

BEATBOX: UP THE WAZOO

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DJ Dennis Ferrer Leads Heavy Spate Of Early '07 Club Full-Lengths
KERRI MASON

He had helped create some of the most memorable dance cuts of the past two years, but things still weren't going New Jersey-based DJ/producer Dennis Ferrer's way.

"I've done singles and remixes up the wazoo," he says. "But no matter what I did, no matter what big records I made, it didn't elevate me to where I wanted to be profile-wise, career-wise."

So Ferrer decided to make an album. Out Feb. 20, "The World As I See It" (King Street) delivers on the promises of his hits: 2005's "Sandcastles" (co-produced with Jerome Sydenham), a rare male vocal that galvanized the international DJ community, and his 2006 remixes of "Cure and the Cause" (by Fish Go Deep) and "Most Precious Love" (by Blaze), which became worldwide singalongs. The album combines vintage soul and modern thump into true-blue house music that satisfies finicky lifelong heads and fist-pumping new initiates.

"I just wanted to make a quality dance album; I don't portray it to be anything other than what it is," Ferrer says. "I'm making seven-minute songs. I'm not hiding the fact that it's club music."

But club music that's this, well, musical, is rare. "Church Lady," with a droll, been-there-done-that vocal by Danil Wright, offers a groovier, less frenetic take on gospel than dance usually puts forth; "Underground Is my Home" is one of the best house-appreciation tracks ever cut (and there have been many). The last dance producer to unite classic styling with modern sounds this effectively was Danny Tenaglia, on 1998's classic "Tourism."

TIME TO RELEASE: A diverse slate of marquee dance artists are prepping full-lengths for release in March. LCD Soundsystem will let loose "March of Silver" (DFA/Capitol), the follow-up to its self-titled Grammy Award-nominated 2005 debut. James Murphy again punk-ifies oft-overlooked early dance influences into a hipster party soundtrack. Closing cut "New York I Love You but You're Bringing Me Down," a gentrification protest song masked as a lost love ballad, could start a downtown revolution.

Unmistakable Everything but the Girl vocalist Tracey Thorn—fresh off a surprising Grammy nomination for "Damage," a collab with Buick Project and remixer Tiefschwarz—will release "Out of the Woods" (Astralwerks), her first solo effort since 1982's "A Distant Shore." West Coast producer/DJ Miguel Migs, known for his good looks and equally seductive Latin-tinged house, is set to release "Those Things" (Om). And evergreen sexy boy duo Air combined Japanese instruments, vocals from Pulp's Jarvis Cocker and Divine Comedy's Neil Hannon, and their usual ethereal ambiance for "Pocket Symphony" (Astralwerks).

HUDSON'S RIVETER: In summer 2006, well before Jennifer Hudson was rightly compared to a young Aretha Franklin and her performance in "Dreamgirls" was heralded as the best musical theater debut since Barbra Streisand's Academy Award-winning turn in "Funny Girl," New York club promoter Stephen Pevner was savvy enough to book the 22-year-old power singer. "I was in competition with a nonprofit theater company in California who wanted her to perform at a benefit," Pevner says. "They balked, so I bit."

Hudson's performance at his Dec. 30 Saint-at-Large event, a regular party for gay men, could have been a typical club track act. But Pevner booked the Hammerstein Ballroom rather than a nightclub; slotted Hudson before rather than during headlining DJ Junior Vasquez's set, giving her appearance a more concert-like feel; and invited her to perform a full set of songs—none of which were tacky remixes—surrounded by voguers, drag queens and go-go dancers. The result was one of the more memorable—and significant—performances in the history of club events; a display of vocal prowess by Hudson, matched only by her unaffected between-song sass and honest appreciation for her hosts. An icon is born.