

# EROL ALKAN

Erol Alkan is a DJ. He's also a producer, artist, radio host, label head and collaborator. Some have labelled him a musical polymath, others have singled him out as one of most unique talents in electronic and alternative culture in recent decades. His exhaustive history reads almost like mythology; the shy school boy who snuck out of his bedroom window in the early 90s to play indie records to ruthlessly unforgiving crowds, and within a number of years ended up transforming the London club scene, bridging disparate scenes together with experimentation and abandon. Many years later, everything and nothing has changed. Whether in the DJ booth, the studio or on the radio, Alkan continues to rely on a unique alchemy driven by instinct and the pure, infectious love and knowledge of music he has carried since his childhood.

Over 30 years into his life as a DJ, and connection is more important to Alkan than ever before. Founding the legendary, weekly Monday club TRASH in 1997 at the age of 23, Alkan served as both the promoter and resident DJ for exactly a decade until it bowed out at the height of its powers in 2007. From humble beginnings at the original Plastic People in Oxford Street. whose closure lead to a brief period at The Annexe in Dean Street, to TRASH finding its home at The End, often cited as one of the most important club venues of all time. Once dubbed by The Face as 'The greatest club in the world', TRASH went on to host early live shows for LCD Soundsystem, Peaches, The Rapture, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Bloc Party, Klaxons, Scissor Sisters and Gonzales, as well as secret shows for established names such as Soulwax, Phoenix and Suicide.

Ten years on since Trash's closure, 'To The Rhythm' was born via a 13 week residency in 2017 at London's XOYO. A carefully curated line up saw a diverse mix of live artists and like-minded DJs play, including Ride, Factory Floor, I-F, François Kervokian, Ellen Alien, Hot Chip, Barış K and Peggy Gou, as well as other familiar names that make up Alkan's close musical family.

Recent years have seen Alkan expand 'To The Rhythm' in the form of a series of all-night long sets that create the ideal environment to explore the far-reaches of his record collection, spanning acid-drenched rave, frenetic house and the spirit of alternative pop, guitar music and opening sets focused on otherworldly, gentle records as imaginatively curated on his much-loved 'Bugged In' mixes. Taking up residency at beloved UK clubs across London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool and Birmingham, 'To The Rhythm' continues Alkan's communal philosophy, while looking forward to showcase his varied, constantly updating record collection. Taking the helm of each of the 3 hallowed slots that make up any singular party: the warm up, headliner and closer, Alkan approaches each stage of the night with a focus that draws the best from the dance floor, whilst offering a musical narrative back intended to be personable, transportive and hedonistic, sometimes all at once.

As much as extended sets have become a major part of Alkan's current presence as a DJ, recent appearances at clubs such as Drumsheds, Warehouse Project, Printworks, The White Hotel, Golden Lion, Nitsa and Le Sucre have been outlets to appear on curated line ups alongside artists old and new, showcasing more traditional shorter sets akin to those outside of Trash in the 00s which lead him to being awarded Mixmag's Dj of 2006.

*"I feel comfortable to play anywhere across the night if I feel I can make a valid musical contribution, and that can happen in a number of different ways", Alkan explains. "I never plan sets as such, the only homework I do is making sure I feel I've absorbed or made enough music to keep things fresh for myself. DJing for me is 50% the records you bring and 50% the ability to read the room. At it's best it is like a symbiotic relationship with the dance floor. I simply aim to be the best version of myself in every situation I face."*

Playing back to back has also long since represented another important dimension within Alkan's craft, with recent performances with Palms Trax, Ivan Smagghe and Solomun adding to a illustrious list of names which has

also taken in 2manydjs, Justice, Daniel Avery, Gerd Janson and Boys Noize over the years. In tandem, Alkan's joyous, knowledgeable 'Disco Sets' instinctively move bodies at underground queer discos or parties as vast as Le Discotèque, Homoelectric, Le Garçon Sauvage and Glitterbox.

Outside of these clubs, Alkan continues to take a similarly wide-ranging musical approach on a number of festival line ups. Recent appearances have included Houghton, Field Day, Glastonbury, Lost Village, Bluedot, Homobloc and Ant Bangos, as well as headline sets at Sonar's outposts in Barcelona, Lisbon and Istanbul.

