I Am A Rockstar."

What's next for you?

Juicy Beach [party] at WMC
[Winter Music Conference] 2010 in
Miami this year is going to be
massive. I'll announce more about
that soon, but the lineup is really
incredible. We are working on that.
Juicy Beach has earned an
international following and
reputation since I started it, so I'm
very excited for WMC this year.
Besides Juicy Beach at WMC 2010,
I have three remixes due in the
next day: a remix for Tiesto, a new
one for Stonebridge, and a new
George Acosta remix. I'm keeping
busy.

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*Robbie Rivera DJs Saturday at Giant
at Vanguard, 6021 Hollywood Blvd.,
Hollywood. 21+. Tickets \$33 in
advance. Doors at 9:30. Info:
giantclub.com.*



L.A. Weekly staff writer He formerly worked at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Los Angeles Times*, where he participated in Pulitzer Prize-winning coverage of the L.A. riots. His work has appeared in *Rolling Stone* online, *the Guardian* and, as a young stringer, the *New York Times*.

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