

JAMIROQUAI'S ten year odyssey through the galaxy of funk has generated some spectacular statistics. The four albums released since Jay Kay's 1992 emergence from London's acid jazz underworld have sold 16 million copies. The last two albums alone, 1996's 'Travelling Without Moving' and 1999's 'Synkronized', shifted over 11 million between them.

The one time 'skinny white skate kid' from west London has taken a lot of flak for getting on down his way, yet as trends have disintegrated and prejudices faded, contemporary music has come to \*synkronize\* with Jamiroquai's groove more than ever before.

Boogie is back big time. Young, cocky and full of funk, Jamiroquai have consistently been an amazing live band and have paved the way for other acts like Basement Jaxx and Daft Punk.

Front man Jay Kay sat down to an interview with Dan Gennoe recently where he talked about his love of music and his latest album "A Funk Odyssey".

***The first single to be taken from Jamiroquai's Fifth album, 'A Funk Odyssey', is 'Little L'. What's the track about?***

JAY KAY: 'Little L' is a song that was written really to reflect the ups and downs of a relationship. In other words you don't love someone with a big L all the time, you love them with a little L. And they love you with a little L. Hence 'you make me love you with a little L'. Everybody seems to think it's about my old relationship, but I don't think you can say that every time someone writes a love song or a not love song that it's about them or even that it encompasses the whole relationship. People will no doubt pick up on the chorus and either guys will sing it to girls or girls will sing it to guys. It's catchy and hooky and that's why it's the first single. But people always want to look into that personal story and think that you're writing about your ex.

***It's a very instant and catchy track, did it take long to write?***

JAY KAY: 'Little L' was something that really didn't take long to get together. Toby [Smith, Jamiroquai's keyboard player] started off, he had a little chord idea and a bass sound which just rolled along, and I suppose in about twenty minutes I'd found the right melody. I'd had that 'Little L, you make me love you with a little L' sitting around in my book for ages, so once I'd clicked and it matched up, it took about twenty, twenty five minutes. Then after that there were a good few days of trying to work out the best way of doing it. It was one of those songs where we didn't go into a different chorus musically, we just kept the groove going and I melodically made the chorus.

***It's a real party tune as well isn't it?***

JAY KAY: Yeah, I think it's like a lot of songs I write, they sound really happy and groovy but in fact if you listen to the lyric underneath, it's quite dark. I've done a few like that, 'Too Young To Die' was a little bit like that, you know a nice happy chorus but... I like things that are melancholic in some respects. But we've done a club remix of the track, which I think is a winner, an absolute winner. I love it.

***With this album, is it true that you wrote songs with the remixing in mind?***

JAY KAY: To an extent, yeah. I mean there's more programming on the album that there was on the other ones. We always recorded live as a band in the studio and the melodies were based around a genre of music, that wasn't dance music, and I could always see this problem with remixes, of putting a 'thump thump' underneath it. I never ever thought that the vocal went well with that stuff, and this time, because we've used the programme thing and tracks are much more dance orientated as opposed to jazzy and funky, I really feel that it's made it easier for the remix. The voice sits easier with the remix, it's happier with it. I look back to 'Space Cowboy' and although David Morales did a great remix of it, I couldn't see how everyone could love it so much. You know, you have a different opinion when your own stuff is mauled. But it's much easier for people to listen to it in a club, you don't see the flaws.

***What was it about the 'Space Cowboy' remix that niggled you, because everyone really loved that track?***

JAY KAY: Well, what didn't work for me with the 'Space Cowboy' thing was just that we had a tempo change in it [the bridge of 'Space Cowboy'] and I couldn't understand who they were going to make it all sit right to this one generic backing beat that didn't take that tempo change into account. And it never did sit right. And I was dead against this thumping beat at the time. But times were different then. It's funny, they say people go full circle and in a sense I have with this album. I started doing music on machines a long time ago when people had Emmu SP1200 and MPC60s, which is the little box thing that all the hip hop guys tend to use now. So I've kind of gone full circle and ended up back again using computers and E-magic, all the things that I'd rebelled against by recording the previous four albums completely live.

***What prompted you to start using computers and samplers again?***

JAY KAY: It opens up different things, really. That was the main thing. But if people point the gun at you and go 'look this is retro and your songs sound the same, why don't you change them' you've gotta do something different. Plus you've gotta hope that people understand why you've done something different, namely for your own entertainment and your own satisfaction.

***'You Give Me Something' is a classic Jamiroquai disco funk tune, what inspired that track?***

JAY KAY: Well that's the yang to 'Little L's' ying really isn't it. 'You Give Me Something' is as much about the positive side of relationships; you meet somebody, they're different, they're special and unique, and you think great this is really good and they give you something that nobody else can really give you. It's very, very simple, a very sing-along kind of thing, and some things have to be like that. I'm not a believer in being a crazily deep guy about everything 'cos people sometimes don't get it and you don't go across the board and hit everybody with that stuff.

***'Picture Of My Life' on the other hand is something a bit different. Not only does it have a very romantic French Riviera Latin sway to it, but lyrically it sounds very personal and thought out. How personal is it?***

JAY KAY: 'Picture Of My Life' really upset me when I sang it, because I felt it was about the ups and downs I've had in my own life. Sometimes I've spoilt things for myself. There have been various reasons, but sometimes you feel that you could have done things better or could have done them differently, which is where the line 'someone tell me when something good became so bad'. And it's one of those songs that was really hard to sing. It's quite honest and I think again it's what all good songs should be, they should mean something different to each person that listens to it. I think that it will find people out there who feel that way.

***People who feel they've made mistakes in the past?***

JAY KAY: Yeah, and you know, we've all got these people who tell us to do things differently, and we should do this and we should live our lives like that, and no one's really got the answer. They're just full of suggestions and that why there's the line 'if you have a cure, to me would you please send, a picture of my life with a letter telling how it should really be instead'. I'm not suggesting that people do really send me a letter. Don't send me any letters, I don't want to open up sacks of mail going 'I've got an idea of how you can change your life'; but that's the idea, if you have an idea about how I should change my life send a letter and tell me how it should be instead.

***Musically, 'Picture Of My Life' is quite different to typical Jamiroquai tunes isn't it?***

JAY KAY: Musically it has a depth of orchestration about it. I think the orchestration we did before string wise would be much smaller scale, I think about 14 people or so. This is about 32 people and we did it in a huge great room that was specifically built for recording orchestras, as opposed to doing it in my studio which you can pack about 14 strings in and that's your lot. Simon Hale who arranged the strings, his brief was 'I want something very Bond like, very John Barry like', high unison strings, very floaty. And he came up absolute trumps. And to watch them do that was a real thrill, you knew you had a winning song on your hands. I think it's a really powerful song and a really mature song for someone as juvenile as me. I like it a lot.

by Dan Gennoe