



Snowboy

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BIOG

Latin percussionist, recording artist and band leader, Snowboy, has also been a DJ since the classic Jazz Funk days of 1978 where he used to hire out the UK's No 1 Black music night club, 'The Goldmine' (made famous by the legendary Chris Hill), at the age of 17 to put on special Jazz Funk nights. It was his knowledge of Jazz, Latin, Funk and Soul records that inspired him to take up percussion and has since made 16 albums and 22 Latin, Funk and Soul singles and recorded and played with artists such as Lisa Stansfield, James Taylor Quartet, Jon Lucien, Sam Dees, Imelda May, Mick Hucknall, Mica Paris and Incognito.

As a DJ, along with Keb Darge he was one of the originators of the world-famous club night 'Deep Funk', spawning a world-wide scene under that club's name. He was a resident at The Jazz Café for 16 years, The Blue Note in Hoxton, London, and he ran the world's number one real Jazz Dance night, 'The Hi-Hat' for 13 years – which attracted dancers from all over the country. He regularly performs all over the world in countries such as Australia, Greece, the USA, Singapore, France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Japan, Hong Kong, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Bangkok, Norway, the UK, Canada and Spain.

Not to be pigeon-holed, although known for Jazz Dance, Latin, Soul and Funk, as a collector, his 30,000 piece record collection comprehensively covers Swing, Blues, Jump Jive, Rhythm and Blues, Ska, Jazz Funk, Disco and all forms of Funk such as Washington Go-Go amongst many other styles.

Snowboy is also a music historian and considered an authority on many styles of Black music. In 2009 he had a book published on the history of the UK Jazz Dance scene called "From Jazz Funk And Fusion To Acid Jazz", contributed to a book on the history of Washington Go-Go Funk and was the first journalist outside of Chicago to document their 'Juke music' and their corresponding dance style 'Footworking'. He wrote for the famous Funk and Hip Hop magazines 'Big Daddy' and 'Grand Slam' and is currently a columnist and reviewer for 'Blues And Soul' magazine.

Snowboy has three 'Hi-Hat' Jazz Dance compilations already released, another of Washington Go-Go Funk, called 'Meet Me At The Go-Go', a Mambo compilation called 'Afro Cuban Kaleidoscope' for Fania Records, 'Snowboy presents New Vintage' on BBE (and has 8 others in the pipeline for them) and a 'Good Foot' one for ACE. He has also done sleeve-notes for countless compilations of different music genres.

Other career highlights include proudly being a music curator for Wayne Hemingway's annual award-winning 'Vintage Festival', a part of the DJ team for Alex Lowes' legendary yearly 'Southport Dance Weekender' for 21 years – which is possibly the most important dance music event of its kind in the world, 'Love Soul' Soul weekender in Ibiza and Snowboy even runs his own enormously popular 30's & 40's weekender called 'Riviera Swing' in Torquay every November.

In 2006 he featured in a list of the 40 most influential British DJ's of the last 40 years in 'Blues And Soul' magazine and was the music producer and programmer for 4 years for the number one show on BBC Radio 6 – 'Craig Charles Funk & Soul Show' every Saturday.

Snowboy (real name Mark Cotgrove) started as a DJ when he was 17 years old. Inspired by the legendary DJ's Chris Hill and Bob Jones, he used to hire, monthly, the country's most legendary black music club, The Goldmine.

The Goldmine was Chris Hill's residency and it was voted the UK's No. 1 club for 12 years and was Snowboy's grounding in Jazz, Funk and Soul. After doing 24 of these Wednesday events over the years, he found his collection was getting more biased towards the Latin Fusion that was prominent in the clubs in the late 70's/early 80's and Snowboy got interested in making all the 'exotic' sounds on these records (particularly by Brazilian percussionist Airto). So after working a summer season as a prestigious 'Redcoat' at a Butlins holiday centre in 1982, with his bonus, the day he returned he went and bought his first set of Congas. After a year of trying to teach himself, Snowboy started having lessons studying Afro-Cuban and Brazilian percussion with the UK's grandfather of Latin music, Robin Jones, whom he met at a Samba night at London's Wag Club run by the legendary Jazz Dance D.J. Paul Murphy.

