



DJ Ralphi Rosario just met Cher: "I just finished mixing her 'Different Kind Of Love Song.'"

"Circuit anthems have had their heyday"

DJ Ralphi Rosario gets between the beats

BY ELIO IANNACCI

The rules of clubland have definitely changed since house first started being built. Nowadays, promoters are only as good as their last great party, divas are only as good as their last hit single and drag queens are only as good as their last fierce outfit. But there are a few exceptions to the rule and over the years DJs have been slowly snatching

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the spotlight from the rest of the club cast. Some have even managed to gain the much-coveted "legendary" title from between the beats. Case in point? Chicago-based DJ Ralphi Rosario broke onto the world dance scene in 1987 with the huge hit (now classic) "You Used To Hold Me." No one remembers who sang on it, but all the right people remember who mixed it (including the Pet Shop Boys, Gloria Estefan, Everything But The Girl and, most recently, Cher, all of whom hired Rosario to mix their records). After working behind turntables and in studios all over the world for nearly two decades, Rosario's career is what most makes him a legend. His latest album, *Cassagrande Presents Ralphi Rosario*, is a houseo-

graphical timeline of the greatness that he has helped build and is still building in dance music. Peppered with a multi-movement blend of soul and Latin house, circuit, deep beats, electroclash and trance, the disc, like the DJ, serves up an eclectic dance floor dialogue that needs to be heard.

Elio Iannacci: NYC DJ Alex Lauterstein has declared that the diva is outdated. Do you agree or disagree?

Ralphi Rosario: I disagree. If it is a good song and a vocalist can carry it, it will still be a good song. House music is outdated period. But it changed and became something else – acid house – and that has changed and become something else. It always changes. I like playing and producing vocal records, big room records, track records. You can't play one type of sound the whole night – people get tired, quick.

Do you think tracks with no vocals have the same shelf life?

Circuit anthems have had their heyday. People will remember vocal tracks, not songs with no voices 10 years from now. Good female singers who can deliver, like Kim English, Donna Blakely and Suzanne Palmer, have been doing it for years.

What happened to Xaviera Gold [the vocalist from "You Used To Hold Me"]?

Last thing I heard she moved to Bowling Brook [Maryland] and said she hated all the men in the music business. She thought men were crap. She said I would never amount to anything, never be anybody or make any records. And then, she just disappeared.

Do you ban anything from your turntables?

I don't like noisy progressive, techno-sounding tracks. There're pots and pans and really good or bad pots and pans.

Biggest celeb moment?

Meeting Cher. I just finished mixing her "Different Kind Of Love Song." I met her backstage after her tour. I was calm and cool when they brought us to talk to her but my friends stood quiet and frozen. Knowing that she liked my mix meant everything to me.

Now that circuit culture is thriving, is the gay community less artistic?

We've always been the ones to discover music, clothing and art first. It is still true now and will always be that way.

■ Elio Iannacci is fab's music editor.