

FURIOUS RECORDS

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Running a business is difficult. Running a profitable one and maintaining close working relationships with competitors is nearly impossible — unless your business is a drum and bass record label and your competitors are other labels managed by friends and acquaintances with a shared passion for the music.

Just ask Furious Records' front men Ted Marrocco and Alex Williams (a.k.a. D-Region and Lexx). In a few short years they have managed to bring their label to the forefront of the Canadian drum and bass scene, forging many close friendships and rock solid working relationships along the way. With an arsenal of talent including old hands Tommy Illingas and Nai and newest editions UK duo Sketch and Code, it is easy to see why Furious Records is such a rising star.

In the beginning, the two artists (and longtime friends) began getting together to collaborate on tracks. But, as Lexx explains, in the late '90s they decided they were going to try and start a label because there was a lot happening within the Toronto drum and bass community at the time.

“We each brought our own knowledge to the table,” explains Lexx. “I'd been DJing a little bit, throwing small parties and I'd been into drum and bass for a while, and Ted had much more production experience and song writing ability.”

At the beginning, both men admit to being less than familiar (naïve if you will) with what it actually took to run a record label. “I didn't have the foggiest idea the kind of commitment that it would take to make a record label that would actually turn a profit,” confesses D-Region.

But the two were very open to advice from other label managers, producers, DJs and leaders within the drum and bass scene. “I started to get little bits of perspective just through going to the nights and inquiring about little things like how much it costs to even make records,” explains D-Region.

Another source of knowledge was DJ Ra, manager of Jedi Records. Before he started his own label, D-Region had sent a few of his tracks to Ra. “I thought that these guys had some talent so I started booking them at my AWOL events,” Ra explains. “We have been friends since, so it's basically I help those guys out and they help me.”

Obviously, this advice was put to good use. With a string of popular releases under its belt, Furious Records shows no signs of letting up. Both D-Region and Lexx are proud of a number of new artists recently signed to the label including established UK production and DJ duo Sketch and Code, talented local producer/DJ DS-1, and respected Canadian MC Stryka.

Sketch and Code

DJ Code explains his current involvement with Furious Records has been evolving for the last three years.

“It basically came via World Dance and AWOL, so I have a lot to thank everyone there for,” he says. “AWOL in Canada had been running for a few years, and Christmas 1999 they decided to bring me over to play at their Boxing Day event in Toronto. D-Region was on the same line up that night and I was passed some of his music after hearing DJ Ra play it. I was really into it and kept in touch with them, once I was back home, to get their new material.”

The relationship was a two way collaboration with Code also sending them music to play.

With tracks being released on a host of other labels including Intercom and Emotif, Code explains that producing good tunes opened doors for him and partner Sketch in the dnb scene. “I’ve been DJing for at least five years at things like World Dance and AWOL, which has given me a firm platform to work from,” he says. “But since we’ve been making music and getting reviewed in the press etc., everything has been projected to a much wider audience.”

DJ Code sees his and partner Sketch’s involvement with Furious Records as mutually beneficial, as do D-Region and Lexx.

“We are hoping that Furious will profit off the things that are going on for us with Intercom and Emotif,” he explains. “Hopefully having UK artists on their label will benefit them as much as it does us and help to raise their profile in the UK.”

But Code is also quick to mention the rewards he and Sketch get from the deal, including a steady supply of fresh material other people in the UK aren’t playing. “Being signed to a label in North America will hopefully give us the opportunity to work in places that we perhaps wouldn’t be exposed to without their involvement,” he adds.

D-Region explains the upcoming Sketch and Code release on Furious (Furious 04) featuring Lockjaw and Snakehead has been doing extraordinarily well on dubplate. But it is only one of a number of Furious tracks that have been dropped by DJs both in Canada and abroad.

“We’ve had guys like Dom and Roland playing it. Aquasky have been playing it. Freaky Flow’s played it and more,” he says. “We hope that one’s really going to bust us over our sales limits of the past. Our distributors are really excited about those records.”

The record is slated for general release in spring 2002.