A few years later a friend by the name of Bill Bailey decided, as a project, he'd like to put just one record out to see how the system works – from demoing to seeing it in the shops. So, co-funding it with a friend, Allen Burrell, he asked Snowboy if he'd like to do the record as Bill was interested in his musical ideas and taste of music as a DJ. This (his debut) was called Bring On The Beat and had a B-side called When Snowboy's Rockin' The Mike which he was rapping on, as in those days he was a regular on the mic at the UK's first rap night, 'The Language Lab' in Soho, London. The A-side was a Washington D.C. style 'Go-Go' Funk track, very heavy on the percussion, which was when Mark decided to use the name 'Snowboy' (after a character he played in the show West Side Story for a local amateur theatre company called The Little Theatre Club when he was 18).

Around the same time as the release of the single, Snowboy started playing professionally for an artist who he knew from the amateur theatre company by the name of Chris Sutton. Chris released 3 singles and an album for Polydor Records, but, unfortunately, never cracked it. Also, at the same time, Snowboy was asked to tour with the Tex-Mex legend Flaco Jimenez from San Antonio, Texas. Flaco's UK label owner, Dave Hatfield, after hearing Snowboy's first single, wanted him to do a single on his label, Waterfront. The Latin-Jazz single, Mambo Teresa, featured Flaco and broke out big with the Jazz Dance scene, totally committing to it. The follow up was also recorded for Waterfront but ended up on BGP after buying it from them. The single Ritmo Snowbo, was another Latin Jazz track and, once again, cracked it on the dance-floor, with a B-side version of the jazz classic Night In Tunisia sung by Jackson Sloan (whose debut album was also produced by Snowboy).

At this point we are in 1988 and the Jazz Dance scene was massive in the UK. The records had all done well and Snowboy was very active as both a DJ and percussionist. Backtracking to when the second single came out: Snowboy's teacher, after hearing it, got him to play bongos in his Salsa band, King Salsa. The pianist in this band was Danny White who had a very big pop band at the time called Matt Bianco. Danny was going to leave Matt Bianco with his girlfriend Basia (who was the lead singer) to concentrate on her solo career. Danny asked Snowboy to play percussion in the band, which was a massive break for him because Basia went on to be really big around the World and especially America (both North and South). With Basia he did the Johnny Carson show and David Letterman and, endless TV shows as well as touring around the world.

The famous DJ recording artists, Coldcut, saw Snowboy's first record on the wall in a collectors record shop, heard it, and thought the style of percussion was what they wanted for their single Stop This Crazy Thing. He did it and it was a hit, and at a Coldcut party, Snowboy met Ian Devaney (who was in the promo video) and his girlfriend Lisa Stansfield; who had already had her first hit with Coldcut. It was Snowboy that they got in for percussion for her first and consecutive tours as well as recording on all her albums and singles (except the first album), and, like Basia, he has toured the world with her and done loads of TV shows.

This was from 1990 to present day, but, back in 1988 (again) the Jazz Dance scene had just been re-named ACID JAZZ as an in-joke amongst a group of prominent DJ's in that scene as the music, Acid House, was breaking big (obviously, musically, both styles have nothing in common). The home of this movement was at a club called Dingwalls in London which Snowboy was very much part of, playing there very often in different bands. A label was formed by the main DJ there, Gilles Peterson and Eddie Piller. The label was called Acid Jazz and Snowboy was approached to record an album for them. What is Latin Jazz doing on Acid Jazz records? The biggest mistake the

public made was not realising that Acid Jazz was a scene rather than a style of music. The music was Jazz Dance i.e. any Jazz-based music you can dance to. Snowboy was part of an Acid Jazz (scene) project on Polydor called The Freedom Principle which showed off the diversity of our scene. Snowboy contributed a Latin House track which got to No.21 in the national club charts.

