

# OFF THE FLOOR

Books, art, movies, etc...

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## DIARY OF A LEGEND

**Legend is a hashtag for a raver who goes out on a Friday night and doesn't get in till Monday. Legend is a word that gets bandied about on fridges and coffee tables at 4am, but in the precious couple of hours OFF THE FLOOR spends with the softly Chicago-accented Marshall Jefferson, "the godfather of house", we get the sense of what a true legend is...**

### 01. A legend is modest

Marshall is accompanied to this interview in London by his sidekick with a Snoop Dogg drawl, Sleezy D, the original voice of the acid house record 'I've Lost Control', released in 1986. They have collaborated continuously since, and have an apparel company with a new line hitting soon, and some fly future classics that DJ Mag is privileged to get a sneak-peek at. Sleezy continually gives props to Marshall, almost forcing him to confess reluctantly on who the first name apostles of house music are: Larry (Levan — Paradise Garage), Larry (Sherman — Trax Records), Larry (Heard — Fingers Inc.), Frankie (Knuckles), for starters.

### 02. A legend works hard

Marshall Jefferson was 23 (yes, maths kings, he celebrates 60 this year), living on the Bukowski trail of working in a post office when they began recording. "I was doing the graveyard shift from midnight to half-eight in the morning, and I was knackered when I got in," Jefferson says. Sleezy was 17, and dancing at the Muzic Box. "I'd go by, say 'Marshall, WAKE UP, you shoulda heard it last night!'" Sleezy D says. "There were

kids pretending to be gay to be in the scene, that's how it was in Chicago, it was in to be gay. The promoters were structuring the parties to scare away the gang bangers, we wanted to keep the riff-raff out of the park, and the riff-raff didn't buy designer jeans and that stuff — you couldn't get in if you didn't have an ironed shirt. They had the big long lines because they were small clubs. Sometimes they were packed to the rim, and Frankie Knuckles didn't like straight kids at his parties, unless you have something. A lot of straight kids pretended, but the ones who were gay were proud of it. The music was banging, so I was going out at 13." After some years of this, one time, he went back happy to Marshall's. "That's a good way of putting it: I came back happy, very happy!" Sleezy D says. "He was dancing around, I was getting hyped, that's when the 808 drum machine was out — we used to call it the Go Off Drums," Jefferson adds. What kit were you using, DJ Mag asks. "An 808 and a TB303, all that," Jefferson says. "I did the 'ARRRRRRHHHHH I've lost control'," Sleezy D says. "'Ahhhhhh — I'm losing it', and he was dancing the whole time. We had a ball doing that."

### 03. A legend has visions

"I'm not a musician," Jefferson says. If you buy the kit though, you kinda are, we say. "I bought the equipment, I took a friend to the guitar centre," Jefferson says, "and the dude there said, 'This keyboard makes you sound like Stevie Wonder, even if you don't know how to play at all'. So I'm like, dig! "He said, 'Get this, do that', and I said, 'How much is it?' 'Three thousand', he said. He said, 'Don't you work in the post office?' Email was nowhere in sight, but he gave me a ten thousand dollar credit note. So I walk out of the door with a TX1, right. He said, 'You know you need a keyboard? This is a sequencer, you need one to play it. You're not going to hear any sounds till then.' So then, 'You got a drum machine? You need a drum machine too, because I don't know how to play drums. You got a mixer?' 'Yeah, I'm a DJ, I got a mixer,' I say. 'I got a Gemini mixer.' He's like, 'No, you need one of these. A recording mixer, a four-track, I'm gonna be recording.' And Sneezy come over, and I was like, I bought all this stuff and don't know how to play it."



### 04. A legend invests time and energy

How long did it take you to pay off the loan? "Is it paid yet?" Jefferson says. Cue much laughter.

Marshall plays the best clubs every week, "But no-one was listening to me before my records came out. A lot of the DJs, like Farley [Jackmaster Funk], and the Hot Mix 5, they were famous before their records came out, but not me." "Back then, there would be four or five parties each Friday, Saturday," Sneezy D says. "So if you saw other posters, you'd tear them up." "You'd tear the opposition's posters down," Jefferson adds. "If you have 5,000 posters around the city, you got 20,000 posters, for the first wave, and another for when the enemies had tore down all the posters. I didn't find this out till a few years ago. I was wondering why people weren't coming to my parties. Wah! Because they tore down all the posters." "Back in the early '80s, before we started putting stuff out and putting on parties," Sneezy D says, "the main DJs were Andre Hatchett, Tony Hatchett, Wayne Williams, Mike Dunn and Jesse Saunders, and women in house music, there were two major DJs when I was at high school: Lori Branch and Celeste Alexander. They ran with the big boys, they were known to get down, and they never come here — they do a radio show over in Chicago, and Dee Jay Aletia is really big in Chicago now, she has a real following."

### 05. A legend starts a movement

"When we did 'I've Lost Control', they didn't call it house," Jefferson says. "They stampeded the dancefloor but they didn't know what to call it, until it hit the UK. Because they were playing 'Acid Tracks' from Phuture, the next thing we heard was acid house, and people started asking me what the first acid house track was, because I produced both. If I'm with Sneezy, I call it 'I've Lost Control', and if I'm with Pierre, I'll call it