Furious Camp

As mentioned earlier, Sketch and Code are not the only new editions to the Furious crew. Rising talent DS-1 is also making his premiere on the label with a remix of Wishing on a Star. Look for it on Name Records (Furious' bootleg subsidiary) as the b side to dance floor smasher I Do.

Although he has been DJing for the last few years, Ds-1 credits producing tracks with getting him recognition within the dnb scene. After some of his tunes were featured in the dubplate section of TorotnoJungle.com — now running 4 years strong, averaging 4 million hits a month and serving as an online meeting point for the Toronto drum and bass community — Furious records took notice.

“I guess D-Region periodically checks that (section) and he basically came through and told me that he liked my tunes and that they sounded different,” Ds-1 recounts. “That was the first big move.”

After he played some smaller parties with DJ Ra, D-Region and Lexx booked Ds-1 for a Furious Records release party in August of 2001.

“After that I locked down a residency at Turbo for the Syrous Sessions Friday nights,” Ds-1 explains. “As a result of those original breakthroughs, I found my way into a lot of club nights in and around the Toronto area.”

Ds-1 plans to devote himself to producing music for the upcoming year. Although there is only one tune out on Name Records right now, there are sure to be more.

“Basically, I'm trying to buckle down a little bit in the studio and just get my head around as many tunes as possible,” he says. “That's probably my biggest in right now, so if I settle down and I get things done then I think it will really pay off.”

Another recent edition to the Furious collective is MC Stryka. He joins Nai as a resident MC.

“Right now my role is an MC, like MC Nai,” Stryka says, explaining that they are used for any Furious Records tours or performances.

“A Furious MC's job is to know what's up and let the DJ focus on selection, and, of course, to make sure that the crowd we are playing for gets the full Furious experience,” he adds.

And having resident MCs also brings some diversity to the Furious camp. It introduces a different viewpoint into the mix.

As Nai explains, “I bring them a little bit more of the knowledge and a little bit more of the conscience and the lyrical aspect.”

Building on the success of their past vinyl releases, Furious are branching out into

the wider market with a CD mixed by the one and only Tommy Illfingas. Called Warrior Poet, it features a lot of Canadian material from labels including Jedi, his own Fortress label and Furious, as well as non-released material or tunes only on dubplate. All the material is presented in a continuous mix by Illfingas.

For Illfingas, this project was an opportunity for him to take mostly his own material and mix it himself without a lot of post production etc. "It's almost like a recap, my DJing of what I've done in the studio over that last year," he says. "Whatever I did on the turntables in that hour is what people can purchase."

Apart from the CD, Illfingas will have two tunes out on Furious in the near future. One, Warrior Poet, is the title track from the CD. The other is a remix of an earlier Furious track, Release.

Future Plans

Like any other successful business, the label's future plans include growth. Although they have achieved some success with their releases to date, D-Region and Lexx are not content to limit themselves to releasing dnb vinyl. They are flexible enough to explore other mediums of expression.

"Right now, the Furious plan is to try and explore all the different avenues and all the different mediums there are for a record label to get involved in," D-Region says. "That's why we've started doing mixed CDs, and we did mixed tapes, and we do lots of vinyl and we do a web site."

Furious' artists are also involved in a diverse array of projects both inside and outside of the dnb scene, including Nai, resident MC.

"A lot of my focus has been as a hip hop MC outside of here," he says.

"I work with my girl Masia One and we have a click called Local Genius, and we work on a whole bunch of projects that way. We have a couple of EPs coming out (and) a couple of seven inches coming."

As mentioned earlier, Sketch and Code are involved in other endeavors as well. Look for Ghost & Tribe out on Solid Ground, as well as a remix of Sappo's track, What I Need for Emotif and Whatever and Fear No Evil also on Emotif.

Although they plan on growing and evolving, D-Region promises that quality will always be important to Furious.

"We stick very solidly to not do quantity over quality," he enthuses when discussing the label's philosophy.

"We want quality all the time. But on top of that, we try to do as broad a range of things as we can so that, hopefully, Furious can grow into something that is more of a music group as opposed to just a record label that does just drum and bass

vinyl.”

Check the website out at www.furiousrecords.net. Updated regularly, it is a good source of info regarding tours, releases and label news.

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