Snowboy's debut album in 1988 was one of the first albums on Acid Jazz records. Label co-owner Gilles Peterson wanted to put something out that documented Snowboy's career to date by licensing all the early singles, plus record a few new tracks to make it current. The album was called Ritmo Snowbo.

As well as playing with King Salsa and Basia he then also joined the James Taylor Quartet, and played for them when he was available, and enjoyed 16 great years with them on-and-off. Through playing with James, Snowboy met Noel McKoy (JTQ's singer then) and featured Noel on two singles (Snowboy's singles usually represent him as a producer, giving him a chance to reflect his varied music taste as a DJ). The first of the two, Give Me The Sunshine, actually went into the UK national charts at No. 51.

Snowboy never wanted to put a band out on the road because he was so busy playing with other bands, but because of so many requests for gigs in 1992 he started performing regularly (as time permitted). Another album was released called Descarga Mambito, but it was his album, Something's Coming, in 1994 that gave him the most exposure. The label Acid Jazz was at its height (as was the scene) and Snowboy was in every other music publication (even on some covers), so this album surprised everybody by flying into the U.K. Indie Charts at No.11 (alongside Depeche Mode and The Smiths!) – an Afro Cuban Jazz album! Snowboy did 88 European gigs that year and has since played all over the world from Australia, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore, Turkey to Scandinavia to Ireland.

Snowboy is also a producer, a re-mixer (check his re-mixes of Lisa Stansfield, Roy Hargrove, Coldcut etc) and has played or recorded with artists such as Lisa Stansfield, Imelda May, Mick Hucknall, Mark Ronson, Basia, Mica Paris, Gibonni, Airto Moreira, Jon Lucien, James Taylor Quartet, Incognito, Flaco Jimenez, Big Boy Bloater, Mother Earth, Corduroy, Speedometer and many many more. Altogether, so far Snowboy has had 22 singles and 16 albums released on various labels ranging from Polydor, Big Life, Acid Jazz, Ubiquity/Cu-Bop (a label that specializes in Afro Cuban Jazz), Chillifunk and Freestyle. His latest critically-acclaimed album, New York Afternoon, is on his own label, Snowboy Records.

As well as his latin jazz group, Snowboy was the band-leader of the all-star UK Funk big band, The Fantasy Funk Band, and member of another Funk big band, The Sound Stylistics and co-formed a short-lived all-star UK Funk band called The Perceptions, who released 1 album and 3 singles (2 of which feature none other than James Brown's Trombonist, Fred Wesley).

Also a writer, Snowboy had a music history book published on the UK Jazz Dance scene called From Jazz Funk And Fusion To Acid Jazz – The History Of The UK Jazz Dance Scene. It was published in 2009 by Authorhouse/Chaser Publications. He was also a columnist and Jazz and Funk reviewer for the long-running and world-famous Blues And Soul magazine. He has recently been featured in the books Salsa – Musical Heartbeat Of Latin America by Sue Steward, Dancin' Salsa – Salsa Hotline Japan and is in the Who's Who Of Latin Music. He will be soon featured in a new book on the history of Mambo music.

Aside from Snowboy's career as a musician, he can currently be found deejaying at the South London Soul Train twice a month, and until recently at the award-winning 'The Good Foot' at the world-famous Madame Jo Jo's, playing 60's Funk, Soul, Boogaloo and Mambo. He was also the music-programmer for 4 years for BBC 6's number one radio show Craig Charles Funk And Soul Show.

He is without doubt, the country's best known Latin percussionist and his band is probably Europe's most travelled Latin Jazz act. He sees himself in the future as just to continue to spread his brand of exciting Afro Cuban Jazz around the furthest reaches of the planet.

Snowboy's proudest association is with his No.1 fan – Professor Robert Farris Thompson of Yale University. He is one of the world's leading authorities on Afro-related Art, History and Music and was quoted as saying "In one man's opinion, I think, for Afro Cuban music, Snowboy is doing, and can do at ever higher and widening levels, what the Beatles did for Rock".

Snowboy is an endorser of L.P. percussion and Zildjian cymbal's.