

earthdance

BY ANDREW KNYTE

Earthdance is an annual event in which dance floors around the world unite for one day in support of world peace and healing. Started in 1997 by a visionary named Chris Dekker, this year's event (taking place on October 14th) will include 80 cities in 40 countries around the world. The culmination of the event will be the international Prayer for Peace at 12am Greenwich Mean Time. During this unified moment, participants will be linked up on dance floors, via the web, and through the broadcasts of Radio Free Asia in a powerful moment of human consciousness.



The proceeds of the event will go towards main charities: Earthdance Spirit (Tibet), Earthdance Environment, Earthdance Tribes, and Earthdance Children. Not only will money be raised by the millions of participants around the world attending the parties, but also through sales of the Earthdance 2000 CD being released on the CyberOctave/HigherOctave record label this fall. That CD will include artists such as Groove Armada, Orbital, and Moby - whom all donated their tracks to the project.

Instead of boring you with my own interpretation of this phenomenon, I've decided to let you jump right into a Q&A session with three major players in the Earthdance project, including Chris Dekker himself, the founder of Earthdance. Earthdance will be broadcast live over the web at [Raveworld](#) as well as the Earthdance websites around the world to accommodate the anticipated traffic. Enjoy...

Interview #1: Joe Matheny at Immersion New Media

Immersion New Media is a young, high tech company based in Santa Cruz, CA founded in July, 1999. They specialize in digital video - meaning streamed (webcast) video, CD-rom and DVD video. Joe Matheny is the President/CEO/Founder of Immersion New Media. Immersion produced the CD-rom/DVD video on Earthdance that is being released on Higher Octave/Cyber Octave records this fall.

Q: How did you get involved with the Earthdance project?

A: Well actually, very serendipitously...I was over at another client's place, doing a demo of some of our new DVD/Web technology. It just so happened that Chris Dekker from Earthdance was actually there in the room - he had just been in a meeting previous to me coming in. He saw me setting up and he asked if he could stay and see it, and I said sure and then he saw it and boom, we hit it off.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about Immersion New Media and how it got started?

A: One of the reasons we started the company was, we were all working for traditional software corporations. Even though some of the places were cool for a software corporation, it was still a corporation and the bottom line is that you're not going to get to do really cool, super techno stuff. most of it's going to be corporate. (ominous emphasis). We decided to start a company where we we could do fun things and we're not really greedy. We're not one of these dot-com companies that wants to make a billion dollars tomorrow by an over-evaluated stock IPO. What we're into is building stuff that we like, that we think is cool. That we think lends to the expansion and raising of consciousness of the human race. Our background is, well, we basically come from the Nintendo generation. I can't Think of a single person in this company that's not into house, drum'n'bass or techno. We make plenty of money, we Make enough money to live. So, this whole thing's about 'you have to start a dot-com and go IPO and make a billion dollars' is just crap - and we don't believe in it.

Q: Incredible, revolutionary if I may say so...

A: (Laughter)...everybody keeps saying that. Like, 'my God, you're not greedy?!'

Q: If there's one thing that you would want people to know about Immersion New Media - what would it be?

A: That we're New Media, we're not old Media.

Q: That's it?

A: That means something. Before writing was stamped into the culture with the printing press...the way we communicated with each other was we all danced around a fire and told stories. We painted on cave walls, and we made clay figurines, and we banged on drums. All the things we did to communicate to each other were holistic expressions...not this disassociated, intellectual way of doing it with words on paper. Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, books - they just don't get what we do. It's like, they're speaking in cuneiform or something, and we're speaking in some sort of Alpha-Centauri dialect. They just don't know how to communicate the way we communicate, so what we decided to do was to create a company that communicates our way.

Q: So besides the DVD project, will Immersion New Media be involved in any other aspect of the Earthdance project this year?

A: Actually, I probably will be - Immersion through me will. I'll be there with my Canon XL 1 I think doing some digital shooting and I think we're going to try to link that up and pipe it out live on the web. In kind of an unofficial capacity, Immersion is still involved. Everybody in the company is way behind what Chris and those guys are doing, so we try to lend as much of our time volunteer-wise as we can.

