



## AFRICAN ALL-STARS

**HOUSE OF THE HOLY AFRO IS IN TOWN AND HOTTER THAN THE SAHARA SUN. DJ DINO MORAN TELLS DANIELLE MARSLAND THEIR PLANS TO MAKE US SWEAT.**

**"P**eople everywhere just fall over themselves. They're like, 'Oh my god, it's so fresh! It's so hip!' The response is phenomenal." Dino Moran, one of the world's first African dance music producer/DJs, here shares with *Members Only* some of the exciting feedback his "Afro-fusion" style has generated.

Created using the rhythms of Africa, analogue equipment, and live instrumentation, "Afro-fusion" is Moran's response to what he perceived as a lack of African culture in dance music. "They say DJing is a form of expression, so I found myself trying to express myself, yet there were no tools for it... there was no African dance music." Funnily enough, the hardest part of his job is convincing African people themselves. Moran explains, "Africa is very insecure. I think this is mainly due to Western media oppression. Africans think whatever is on MTV or BBC must be the authority on what's 'cool'. The hardest part is convincing African people that it's their own country that is 'cool'."

Moran started his love affair with dance music as a child breakdancer in Africa. "I can't think of a time in my life when I didn't dance," recalls Moran. "I'm a dancer by nature - I love to dance. So I've always paid attention to what would make me dance. Later on it became about how to make others dance." Despite the successes of Moran's 14-year career on the DJ circuit, which has seen him support the likes of Carl Cox, Sasha, John Digweed and Deep Dish, Moran sees himself "flying the flag" not for dance music, but for South Africa. "I'm grateful for the international success, in that it can bring about change in the way South Africans see South Africa. It proves a point that we really should be embracing our own culture."

Moran's latest efforts to promote his culture come by way of his collaboration with South African artist Brett Bailey for their nightclub theatre extravaganza

*House Of The Holy Afro*, the worldwide smash that hits Perth this month as part of Perth Festival's Beck's Music Box programming. Described by daily *The Scotsman* as "like the Soweto Gospel Choir on acid", *Holy Afro*'s a riotous mix of gospel, poetry, and choreographed African dances. "It is a very exciting night out," shares Moran of the strictly "standing-room only" show, which requires heavy audience participation. "The entire thing doesn't stop - there's no intervals, it will sweep you off your feet. I've seen the least likely people lose their ties and jackets, and spend two hours trotting up a storm."

Moran, who provides the beats for the show, is particularly enthused about the involvement of African theatre troupe Third World Bunfight, as well as South African performance poet Odidi Mfenyana, in *Holy Afro*. "Didi is one of the most flexible performers I've ever worked with. To give you an idea, he can do a five-foot star jump off the ground in six-foot stilettos! He's got the full vocal range, from baritone all the way to tenor. He switches roles like a chameleon, from over-the-top queen to very butch... it's just spectacular."

So what's Moran's secret for getting, and keeping, *Holy Afro* audiences dancing? "Well, it's about tuning your senses to read a crowd properly," advises Moran. "You also learn how to pace your crowd. A lot of DJs just go out and play - what they don't realise is that they burn their crowds out. In my experience, it's more about the journey." A hearty laugh follows, deep from Moran's African belly. "And failing that man? Brute force!"

**WHO:** DINO MORAN

**WHAT:** *HOUSE OF THE HOLY AFRO* & DJING AFTERWARDS - THURSDAY 26 & FRIDAY 27 FEBRUARY, BECK'S MUSIC BOX, THE ESPLANADE, PERTH