Alkan's interest in studio productions and collaboration has always sat comfortably alongside his reputation as one of the most diverse DJs in club music. Two of Alkan's early album productions, Late Of The Pier's 'Fantasy Black Channel' and Mystery Jets' 'Twenty One' have been expanded and lovingly re-issued via his own label Phantasy, while recent years have seen Alkan affirm his production nous, working alongside shoegaze legends Ride, solo artist LA Priest, stadium regulars The Killers and global pop icons Duran Duran. Released in 2021, 'Future Past' was the band's landmark fifteenth album and was largely produced by Alkan alongside Mark Ronson and Giorgio Moroder, and featuring Blur guitarist Graham Coxon.

Original productions have appeared in the form of a variety of singles 'Bang', 'Sub Conscious', 'Spectrum', 'Automatic' and 'A Hold On Love' (which celebrated it's recent 10th anniversary with a duo of reworks from Erol himself) have all featured in the sets of the world's most revered DJ, as well as providing the soundtrack for Chanel catwalks amongst other creative spaces. In parallel, Alkan's contribution to Fabric's mix series was awarded 'Best Compilation' by DJ Mag, while his contributions to the I Love Techno and Bugged Out series of mixes further underscored Alkan's sonic versatility, the 'Bugged In' component of the latter still a sunrise benchmark of psych, folk and offbeat musical selections.

As a remixer, Alkan's generosity and imagination have recently provided buoyant takes on tracks from The Chemical Brothers, Confidence Man, Unloved (David Holmes), Working Men's Club, and Jake Shears. Long considered one of the greatest remixers in electronic and alternative culture, Resident Advisor previously concluded that Alkan "belongs in the class of other fêted studio scientists like François K and William Orbit, whose best remixes exist out of time." Many of these earlier reworks were collected on a 2017 compilation, 'Reworks Volume 1', in which Alkan's versions of Hot Chip, Connan Mockasin, Metronomy, Tame Impala, Manic Street Preachers and Justice all feature as classics of their respective genres.

As one half of Beyond The Wizards Sleeve - a 'sonic brotherhood' alongside Richard Norris - born in 2005 via a mutual love of 60s and 70's psychedelia and as an avenue for them to both play riotous 8 hour sets in pub back rooms to unassuming crowds. consisting of their own edits designed for the modern dance floor in mind. Since then they've applied their touch to some of the world's most celebrated artists, turning in timeless 'Re-Animations' for the likes of The Chemical Brothers, Franz Ferdinand, Tracy Thorn and Midlake, as well as the entirety of the Temples' debut 'Sun Structures', re-emerging as 'Sun Restructured'. The project culminated with an original album titled 'The Soft Bounce' which featured collaborations from Jane Weaver, Hannah Peel, Holly Miranda, Blaine Harrison, Euros Childs and writer Jon Savage.

Alkan founded Phantasy in 2007. A record label intended to simply be a 'singles club' or springboard for new, unsigned artists, took on a new creative life by the time it reached it's 13th release. Debut albums by Connan Mockasin and Daniel Avery cemented Phantasy as one of the most important independent labels in the world. Whilst neither firmly rooted in electronic or alternative music, its fundamental 'psychedelic sensibility' provides an esoteric outlet for releases for a diverse range of artists including CC:DISCO!, Red Axes, Cowboy Rhythmbox, James Welsh, Terr, Josh Caffé and Gabe Gurnsey.

Given his lifelong endeavour to channel music and creativity from past and present eras, it's little surprise that Alkan has also enjoyed a fruitful and ongoing spell as a radio DJ. Having broadcast on BBC 6 Music for over a decade, including the longest-standing stint hosting their '6Mix' residency, he is now one of the residents at

London's boundary-pushing NTS Radio, programming shows that connect the vitality of his current club sets with a vast record collection spanning decades.

As the sands of alternative and electronic music culture shift faster than ever, Alkan remains one of the most influential and enduring artists in whatever world he chooses to occupy. Never mind cliches, Erol Alkan is an even rarer sort; an artist who needs no introduction, yet with so much more to share.