

{ MUSIC }

Electric Electronica

Producer/DJ **DIPLO**'s brand of house music has hit the mainstream, thanks in part to his work with pop stars of every variety.



hobby — just a way to put out music where we didn't know where it could go. But now, after almost three years, it makes a lot of sense. There's a whole culture around it now. It feels like a real group.

AW: The dance-music scene has exploded with DJs who've become famous overnight.

D: Nowadays, a DJ just needs to have one song that plays in the clubs and on YouTube and they blow up so quickly. But a lot of times, that's a flash in the pan. It doesn't last very long. Ours is more of a slow grow.

AW: Major Lazer's music is heavily rooted in Caribbean culture. What draws you to the music of that region and, particularly, Jamaica?

D: Growing up in Florida, I was tuned into a lot of reggae music really young. When I listened to Jamaican music — everything from ska to rocksteady to Bob Marley to dancehall — I realized how that music was like a sponge of everything. It was like what I was already doing:

always mixing and matching different things up in genres.

AW: In your collaborations as a producer, which artist has surprised you the most?

D: [Justin] Bieber. I didn't expect it to be so much fun. Working with somebody that young — they really teach you so much. He had a lot of his own opinions, but he was also so interested in learning. With him, it was really collaborative. There was a lot of rap music [we made] that no one will ever hear.

AW: You've made a habit of dressing in designer suits at your shows. Why?

D: I think you're getting paid so much money, you might as well look like a star. —DAN HYMAN

Wes Pentz, a 34-year-old Fort Lauderdale, Fla., native better known as Diplo, has quietly become one of pop music's busiest producers, working with the likes of Kanye West and Usher. He also performs year-round both as an in-demand disc jockey and as the principal mind behind reggae-infused house-music outfit Major Lazer. This month, Diplo's group releases a new album, *Free the Universe* (Mad Decent, \$12). To mark the occasion, he talked to *American Way* about dance music's newfound popularity and dressing like a star.

AMERICAN WAY: Aided by electronic dance music's recent surge in popularity, Major Lazer has evolved from a niche act to a mainstream festival headliner.

DIPLO: When we first started, it was like a little



Getting His Groove Back

Celebrating 40 years of making people shake their booties on dance floors across the world, **HARRY WAYNE CASEY**, better known as KC from KC and the Sunshine Band, is back with his first album in more than a decade, *Feeling You* (Sunshine Records, \$17). "I feel like a year ago I came out of a musical coma and these lyrics and melodies just started flying out of my head," he says with excitement.

Since his explosion onto the '70s music scene, the 62-year-old has watched numerous new artists dabble with disco and other forms of dance music. Here, he shares his favorite pop performers of today.

Rihanna



"She reminds me of the Donna Summer and Gloria Gaynor days."

Ke\$ha



"Her energy is just terrific, and her songs are very dynamic and fun."

Kelly Clarkson



"I love Kelly Clarkson, especially now that her stuff has crossed over into dance."

Cee Lo Green



"There was a dance artist back in the day whose name was Sylvester. He sang, 'You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real),' and Cee Lo definitely reminds me of that sound."

Katy Perry



"She's one of the most consistent artists out there that I can think of. I like every record of hers." —KRISTY ALPERT

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: SHANE McCULLY; ART STREIBER; JON KOPALOFF/FILM-MAGIC; TOMASO BODDI/WIREIMAGE; NELL ROCKFORD/FILMAGIC; FREDERICK N. BROWN/GETTY IMAGES; LESTER COHEN/WIREIMAGE