

PRODUCT
FOCUSPHIL
HARDING

Left, clockwise: **Kylie Minogue, Bananarama, Diana Ross, Dead or Alive, Mel & Kim, Holly Johnson, Martin Fry, Mandy Smith.**

Phil Harding's extraordinary music career spans recording The Clash and Killing Joke in the 70s, remixing and producing top club/dance and pop acts in the 80s and 90s, to recently working with Lamont Dozier in L.A. Working in the 80s out of a basement studio in Pete Waterman's PWL-studio complex (with production partner Ian Curnow), Phil Harding's club mixes and productions in the Eighties dominated dancefloors and club charts on an international scale. His recent Cherry Red-published 600-page critically-acclaimed book *PWL From The Factory Floor* is now accompanied by a long-awaited 2CD release of remastered remixes and rarities. Harding and project developer/editor John Palmer talk to MFF

HOW DID THE BOOK COME ABOUT AND WHAT DID IT COVER?

PHIL: I was there at the start of PWL studios from 1984 until 1992. At its peak, there were over 60 staff with a huge CV of artists who we'd created productions and mixes for... ABC, Rick Astley, Bananarama, Chic, Dead Or Alive, Depeche Mode, Dollar, Erasure, The Four Tops, Debbie Harry, Holly Johnson, Matt Bianco,

Mel & Kim, Kylie Minogue, Gary Moore, Nitzer Ebb, The Pet Shop Boys, Diana Ross and Donna Summer, to name just a few, with worldwide sales in the tens of millions. Working with both the Stock Aitken Waterman production team (on the 'top floor') and my own productions and remixes with Ian Curnow (in 'The Bunker' studio in the basement), my perspective and experiences span the whole operation – from the technical and creative to the business (and diplomatic) aspects working in a very fast-paced music industry environment.

In 2009, I self-published a 200-page first edition of the book – a 'white label' you could call it. I had a number of discussions and meetings with Pete Waterman, as I wanted his co-operation to go ahead with it, and to discuss specific topics (as I also did later with other former members of the PWL team). The first edition of the book sold out very quickly, and the response was fantastic from all parties, including ex-PWL colleagues and many fans of the music, many of whom sent me messages of how much they'd enjoyed it.

HOW DID THE EXPANDED EDITION COME ABOUT?

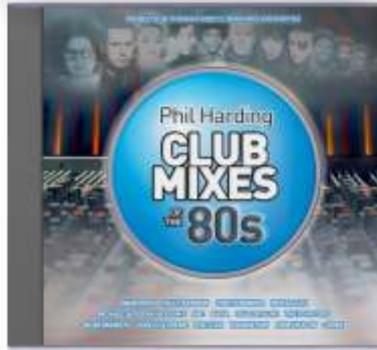
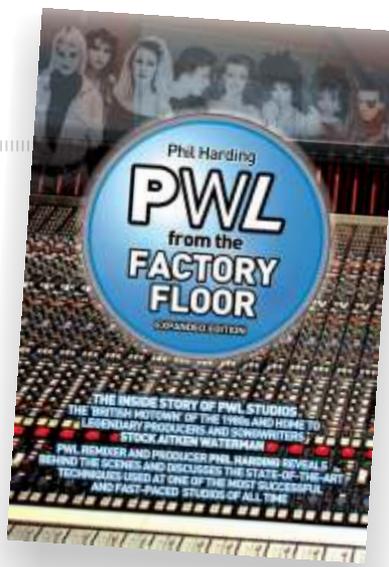
JOHN: Having put together the very successful packages of the first PWL re-issues on Cherry Pop from the track ideas they'd had for CDs of Princess, Mandy Smith and Lonnie Gordon, I phoned Phil about constructing the follow-up and first double-CD (Sinitta 'The Hits+ Collection'). He helped with producing more in-depth, 'business-like' research-format sleeve notes, with case-study interviews conducted verbally with those involved. He was terrifically helpful and insightful. We naturally went on to talking about the book's first edition (which I'd enjoyed immensely), and later took him to meet Cherry Red's MD Adam Velasco (in December 2009) with the idea of developing a second edition for Cherry Red Books and pushing the Cherry

Pop bar even higher with a full various-artists double-CD of Phil's 80s mixes and rarities as a companion release. Taking up the role of editor and working once again with music researcher and definitive PWL discographer, Jeremy Kay (approached originally as first choice editor of Mike Stock's biography) we put together a plan with Phil for expanding the book into multiple additional sections and adding in many more detailed accounts of behind-the-scenes. With such a successful and prolific operation as PWL Studios, it's a very rich, eventful and dramatic history.

WHAT TOPICS ARE COVERED IN THE BOOK?

PHIL: The main section covers each year in its own chapter 1984-1992 – the 'rise' and 'fall' of the studio's success really – not only working with a whole array of artists and discussing some of the studio techniques and challenges we faced, but other aspects of working in the music industry, such as with one highly-determined newcomer, Simon Cowell! There are in-depth interview sections with me on working with well-known artists of the era (such as Kylie Minogue, Rick Astley and Dead Or Alive), commentaries on 'the circumstances' of a whole number of key mixes I did and the music/mix styles we went through over the years and a day-in-the-life photo tour of the studio taken from video camera footage of mine. Also included is an in-depth technical section, with something for everyone – a case study on how to mix a No. 1 single (Kylie's 'Hand On Your Heart'), a definitive description and history of music technology/equipment used in the Eighties at the studio and insight into the PWL/SAW recording/mixing techniques.

