



Unit 137 In conversation with Ed West

Over the summer of 2020 we released Ed West's latest series: **'Messages from the Dance'**. The four part series is based around two samples taken from a Unit 137 dance in New Cross, where vocalists Deemas J & Kosher both presented passionate messages to the crowd. Their words encapsulate some of the positive messages behind sound system culture, which Ed celebrates with each tune. The singles in the series each have a

distinct vibe but are united by their messages. We caught up with Ed to ask him few questions about the series.

How did the idea behind this series come about and what was your intention behind highlighting these two messages?

The idea came about actually in the rave where the words were born. I can't remember if something had happened to provoke the two of them to say the words they said, but they are both people who tend to project positivity a lot anyway. I hit up Marv (aka DJ Ren) afterwards, or after a couple of weeks when I re-remembered the idea, as he had filmed the event and had a two-track recording somehow as well. I think both of the tunes musically were ideas I was working on around that time anyway,

so the samples completed them nicely. The intention was to bring a bit of the spontaneous energy of MC's doing their thing live to the tunes I had. I guess I had probably learnt the concept from hearing samples of sound clashes in Jungle tunes, I love all the noise of crowds and the distortions from the room and speakers, it just brings another dimension to the tunes. The messages are both obviously passionately delivered and quite profound, so it's good for them to be heard by more people, and even go full cycle and get heard again in a live sound system setting.

Both singles from the series have very different vibes to them. Was this a conscious decision?

I think they were just two ideas I was working on at the time, though it must have been a bit conscious, I think it had started with Kosher's words actually, the passion in her delivery just



struck me as being a really emotive raw moment, and as I was trying to find what she had said I discovered the Deemas words as well. The instrumentals were both just experiments in the 80/85bpm sort of tempo which I've always loved because of the relationship with Dancehall, Hip-Hop and Jungle music. I just love that tempo area. I was pleased when they were both up for me using the samples as obviously they could have said no for whatever reasons. Kosher and Dee are both people that know themselves, and a fair old bit about this world we live in, they're both good friends of mine and it's always an honour to have them each on the mic in the studio or live.

The series is completed by a remix by Oliver Palfreyman and a vocal version feat. Kosher and Natty Campbell. How would you want people to listen to the series? Do you see it as a whole or individual parts?

I think the main thing I felt was that the two initial versions of the tunes were kind of like two sides to a 12" and should be perceived together. The remix and the vocal version are separate really, and were ways to show the tunes in a different light. The Big People Dance tune had always intended to be a dub instrumental type tune, and then someone had suggested I recorded a vocal version so I gave it a go, and obviously Natty and Kosher both smashed it, so there was another version, but I wanted it to be felt as a bassline first. Oliver was someone I met through doing some mix work for him, and I was really feeling his style of production, so hit him up and he flipped the samples in a wicked new style.

The artwork features heavily in both music videos, can you tell us a little bit about the concept behind artwork and the videos?

There wasn't really a plan so much with the artwork I just like making collages in photoshop really. It's a bit like sampling in music. Keifer is a wicked photographer and me and him are often talking about 35mm stuff, he'd showed me the photo's he had taken from the Joe Armon-Jones gig in brixton earlier this year, and I loved the feel of them, so he let me use some, and I just experiment with adding some colours and textures of some of my own 35mm photos i've taken and stuck them together in photoshop to make a sort of collage.



Do you think the messages now have a deeper impact during this crisis?

Yeh I think they do really, because we haven't been able to get together and experience live music for way too long, and these tracks have only come about in the way they have because of

the magic of live music. I think they're a bit of a celebration of the magic of MC culture and what happens when you get MC's on the mic bouncing off each other. So it's hopefully a bit of a reminder of how important live music is and the magic that can happen.

What're you working on next?

I've got a few things bubbling away, more stuff planned for release with 137 in 2021, and I have stuff I've produced for other artists hopefully coming out later in the year, might be another self release before the year is out as well. I'm always working away at something music related, for other peoples projects and sometimes my own.

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All photos by [Keifer N. Taylor](#)

