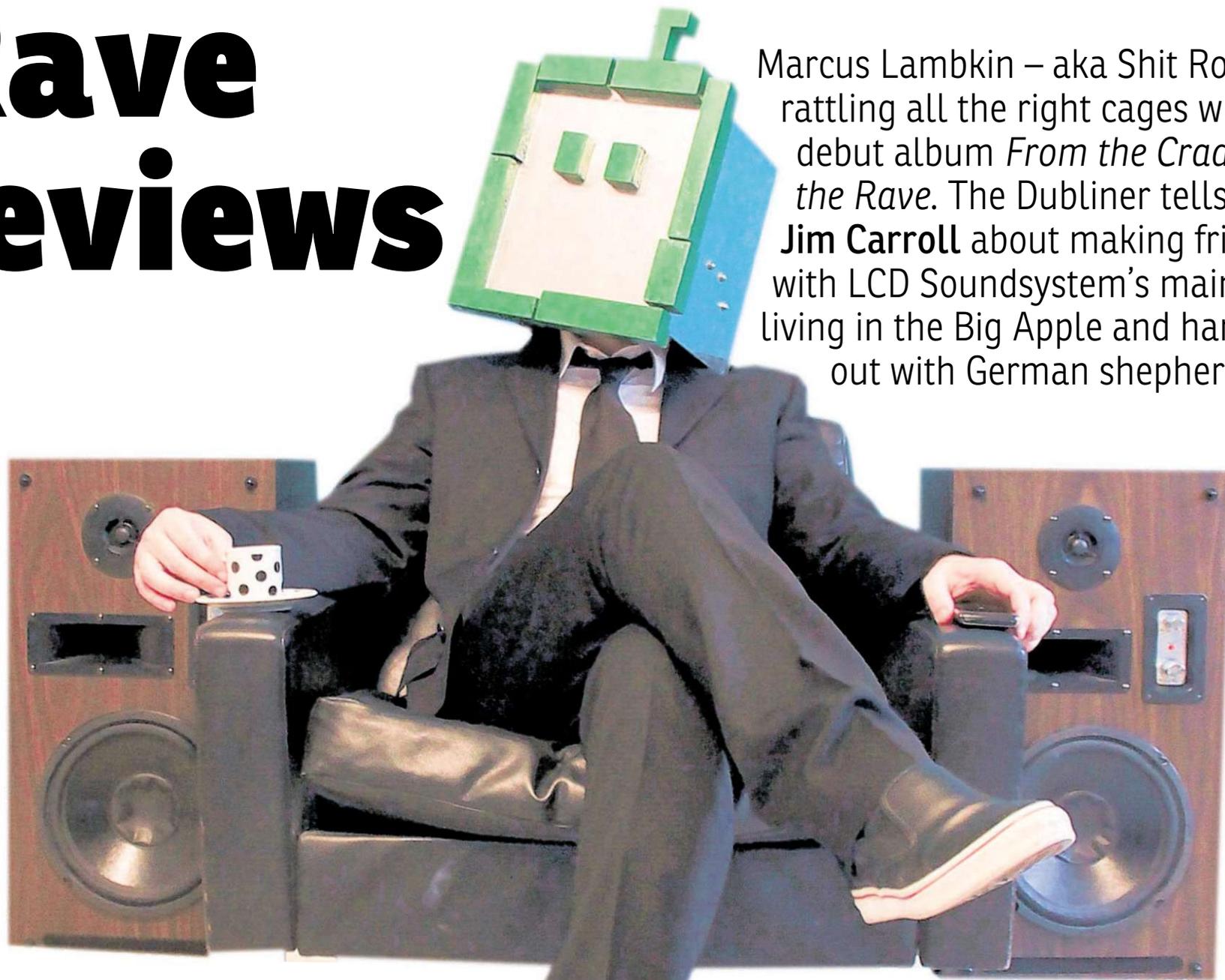


Rave reviews



Marcus Lambkin – aka Shit Robot – is rattling all the right cages with his debut album *From the Cradle to the Rave*. The Dubliner tells Jim Carroll about making friends with LCD Soundsystem's main man, living in the Big Apple and hanging out with German shepherds

IT'S TIME for Marcus Lambkin to do a twirl in the limelight. Now, you may already know about the Dubliner's adventures in New York, his connections with James "LCD Soundsystem" Murphy's DFA stable, and a string of fine, robust dance-floor singles.

