

IN THE STUDIO WITH...



Lake has become equally adept at a variety of club sounds.

## CHRIS LAKE: RISING STAR

After his breakout three years ago, DJ/producer Chris Lake can be considered one of dance music's top talents.

His ability to work a big-room crowd has become well known, earning the praise and attention of fans from across the globe. He has been releasing quality tracks since 2001, and more recently launched his own label, Rising Music. The U.K.-based DJ tours constantly and he maintains a strong online presence via popular podcasts and a video tour diary.

*Crazy* is Lake's latest long player, seeing its recent release in the United States through Nervous Records. It's a snug combination of upfront progressive, electro-house and vocal numbers fit together in one cohesive package.

Other DJs took notice of Lake's key sound in 2006, when he released "Electro Retro." He doesn't think it was necessarily his best

work—"It was more like a B-side track," he supposes. But for Lake, this was a time when things started to really come together. He wrote "Until She Rises" and then "Changes." The latter tune, which makes an appearance on *Crazy*, became a defining moment of his career. "It was the first record that people mostly associated with me," he acknowledges.

But Lake returned with another clubland anthem, 2008's "Only One." He says composing the track was a quick process with vocalist Nastala. He had just returned from some gigs in Canada and the two were grooving with a beat he had just made. He hummed the melody of the vocal, Nastala came up with the words and they grabbed the nearest microphone. Lake determined that the first take was recorded really badly, although it was fine in terms of the attitude. Still, for three weeks, they

tried to re-record that vocal, but they could not get the essence of their first take.

"We got so frustrated after three weeks that we did nothing with the record for 10 months," Lake remembers. "Nobody heard it. I didn't play it for the management. It just sat there."

Lake completely forgot about "Only One" until he came across it on his hard drive and re-played it. He couldn't believe he had it sitting there for so long and immediately arranged to get it out. The final version, it ends up, uses the original vocal—nothing was changed. "We tried to perfect it," he says, "but sometimes the magic happens in the heat of the moment."

Studio-wise, Lake mixes everything in Ableton Live, including the mix-down. Occasionally, he uses Logic 8, although not that often. Ableton Live, he says, offers plenty. "You'd be surprised

at how many people use just a simple piece of software like that or Fruity Loops," he says. "You can make great-sounding records with all these pieces of software; you just have to know how to use them."

On *Crazy*, Lake traverses a wide range of club-friendly moods from the flirty "Tokyo" to the trance-tech collaboration with Sébastien Léger named "Aqualight." Nastala appears several times in lush, melodic dance pieces, including "Give In" and "If You Knew." But Lake also shows his penchant for creating dancefloor destroyers on "Robots," as well as his ability to craft chilled-out downtempo on "Communicate."

Having so many bases covered makes *Crazy* appropriate for beat-hungry clubbers as well as general music fans. Naturally, Lake's diverse sonic palette is a benefit derived from having played for "some of the best crowds in nearly every

major country in the world."

And each territory seems to have its specific tastes. He's found that the more banging records—hard electro, for instance—don't go down as well as the melodic tracks in Latin America. Conversely, in Europe the more melodic tracks don't fare as well as the hard stuff.

The first Chris Lake record I ever purchased was also one of his earliest, a remix of Sia's "Drink to Get Drunk." While it is from 2002, it still sounds years ahead of its time. Lake was just 19-years old and still learning his way around the studio. But he notes a beeline progression to his expert sound today. "When I listen back to it, I hear all of its faults," he explains, "and I think about what I would do differently. It was me finding where I wanted to go. I listen to it and I can hear that it is a stepping stone to where I am now."

— Dennis Seban