



FREE  
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HOORAY!!!  
FOR THE RETURN OF

# ITCHIE & SCRATCHIE

FROM BALTIMORE TO  
IRAG TO NEW ORLEANS  
WITH DAVID SIMON

RUSKO:  
NO POPSTEP TART  
TRACK BY TRACK  
MIA'S WYVA

RYAN KWANTEN:  
SUMMER BAY LOSER  
IS TRUE BLOOD HOTTIE

## STORM FRONT

GIVEN THE TASK OF CAPTURING THE ESSENCE OF PROGRESSIVE HOUSE MASTER **JOHN DIGWEED** ON FILM, **PABLO CASACUBERTA TELLS ANGUS PATERSON** HE WANTED TO CREATE A DJ DOCUMENTARY WELL OUTSIDE THE NORM.

The dance music documentary is a format that's often at odds with the understated seriousness that dance culture insists to be about. It's typically full of congratulatory backslapping, flashing lights, sexy dancing babes, as well as an obsession with capturing that single moment in the peak of a build-up when everybody has their hands in the air – and stringing it into one endless euphoric montage. So when it comes to the musical stalwart that is John Digweed, it's not surprising we've been treated to a completely different approach. His latest Beatock compilation *Structures* features what could possibly be two of the most polished and enthralling mixes we've ever heard from the man, but fans are given a tasty extra bonus in the form of the *Eye Of The Storm* documentary directed by experimental filmmaker Pablo Casacuberta, who's had extensive success both as a visual artist as well as a materials director for TV and short films during his 20-year career. In the same way that Digweed doesn't play by the rules of ego-driven DJ culture, neither did Casacuberta intend on conforming to what was expected of him.

"He didn't seem to crave 'the power' of being on stage," Casacuberta says of the underground house maestro. "He wasn't under the limelight at all. He was a mysterious, very kind guy, who seemed to be thinking all the time, although he also looked very instinctive and quick. I am not particularly into 'coolness' and similarly, John didn't seem to be concerned at all about being cool. He is simply too much into the music he plays to be distracted by such matters. So I figured that there was enough mystery about him to secure a good documentary."

One indulgent luxury that Casacuberta was afforded was the assumption his viewing audience would have an existing awareness of Digweed's 'public persona', which opened up all kinds of creative possibilities. "I always approached the shots following the same motto: 'tell me something I don't know'. To do so, I have to think how I can see the artist in ways that haven't been seen before. Once you decide

to depart from the old beaten track, you are entirely free to go anywhere. And it certainly helps a lot when you find an artist like John, who was as interested in experimentation as I was. He didn't have any preconceived ideas or no-go zones. He wanted this project to be and to feel very open."

While Digweed might be the antithesis of huge house music personalities like Erick Morillo and Roger Sanchez, he's got his own brand of charisma. He's described by Casacuberta as the most reflective, softly spoken and kind guy that you could imagine, and interestingly, it's exactly how many of his fans would perceive him. "When I saw his performances, I got the sense his interest in the music over seeded his interest in his own performance, which I saw as a very loving way of approaching his craft. I like characters that have something unique, and John was certainly one of those."

The visual framework of *Eye Of The Storm* is constructed from a dreamlike palette of visuals that goes well beyond quick cuts in nightclubs and slow-motion shots as faceless punters pump their fists in the air. Instead, the documentary is full of moody, often abstract images that are obviously meant to align with what we're hearing from the in-view subject, though not necessarily in a predictable fashion. Imagine Diggers strolling surreally through a museum, while off camera he talks about all the music he's collected over the years. Or a young child running through the desert, as Digweed recounts his formative years as a musician and a DJ.

"The mind doesn't work linearly," Casacuberta says. "If we try to represent a mental process, that representation shouldn't be literal but somehow subtle, and still be able to relate to the subject matter that is being discussed. I try to go about it in an intuitive way, trying to feel what associative ideas I get from a particular theme. By doing so, you achieve a much more intimate exploration of ideas, even when the subject of the discussion is entirely conceptual. The unusual nature of the images invites a more reflective reading of what we are seeing, and somehow suggest that what we are seeing



are mental images, rather than situations that actually happened."

That's not to say there aren't scenes that capture the intensity of a pumping nightclub. However, even these see Casacuberta experimenting with a number of different approaches – casting the DJ in silhouette, filming from many different angles, and capturing the more abstract moments that somehow manage to capture the exhilaration more accurately. "I think clubs are designed to facilitate a distorted perception of reality. Distorted in a nice way, but distorted nevertheless. The lights of a club follow patterns that don't exist anywhere else, and that are meant to produce an experience that is somehow alienated from the common, everyday life perception of things."

It's a location that's ripe with visual stimulation, described by Casacuberta as akin to a "fairground landscape", so it's hardly surprising that filmmakers often get sucked in by the most obvious moments. "It's exploding with visual stimuli and full of very odd, very crazy characters that are all sharing a kind of enormous, collective imaginary scene. I tried to convey the feeling that there is something glorious about being on the dancefloor of a club, but also something absurd, and even funny, and that all those feelings are entirely compatible with each other. I tried to focus in that diversity of points of view rather than just showing people dancing collectively. To focus on particular faces or body positions is the best way to remember that a crowd is always made of very distinctive individuals."

**WAVE: Structures/Eye Of The Storm** (Beatock/Stomp)