But his debut album, *From the Cradle to the Rave*, is where Lambkin gloriously takes flight. All those years DJ-ing in bars and clubs, putting house, techno, disco and electro to work, has given Lambkin a sixth sense of how to construct an infectious tune.

True, there's a host of familiar names in the credits – vocalists such as Hot Chip's Alexis Taylor, The Juan MacLean's Nancy Whang and Ian Svenonius – formerly of The Nation of Ulysses and The Make-Up – who provides the soulful vocals on album standout *Simple Things* – but it's Lambkin who is captaining this ship, and he's having a blast making beautiful, classic tunes loaded with heart and soul.

"I wanted an album that girls would like," he says. "I didn't want to make an album for white pasty dudes with beards sitting at home scratching their chins. I knew I didn't want an album of dance instrumentals which were strictly for DJs. I wanted an LP that you could stick on at home and listen to all the way through."

Lambkin may well have become one of those "white pasty dudes with beards" were it not for a few twists. Back in Dublin in the early 1990s, he was friends with DJs Johnny Moy, Billy Scurry and Liam Dollard, who were making names for themselves at venues such as Sides, Temple of Sound and the Beat Club.

But Lambkin never hit the decks in those clubs. "I was best mates with Johnny and hung out with all that crew back in the day, but it would have been very lame for me to start DJing, because it would be fairly obvious that I got the job because of connections. The scene was very small and tied-up back then, and I didn't really have any aspirations to DJ. I mean, I was buying records and I'd jump on Johnny's decks and learn the ropes from him, but I never played in a club."

By day Lambkin was an apprentice cabinet-maker. "I had a couple of hippie uncles who had spent the '60s in London and Amsterdam, and they had great stories about travelling, so I knew I wanted to travel. I saw an ad in the paper for the US visa lottery, applied, got one and went out to be a cabinet-maker."

Naturally he went record-shopping in New York. "I found all the records that would be in Johnny's box that I couldn't get my hands on in Dublin in the shitty bins because no one was interested in the UK rave stuff. I found all my favourite records and built up a great collection."

The collection was soon put to use. "I blagged a gig in Brownie's on a Sunday night when I could barely mix. They asked me back, and I learned the ropes about playing in front of people. By day, I'd still work as a chippy."

The next twist of fate came when he met James Murphy. "A mutual friend of ours built this great space in the west Village, with a

studio in the basement, which James took over, and he gave myself and Dominique Keegan an office to start our record label [Plant Records]. I was this little Irish guy into dance music and James was this rock guy who didn't like dance music and thought it was all C+C Music Factory. But we hit it off and became mates. We played each other records – he schooled me in the way of Liquid Liquid, Can and ESG and I played him some great dance tunes."

The pair DJ-ed together at Shit Robot parties at the Plant bar ("it was all The Stooges, disco and acid house"), which prompted Lambkin to dabble in making his own tunes.

"I was really daunted by the idea of a big studio, and it wasn't until the Reason software came out that I started to fiddle around with tunes. James lent me a 909 and delay, and told me to play around with them. He's the one who has pushed me for years to

make a 12-inch single. He held my hand, taught me a few tricks and he still produces and mixes all my stuff."

Murphy may well be one of those telling Lambkin that he now needs to put a live show together, but he has resisted the pressure so far. "I've been a DJ for 18 years, and that's what I do best. I'm not a musician. I play synths at home, but it takes me a long time to do anything. It's not the natural thing for me to jump up onstage and play this stuff live."

"I wasn't expecting this reaction to the record, to be honest, so I am under a little bit of pressure to do a live show. I'm going to resist it for now because I think it would be very difficult to put together a live show for that record. I couldn't have the vocalists like Ian, Nancy or Alexis onstage every night, for a start. If I was going to do it, I'd want to do it right. I'm not going to stand up onstage with a laptop. That would be foolish."

The fact that Lambkin is currently living "in deep German countryside" might also scupper putting a band together.

"I met a nice German girl in New York and she wanted to go home, so I said I'd give it a year, and that was four or five years ago. We're in a little village of 900 people outside Stuttgart. All my neighbours are shepherds and farmers, not musicians and DJs."

"My next-door neighbour walks around with a crook and we bought two legs of lamb from him last week. It's great."

"I was this little Irish guy into dance music and James was this rock guy who didn't like dance music. But we hit it off and became mates"

■ ■ ■ From the Cradle to the Rave is out now on DFA. Shit Robot DJs with LCD Soundsystem at Dublin's Tripod on November 19, 20 and 21, and Underworld at Dublin's RDS on November 27