JOHN: In addition to our extra research carried out from previous visits to Pete Waterman's current offices, Phil allowed us unprecedented access to all his documents, tape libraries and archives. This revealed many extra topics for Phil to discuss and also fed into constructing



(CRPOPD 100)

the comprehensive PWL Discography of his many hundreds of releases (including for the first time many that remain unreleased and previously forgotten). With many unseen photographs, this 600-page edition is rounded off with a brand-new 35-page retrospective interview with Phil and Ian Curnow (on a now-rare occasion together) with lively discussion on their time at PWL Studios.

WHAT ABOUT THE CD THAT ACCOMPANIES THE BOOK?

PHIL: I'm delighted at the package that has been put together of 25 of my club mixes and rarities from this era, which for me are very fondly-remembered and should appeal broadly to general 80s club/dance/pop fans, collectors of certain artists and of course PWL fans. Looking back, it's amazing how few of these mixes made it to CD back then. It has been wonderful to be able to include some of the Motown artist remixes we did [Michael Jackson with The Jackson 5, The Four Tops, Diana Ross] and productions with Jimmy Ruffin [best known for 'What Becomes Of The Broken Hearted'] and many highly-regarded artists from the era, as well as a selection of sought-after rarities. I was also very pleased that two unreleased tracks that Ian Curnow and I made with Rick Astley could be included, and the unreleased Club Mix I did of 'Never Gonna Give You Up' and the original 'live bass mix' of 'She Wants To Dance With Me' – all of which are discussed in the book.

JOHN: It's taken almost two years to achieve, with some quite challenging track licensing issues (inevitable with a multi-artist, multi-label project) and it's great to see that Cherry Pop's first various artists double-CD is going to be its 100th release. Both discs are packed to capacity – and once again, remastering and presentation have been taken very seriously and a lot of work has gone into researching directly at different archives over using the best masters and utilising appropriate digital restoration techniques. As someone with a background including music, technology and research, this has been a fantastic project to put together – and as with the book, Cherry Red's support for us has been excellent.

PHIL: My production partner, Ian Curnow has provided invaluable help and an interview with us and track commentary from me is included in the booklet, as well as contributions from a number of the artists. We're hopeful people will find this really worth waiting for. I'm very excited about promoting both the CD and book and will be signing copies for the first orders received by Cherry Red. ●

DISC ONE

- 1 MICHAEL JACKSON WITH THE JACKSON 5 - I WANT YOU BACK ['88] (12" Remix)
- 2 EIGHTH WONDER - I'M NOT SCARED (10" Remix)
- 3 ABC - WHEN SMOKEY SINGS (The Miami Mix)
- 4 DIANA ROSS - LOVE HANGOVER ['88] (12" Version)
- 5 RICK ASTLEY - SHE WANTS TO DANCE WITH ME (Original Extended R'n'B Version)
- 6 FOUR TOPS - REACH OUT I'LL BE THERE ['88] (12" Remix)
- 7 HOLLY JOHNSON - AMERICANOS (PWL Extended Version)
- 8 GODLEY & CREME - SNACK ATTACK (Extended Remix)
- 9 JIMMY RUFFIN - EASY JUST TO SAY (I LOVE YOU) (Extended Club Mix)
- 10 BASIA - UNTIL YOU COME BACK TO ME (Phil Harding 12" Remix)
- 11 RICK ASTLEY - TIL THE DAY THAT I DIE
- 12 DEAD OR ALIVE - YOU SPIN ME ROUND (LIKE A RECORD) (Murder Mix)

DISC TWO

- 1 BLUE MERCEDES - I WANT TO BE YOUR PROPERTY (DEF B4 Dishonour Mix)
- 2 PEPSI & SHIRLIE - HEARTACHE (Dot & Daisy's Club Remix)
- 3 IMAGINATION - INSTINCTUAL (Jack Leeek Freak Mix)
- 4 BLOW MONKEYS - DIGGING YOUR SCENE (Remix)
- 5 RICK ASTLEY - STAY WITH ME TONIGHT
- 6 FE FI FO FUM - BEAT YOUR BODY (Manhattan Mix)
- 7 THE BLUE AUGUST PROJECT - OXYGEN (Extended Dance Version)
- 8 SINITTA - BODY SHOPPING (New Vogue Version)
- 9 XS-5 - I NEED MORE (Extended Dance Version)
- 10 AGENTS AREN'T AEROPLANES - THE UPSTROKE (12")
- 11 JIMMY RUFFIN - TRULY YOURS
- 12 FIVE STAR - RAIN OE SHINE (Remix)
- 13 RICK ASTLEY - NEVER GONNA GIVE YOU UP (Phil Harding 12" Mix)