

## **SOUL AVENGERZ DJ's & Producers**

### **BIOGRAPHY\_E 08/2007**

Integral members of the funky house scene for well over a decade, Soul Avengerz state their mission as simply "to create feel good funky house for the music connoisseur." DJ/producers Paul Gardner and Wayne O'Connell exude true passion about the scene, testament to their many nights of gigs and hours spent in the studio. "We are, and have been for years and years, true house lovers of a funky style," says Paul. "We play it, we make it, we love it! Music is about having fun and that's what we do, and we believe it shows in our productions."

The boys' party friendly productions have certainly caught the eye of label Positiva, who signed them up in early 2006. But Soul Avengerz success goes way back. "Having our first record signed by Full Intention and hearing Danny Rampling play it on Radio 1 was mind blowing and something I will remember for the rest of my life," says Wayne. "I could never have dreamed it would get even better, but the Positiva deal is the biggest and best thing that has happened to us. I'm immensely excited about the future with them and still can't believe I'm living my dream!" It's not bad going for someone who became a DJ by default - at a house party one night after the DJ didn't turn up, Wayne got the nod to fetch some records and became hooked... Paul, meanwhile, became fascinated by the whole set up through an ex girlfriend's relative (who used to DJ at the legendary soul weekenders with Steve Walsh), and the two of them began to forge separate but similar paths through the early days of their careers.

In their early teens they were both into "the early electro & break dancing thing - like everyone else in our area," but then progressed into the house scene in the late eighties. Wayne cites his influences as ranging from the days when he knocked around with the Swing Family (a DJ collective from Stoke Newington, north London that played on Sunrise radio - the biggest and best pirate station of its day) whose style was soul, funk and boogie and early house music. "These guys knew their stuff and influenced me massively, setting me up with my first decks and mixer. I was also heavily influenced by Tong and Oakenfold in the early nineties, and local legend Tony Wilson was my mentor." The early pirate radio stations also had a big effect on Paul, "Centreforce and Sunrise especially," but Tony Wilson and Steve Proctor were the DJs he would pay to see play before they

became mates, and wound up DJing alongside on a regular basis in 89-91.

Wayne and Paul inevitably met, via Wayne's club night Dirty, after knowing of each other and living in the same area of London for so long. "We DJ'ed before and after each other on my night and at some stage we were back to back, and getting really good feedback from the crowd," Wayne recounts. Before long, they were playing gigs together up and down the country.

Having established themselves as one of the leading DJ duos on the scene, it was only a matter of time before Soul Avengerz turned their hands to producing, and with such a wealth of experience about what works on a dancefloor they were soon turning out peak time floor fillers. The boys cite legendary production outfit Full Intention as mentors: "they supplied us with the ammunition to play week in and week out on the London club scene and inspired us to take to the production side of things. They gave us our big break back in 1999/2000 and are true pioneers of the funky sound we play today."

From the anthemic house of 'Love You Feel', to the more subtle 'Keep The Funk Alive' the pair established a staggering production profile, catching the attention of some of the UK's major record labels, with remix work for CR2, Positiva and Island Records promptly following.

Paul also launched his own label, Housonic, in 2005, born out of a residency at Club Warehouse. "We have a good team of enthusiasts who absolutely love this house scene and who really believe in what they do," says Paul. "Although it's relatively small, we've had some great feedback already."

The boys now have two records to release on Positiva. The first release, the 'Sing EP', includes the underground hit 'Sing' (featuring Angie Brown), 'Make My Body Rock' and brand new track, 'Get On Down'. They've also signed to DJ agency IMD, alongside the likes of Pete Tong and MYNC Project, and have a host of international gigs lined up for the coming months. Wayne's club night Dirty has gone from strength to strength – it's currently the biggest night at Pacha, London - and will soon be embarking on a tour playing Pacha's venues around the world – where Soul Avengerz will be headlining every event.

"The house scene at the moment is good, very good," says Paul. "We try to push the boundaries of our scene without losing the

ingredients that make funky house what it is – 'the soul'. The funky scene is strong with some awesome producers – The Shapeshifters, Junior Jack, Kid Creme, ATFC, Seamus Haji, Joey Negro, Axwell, Freemasons, and Rincon to name just a few. And with labels such as Positiva, Defected, Eye Industries and Hed Kandi the scene is in good hands."

It's safe to say that life as a Soul Avenger is pretty sweet. "Paul will say that he does all the work which may be true but he loves me!" laughs Wayne. "We're both DJs and bring equally to the table our inspirations and ideas, while James our trusted, loyal engineer will help put our ideas together in the studio. Paul is my best friend and my business partner - I love what I'm doing and I love who I'm doing it with. Although we're very different people we gel well in the studio and behind the decks." Paul agrees that the partnership is a perfect one before giving Wayne a sideways glance. "But there is far too much love in this room!" Sally Learchmouth 2006

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