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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW: PAUL OAKENFOLD TAKES BACK TRANCE

Kim Reyes • DEC 26, 2013

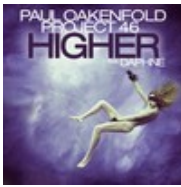
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Paul Oakenfold (<http://www.djz.com/dj/paul-oakenfold>) is an international household name for fans of electronic music, with a career spanning for three decades. The DJ and producer from London got interested in the scene after meeting Trevor Fung and being fascinated with his approach to DJing. "I wanted to dig deeper into all kinds of music," says Oakenfold. "At that time in London, there wasn't really a particular sound like there is now, like with one genre of techno or trance."

He initially broke out in the music industry by becoming a British promoter and agent for artists like Run-D.M.C. and the Beastie Boys. When these popular American artists began crossing over into U.K. territory, Oakenfold noticed just how well received they were: "we had a completely different culture, but Britain, in terms of the way it is with music, really embraced it quickly, and before we knew it, hip hop had crossed over in the commercial charts."

In 2000 the producer, who had found much success in Europe, stepped out into the American scene himself with one of his first U.S. performances at Cyberfest, a festival in Fresno, California that acted as a precursor to events like Electric Daisy Carnival (<http://electricdaisycarnival.com/>). This event marked a new beginning for Oakenfold, who moved to America to continue his musical hot streak here.



► **Paul Oakenfold**
(<http://soundcloud.com/pauloakenfold>)
Paul Oakenfold & Project 46 Feat.
Daphne - Higher (Original Mix)
(<http://soundcloud.com/pauloakenfold/paul-oakenfold-project-46-feat>)

"I was looking at more than one place and one gig to break America, and the way to do that would be to get on a tour bus and go," says Oakenfold. "So I did, like, a hundred shows in America in one year playing everywhere, at a lot of places where international DJs never went."

Oakenfold definitely broke through to the American audience, and went on to successfully headline festivals like Lollapalooza, and produce for artists like Madonna. After being in the electronic music game for quite some time, Oakenfold took note of the difference between American and European audiences: "We've been living with this scene for many years, yet in America, even though it's been around for a while, it was always underground. Now it's mainstream."

"It's really embedded in American culture, so that's why it's exciting at the moment to be in America," continues Oakenfold. "That's why all the DJs are here, and the ones who aren't here are trying to get over here. This is where the eyes of electronic music are at the moment."



► **Paul Oakenfold**
(<http://soundcloud.com/pauloakenfold>)
Massive Attack - Unfinished Sympathy
(Perfecto Remix)
(<http://soundcloud.com/pauloakenfold/massive-attack-unfinished>)

Perhaps more interesting than the rise in electronic dance music itself is the fact Oakenfold was able to see this transition firsthand when he held his first U.S. residency at The Palms in Las Vegas, Nevada. "Paul Oakenfold Presents: Perfecto Las Vegas" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieZPn72RuLs>) began in 2008, a time when Sin City was still known for its casinos and buffets.

"When I was in Vegas then, there was no scene," says Oakenfold. "It's great to see Las Vegas have a big scene now, but that was the biggest change because there was nothing there when we started."

Although he's had some wonderful performances over the years, Oakenfold credits his Vegas residency as one of his favorites because of the venue's vibe, as well as the memories that were created there. "Now, when you look at Vegas, it's unbelievable because there are more electronic nightclubs there than in Ibiza, and there's more people in the electronic community going there than anywhere in the world."



► **Paul Oakenfold**
(<http://soundcloud.com/pauloakenfold>)
Leama - Requiem For A Dream (Paul Oakenfold Remix)
(<http://soundcloud.com/pauloakenfold/leama-requiem-for-a-dream-paul>)

Today, Oakenfold (who is also an advisor to DJZ) has come full circle with plans of releasing a compilation of trance classics that have been reproduced in a current way. His third full-length studio album *Pop Killer*, which has been in the works since 2009, will also finally see a release date this upcoming year.

"The album is similar as last two, in that there are songs with great singers and cutting edge beats," reveals Oakenfold. "But I'm focusing on the next generation of great quality singers from different genres of music, rather than the big established names."

While the electronic dance music scene has managed to capture America's heart and attention, Oakenfold had a desire to share the genre's roots with new fans through good quality trance and melodic music on his 2013 tour entitled *Trance Mission*. To some electronic fans, the genre may seem outdated, but to the godfather himself, trance was ready for a revival.

"The style has disappeared in a lot of ways, and a lot of the producers who were making trance are making a different sound now," says Oakenfold. "The idea of the tour was that we're all going in a direction where it's getting bigger and bigger — DJs want big production, and I thought, 'Well, why not just strip it down to just the music, minimal visuals, and the crowd at small clubs?' This tour is about sharing some of the old classics with a new generation who don't know this kind of music."

Aside from familiarizing oneself with the music and its history, Oakenfold has some sound advice for budding DJs: "A lot of the big DJs were producers first and foremost, so learn how to make music. Work hard, focus, and learn the talent. Put a lot of time into it. Practice."

Take his word for it — the man obviously knows a thing or two about DJing, after all.

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