



Julius O’Riordan, better known as Judge Jules - and referred to as ‘The Judge (who will not budge)’ by some in London, who really ought to know better - is the stuff of legend. He’s been a clubland stalwart for a little over twenty years and his sets, played live all over the world and on radio, are a euphoric sweep, not strangers to the whistle-blowing-hands-in-the-air, crowd pleasing antics of clubland’s hey-day. He is a fun way to dance til dawn, and has consistently been voted amongst the world’s best by clubland luminaries, DJ magazine. He has seen and done it all; we began by asking him what he’s been up to.

“Ibiza only finished a few weeks ago and since, I’ve been playing around the UK and gearing up for the international season.”

There is also his forthcoming second album, *Bring the Noise*, of which (slightly) more later. He doesn’t play long haul gigs in the summer

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Superstar DJ

Battling with lousy cell phone reception, Shout! had a brief - but exclusive - chat with Judge Jules.

months; instead, from June to September, he’s based in Ibiza where he hosts Judgement Sundays at the 5000 capacity super-club, Eden. From a second home on the White Isle, he commutes to Mallorca for his regular nights there, back to the UK, and across Europe.

His Spanish base is revealing. Throughout its short history, clubland has changed. As an infant, in the early 90s, clubbing was up all night and in your face; irrespective of when and where. But Jules describes clubbing today as seasonal, and surprisingly, a winter affair. “There are just so many festivals in the summer months that people stop going to clubs. Or they save all their money for one mad week in Ibiza. Clubland slows, without stopping altogether, but as it gets colder, people always go back.”

And how is clubland? “It evolves over time, and is certainly different today from five years ago. But it is definitely still going strong.” The persistent reports of clubland’s death have generally been greatly exaggerated; it is still a money machine, and is still finding and producing brand new sounds. Just last month South Africa’s Goldfish played in Bahrain, at around the same time that fellow South African, DJ Mujava’s Township Funk, was being played by top flight DJ’s the world over, including Mr Jules. As clubland ages it seems, it extends its reach: or maybe it’s just getting fat.

“The main difference now is its diversity. There is something out there every weekend for everyone. Whether you want druggier, hard European techno, or more chilled out, jazzier stuff, in every major town and city, there is club playing what you want to hear.”

ence between Europe and Singapore and the rest of the world,” he says, “is radio.”

Club music does not lend itself easily to the visual. It is a sonic art in its purist form. Some - and the Prodigy, Underworld and the sorely missed Orbital leap



instantly to mind; but there are countless others: Basement Jaxx anyone, Faithless? - manage to produce the kind of extravagant live shows more usually associated with pop or rock bands, but only

people to exactly where the party is at. This is, after all, how the first raves were organised: a pirate radio station and a mobile number, and the long drive to the middle of nowhere. But in Dubai, says Jules, perhaps there is too much of a good thing. “There are so many stations, that it can be hard to assess quality. It is saturated there, and that can devalue the whole proposition.”

When we spoke, Jules was not aware of any future bookings in this part of the world but, out of season, the world is his oyster. So it may still be on the cards. A quick look on his website (www.judgejules.net) reveals that since Judgement’s closing weekend in Ibiza, he has played as far afield as the US and Canada, Brazil, Korea, Japan and China. And of course he has played in Bahrain and Dubai in recent years.

He travels a lot, but it is not necessarily in style. He has been quoted before about his affinity for budget airlines for short trips, and he repeats his mantra to us: “I go with what is the most convenient in terms of scheduling, whichever means I’m away from my family (he’s married and has two kids) the least amount of time.” Indeed, when we spoke to him, he was standing outside his son’s school gates waiting for classes to end.

So, a family man and a super star DJ, we asked him about life on the road: was he ever susceptible to the excesses of the rock’n’roll existence? “I’ve never thrown a TV out of the window, if that’s what you mean. When I travel, I am the guest of wherever I happen to be; why would I risk not being invited back?”

With his son’s classes now over, and less than hour before flying to Brazil and

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It is impossible to talk about global clubland without mentioning drugs. In its early days, its infancy as Rave, it was all about drugs. But it doesn’t have to be, says Jules. “Look at Singapore,” he says, “that country has an absolute zero tolerance for drugs and yet the scene over there is huge; probably the most established non European clubland.” What about Dubai and Bahrain, which have a similar zero tolerance, is clubbing as big over here? “It is and it isn’t,” he fails to answer definitively. “The differ-

through the use of spectacular visuals and by having charismatic performers to front the man behind the desk. Clubland then, can be best appreciated at home via a technology that is more than a 100 years old. But that is not to say that he is a technophobe, or sentimental about clubland’s origins. Of legal music downloads he says, “It reinvented the wheel,” but he is clear about radio’s role.

Radio retains the vibrancy of the mix, and is as up-to-date as the DJ playing. All that is missing is the crowd and the atmosphere, and radio can direct

the Helvetia Festival in Sao Paulo, the interview comes to an end. He apologises for its brevity, saying that he wasn’t expecting this type of interview. In closing he mentions his forthcoming album: “It’s what you would expect from me; about 130-140bpm, trancey and vocal. It’s good, fun.” *Bring the Noise* is finished, and were he not so busy all the time; it may well have been released by now. But, “it’s looking like January now, as to release before Christmas, is to be buried beneath all the year-end compilations; you end up completely lost. ●