

(cover)

Comeback kid
ROBERT DE LA GAUTHIER
visits history with *Underground Legacy*

THE RETURN OF THE

K I N G

by steve lalla photo roger aziz

The brainchild of groundbreaking promoter and event organizer Patrick Legendre, this weekend's Underground Legacy bash unites long-time local DJs Tiga, Miguel Graca and Stefane Lippé with New York's Rob Di Stefano and, for his most illustrious gig since his recent return to the city, the legendary Robert De La Gauthier.

With their innumerable contributions to the growth and development of Montreal club and rave culture over the years, Legendre and De La Gauthier have secured themselves mythical status in the electronic music community. While Legendre had taken a break from organizing for four years, De La Gauthier has been living in Holland and Germany for the last 10, plying his trade behind the turntables as an internationally acclaimed DJ. In the late '80s and early '90s, however, the two forever etched their likenesses into the face of Montreal's nightlife.

F*** DE LA POLICE!

I was lucky enough to hear De La Gauthier play at January 1994's Random Access, a warehouse rave in the truest, dirtiest, coldest sense of the word, mere weeks before he would leave Montreal. Though the city's rave scene was still in its infancy, De La Gauthier had seemingly accomplished all he could here and was ready to head for greener pastures.

"I was quite tired of the politics in Montreal, it was very frustrating," De La Gauthier recalls. "Parties were getting shut down, we had just been through the whole H2O nightmare with the police chasing after us, and even then that was not new to me. I had been pushing already to have these kinds of events for a couple of years at the time. I had been to New York and I'd been partying this way already for years, so I wanted this really badly, but it was

not happening – it was very hard. I had done every club, I was playing house at DiSalvio's, mixed styles at Lézard on Tuesdays; I had techno nights, I did raves. I was one of the first to go to Quebec, Ottawa and Toronto to play at raves and warehouse parties."

More than just a party with a cool name, Underground Legacy is literally a chronological audiovisual journey through the development of our local nightlife.

"Miguel Graca is opening," explains Patrick Legendre, "playing house music from the beginning, before 1988. Robert is going to cover house from '88 to '92, and Tiga will play early rave music. Rob Di Stefano – this guy's a monument in New York – is going to do the Playground period sound, and then Stefane Lippé will cover from 2000 until now. It's a progression all night long, and during each set the lighting and the ambience in the room will be different. At one point you'll be at Bal en Blanc, then Black and Blue, for example. With projections all around the room, we can transport people to any big event that happened here in the last 10 years."

NO HOUSE IN THE GARAGE

DJing professionally for 24 years now, De La Gauthier's career was born in an era of belt-driven turntables, before any legal afterhours clubs, when raves were no more than a dream cooking on the shores of Goa.

"I started DJing in the '80s – I was the first to play house music in Montreal," he claims. "I even lost a residency of six years 'cause I was playing house at Le Garage, on Mayor Street. The owner's friends were not too keen on house. They thought it was too repetitive, so they told me I could only play one house record at a time, then I had to play something

else after it! A couple of weeks after that they kicked me out."

De La Gauthier's main reason for leaving Montreal, however, was entirely personal. On an earlier trip to Europe he had met his soul mate, Achim, his partner now for 10 years, whom – due to new legislation in Germany that recently permitted same-sex marriages – he married in late 2004.

"I went to Berlin in the summer of '93 for the Love Parade," De La Gauthier recalls, "and I met him the night before. We kept in contact, then finally in January of 1994 I went to Holland because Achim was studying there. I was really lucky because I had never produced records or anything, but I got my first booking in Germany right away. From there other promoters heard me and I started playing everywhere in Germany. Even then it was difficult, if you were just a DJ, to break into the scene, but I got lucky and was able to do that."

From Ibiza to Amsterdam, Berlin to Rotterdam, De La Gauthier has not slowed down since, producing countless EPs and remixes in the past decade, co-founding a family of four record labels and cementing his reputation worldwide as a diverse and eclectic DJ, his sets informed by years of experience, a complete lack of fear and a desire always to make people dance, laugh and lose their minds.

LIVING LEGENDRE

While De La Gauthier has shone behind the decks, it was only through the hard work and perseverance of event organizers and club owners such as Patrick Legendre that he, other DJs and thousands of partygoers were finally able to establish a thriving dance music community here.

"I've thrown parties for a long time," says Legendre. "I'm the one who opened Playground,

Montreal's first real afterhours club. I also did the first small afterhours parties in the basement of Le Royal, but in 2000 I decided to take some time off from the scene and do computer science. I missed it, so I thought I had to do it again – it's still inside me. I wanted to do my comeback at the same time as Robert, so it's perfect."

In addition to Le Royal, which ran from 1992 to '94, and Playground, which lasted from '94 to '98, Legendre was also co-owner of the seminal Big Bang nightclub from '89 to '92, and founded and produced the massive Bal en Blanc from '95 to 2000. Last year he made headlines again as he spearheaded the Collectif Montreal la Nuit and rallied against proposed afterhours restrictions in the Ville-Marie district.

"During that period a lot of people were talking bad about the scene, about drugs, or people making a lot of noise, and I thought it was about time to do something to show that it's not bad, that it's fun, and it's a cultural event."

Showcasing the founding fathers of Montreal's electronic music scene, Underground Legacy promises to be an educational experience for the uninitiated, in addition to hours of exquisite music, visuals and atmosphere, and a trip back in time for veterans of our rave and club community. ()

UNDERGROUND LEGACY

WITH ROBERT DE LA GAUTHIER, ROB DI STEFANO, TIGA, MIGUEL GRACA AND STÉFANE LIPPÉ AT DARLING FOUNDRY (745 OTTAWA ST.), JAN. 29 FOR INFO: www.undergroundlegacy.com, www.robertdelagauthier.com \$60 TICKETS AVAILABLE AT FRAPPE (1311 ST-CATHERINE E.) AND ARITHMETIC (ST-LAURENT 8120NS) OR COURS MONTRÉAL (LOCATION)