

SPIN CYCLE

TURNTABLE TITAN TIËSTO

WORDS PAUL SALFEN

PHOTO JONATHAN ZIZZO



For his new album, superstar DJ Tiësto wanted to shake things up. Born Tijs Michiel Verwest, the Dutch electronic music sensation felt some unlikely collaborations with a few indie rock singers would not only please his fans but keep things exciting for himself. Sitting backstage at The Palladium in Dallas, Tiësto settles back into the couch and reflects on the excitement he has for his new album, *Kaleidoscope*, which features guests Jonsi from Sigur Ros, Kele Okereke from Bloc Party, Nelly Furtado and Tegan & Sara.

"I'm a big fan of Sigur Ros, so that was one of my favorite tracks to do," Tiësto says with a smile. He runs through the tracks with enthusiasm and reiterates his satisfaction with his style mixing with Furtado and Calvin Harris in particular, adding, "I keep it interesting and fresh by changing my style a little bit. I dare to play different influences of music in my old style, and I produced a new album with a different style."

Verwest has been a professional DJ since the age of 14 and has been doing residencies at clubs since 16. As he approaches his 40th birthday in two months, he says, "I don't feel 40 at all. I always hear that I look younger and I feel a lot younger. I have the energy of someone that's 20."

Part of that constant energy comes from the thrill of the many feats he has accomplished in his time: he was the first DJ at the Olympics, played the second largest concert in history [250,000 people], played Disneyland, has a Reebok shoe named after him, a popular radio show, a restaurant and even has a wax sculpture of his likeness at Madame Tussauds in his home country. But the biggest honor for him out of everything has been to still be viable. He says, "The biggest honor for me is, nowadays, I can go anywhere in the world and a couple thousand people come to my show, and that's the biggest thing—I'm still on top of my game."

Tiësto enjoys hearing his music remixed almost as much as he enjoys doing remixes himself, especially now that it's the best of the best working on them. He smiles and explains, "I like it because I go through my record box or CD case nowadays, and I see who my favorite producers are. I just ask them to remix mine, and I already know it's going to be good." However, he's opened up less than stellar remix contests to the public, too. He laughs, "A lot of people ask for spec remixes, and I say, 'Yeah, sure,' and I give them the bars and then it's not that good."

He's also enamored with the new DJ Hero game, the electronic music version of the popular Guitar Hero series, which, of course, features his music. He says enthusiastically, "It's a great game. I thought it would be more complex when I first saw it, but it's pretty easy. It's not even close to a real DJ mix. You just push the buttons and fader."

As he flips through his enormous collection of music to plan the evening's set—a planned four hour show—he starts to consider if it's long enough.

"Lately it doesn't feel like a long time," Tiësto says. Like tonight, I was supposed to start at 12 but I wanted to start at 11 because I have so much music to play. Four hours is nothing nowadays. Five or six years ago when I played three hours, it was a lot, but now I feel like four hours is too short.

Keeps me in shape, I guess—all the fist pumping."
[Laughs]

Although he's used to playing to even bigger crowds, he feels that this show will reach even the people in the back as it does in the stadium shows overseas, even though he doesn't think about that once he hits the stage. He shrugs and says, "I don't focus a lot on the people in the back. I can see a big chunk of the crowds and I can hear them. The people in the back are always the vibe catchers anyway—the people that want to see the show but don't really want to get into it. If I go to a concert of a band I really like but don't go crazy about, I stand in the back. The most important part is keeping the die-hard fans happy in the front."

Before he stands up for his marathon performance, he gives a little hint to the future. "As a DJ, I will always play the way I am. I'm so used to it and so comfortable, but as a producer I feel there are a lot of challenges out there—maybe produce a rock band or a hip hop or dance act. I'd like to do something completely different as a producer than a DJ. That's the challenge for me in the future."

With that, he gathers his assortment of music and equipment and heads out to give the crowd a sweat-drenched four-and-a-half hour show, proving why he's still the biggest DJ in the world.