



# Montell Jordan

## This is How He Did It

Montell Jordan is one lucky brother. Blessed with handsome, caramel features, a 6 foot 8 inch frame and a voice that could melt butter, Montell is having a good year. His first single, 'This is How We Do It', came out of nowhere, to give Def Jam recordings its first Number 1 in the US ever. The debut album, again titled *This is How We Do It*, has gone double platinum, the second single, 'Somethin' 4 Da Honeyz' has already gone gold. Montell is blowing up all over the world, which is why it's cool to see him in New Zealand for one Powerstation gig. We chatted after soundcheck.

Montell, what's a 6 foot 8 inch brother from South Central doing with a degree in organisational communications (say what?) and a world wide Number One single? Give me some history, man.

"Yeah, you're right that I grew up in South Central, but somehow I was always more inspired by what I learnt in school and in church than anything I saw on the street. Church is where I began to play piano. Sometimes during the service I'd slip in a Janet Jackson piano verse, and nobody ever noticed. At college I took jazz lessons and started doing talent quests and nightclubs, just working at getting better and better."

How did you get signed?

"Well, I finished college, I got a job, and did some demos. I was already a walking package, you know, people noticed me because I'm tall, but they always told me I sounded like someone else — everyone from Aaron Hall to Stevie

Wonder, but I knew I sounded like Montell, and I knew I was gonna get a deal."

Eventually, after seven years of demo hustling, Def Jam founder Russell Simmons saw the light and was rewarded with his first Number 1. *This is How We Do It* is an album of slick, swinging street beats, that goes from pop, to R&B, to hip-hop, to a mix of all the above.

"I wrote and produced every song on my album, and I wrote it with the purpose of getting my message across to as many people as possible. So, a jam like 'Payback', with Coolio, is for the hip-hop heads, 'This is How We Do It' is for the pop audience, and 'I Wanna' is for the lustful lovers out there — you know what I'm saying!"

Your, um, message?

"I'm trying to come with some positive messages. I mean, there are a lot of very negative rap lyrics out there (I'm not dissing that, because everyone has to be able to express what they feel). We have this stereotype of South Central as a place full of gangs, shootings, riots, etc. I'm trying to redress the balance, because South Central has its positive side to. That's what 'This is How We Do It' is all about. I sing about how the gang-bangers forgot about the drive-by, and I sing about drinking because its real, but check it with 'I reach for my 40 and turn it up / Designated driver, take the keys to my truck.'"

Looks like Montell is on a positive mission. No argument from me. The best of luck G.

ANDY



# Jazzie B

## The Original Funky Dred

In the late 80s Soul II Soul predicted the sound of the 90s. They opened a gateway and introduced the world to the concept of what I'll loosely call 'club culture'. Their first two albums, boldly titled *Club Classics Volume I* and *II* were just that — massive hits, they defined the sound of the turn of the decade. But now, as we approach the turn of the century, to a soundtrack of hed funk and ambient drum 'n' bass. Are Soul II Soul still relevant in a constantly mutating dance environment? I spoke with the original funky dred, Jazzie B.

Since Soul II Soul came out in the late 80s, the dance scene has become incredibly diverse, with the rise of jungle etc. What are your thoughts on the current scene?

"I think it's great. I love the jungle vibe. It's

a young scene, but it's totally healthy. I love clubbing and still do the odd bit of deejaying, and I'm still doing me Monday night show, *The Funki Dred*, on Kiss FM."

You've said it would have been easy to jump on the latest bandwagon, but you'd rather stay true to the Soul II Soul sound. Describe the sound of *Volume V: Believe*.

"Well, since we started, there's been a real explosion of genres. Each of those is someone's way of trying to express who they are. That's very healthy, it's what we've always preached, and now Soul II Soul are one among those choices. *Believe* is very much a representation of Soul II Soul in 95. We didn't want to diversify too much from where we came from. It's still funky, black, British soul music."

You're onto *Volume V*, a major achievement for a dance group. Did you think you'd make it this far?

"Well, Soul II Soul has always been a collective rather than a group, so we've always been able to come up with something new and, therefore, hopefully some sort of longevity in the business. We've got a lot of new faces since we started out, but that's club culture and that's why we're still here."

To finish off, are you touring and can we expect a *Volume VI*?

"Yeah, we're going to hit the road next year with a wicked new band I've put together, so we'll see if we can sort out a New Zealand date sometime. And definitely a *Volume VI*, mate, for sure."

ANDY



# Rhythm, Love & Family

Andy Gibb was a shadow dancer, Gerry DeVeaux is a shadow writer.

For much of the past five years, DeVeaux has passed the time composing songs for an array of artists including Chaka Khan, Vanessa Paradis, Kylie Minogue, and Lenny Kravitz. As far as claims-to-fame go, being the cousin of Big Len is probably not too far off the A list if you're attempting to bust into the music biz frontline.

"Overwhelmed with the desire" to step out of the shadows, DeVeaux recently took the plunge and released his first album, *Rhythm and Love*. He says he takes a uniform approach to songwriting, regardless of whether he's keeping a song for himself or selling it for big money.

"When I write, I always try to write something that's going to be as timeless as possible. Obviously, you don't know if something is going to be a hit or not, but even if I'm writing a poppy dance song for a dance diva who's only going to last one season, I still try to give the song some sort of timeless quality. That's what I aspire to."

JOHN RUSSELL