Interview #2: Collin Rae at Higher Octave

Collin Rae is the Product Marketing Manager at Higher Octave records. Mr. Rae has written for Accelerator magazine and worked at EMI records in San Francisco before arriving at Higher Octave in Malibu, CA. Cyber Octave is the dance/electronica division of Higher Octave records, on which the Earthdance CD/DVD/CD-Rom package is being released.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about Higher Octave?

A: Well, Higher Octave started out about 15 years ago. It was one of the first New Age record labels. It's always been a label that concentrated on not only the music, but the spirituality that surrounded the music that they were choosing to release. Every project we've released had to have a certain amount of consciousness and spirituality...



Q: That's great - that's great for the project. How did Higher Octave get involved with the Earthdance?

A: That was our president Matt Marshall. Through some twist of fate, he has a way of meeting these types of people who have this sort of elevated consciousness in their projects - they sort of gravitate towards him. And it's an amazing thing.

Q: Right. Could you describe any other artists or projects that might be related to the rave scene at all?

A: The Earthdance project is the one that launched us into that field...which was also an important reason why they sought a person like me to work in marketing. I was doing some writing for Accelerator magazine and my background was Electronic music and that kind of thing. Now what we're doing is looking at delving into some of the other artists that are surrounding Earthdance like a young kid named Steve Porter who is a

producer and mixer that is heavily into the Earthdance family and wants to be a part of this label and that whole project. We do the Medicine Drum records which is the musical project by Chris Dekker. We want to bring in bands that may not be related to Earthdance directly, but are continuing that modern/electronic sound that will fit within what we're doing with Earthdance.

Q: Now how many years has Higher Octave been putting out the Earthdance CDs?

A: This is the second year...

Q: Incredible. And how long do you plan on doing it?

C: Hopefully as long as Earthdance grows and is around.

Q: Wow. So would you then say this is more of an underground thing or you'd want to get as much awareness as possible?

A: We are trying to lift this out of the underground. With certain people - when you can throw raves around the world and get two to five thousand people at those parties worldwide...that to me signifies that it's more than an underground thing. It is now our job to raise consciousness in the music buying community. This music is more than just music that you pop in your stereo, ya know, this is something that is being collected and put out to serve this purpose and to raise consciousness about the issues in Tibet and worldwide issues.

Q: Well, let me ask you this one question, and that would be, if there's one thing that you would want the Eklipze magazine readers to know about either yourself or Higher Octave, or anything else that you're into - what would that be?

C: (laughter) There's probably a lot of things, but we do this Earthdance record in order to sell it to help fund future Earthdance projects. Support us by picking up the record and letting that money go. Higher Octave doesn't make any profit from that record. This is done by us purely to uplift that movement. Recognize that and help us out.

Interview #3: Chris Dekker at Earthdance



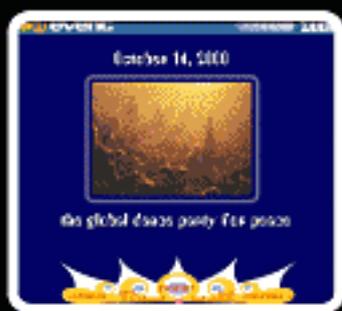
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Chris Dekker is the reason all of this is happening. An all-around nice guy, Dekker is a musician, a humanitarian, an entrepreneur and lover of life. Dekker is a practitioner of shamanism and has traveled all over the world.

Q: Could you talk about your admiration for dance culture?

A: I've been a percussionist for like, sixteen years now, and my original passion was for organic drums and organic rhythms and then when I got into making electronica music as a producer with my band Medicine Drum, the idea was to do electronic music and travel together. When I sort of got into electronic dance music I found it as one of the most powerful sort of new forces of music I ever felt. It was so tribal, it was really a reconnection of the spirit, of the body, and dance which is taking over which was great. I was brought up in a culture where you 'go out and watch the band' and there was a separation, but now you can just immerse yourself into the great energy of dance beats and sounds and people moving their body. It's an ancient tribal revival I call it.

Q: Can we talk about the origins of Earthdance?

A: Sure. We started doing these parties in London called 'Return to the Source' which was a fusion between ancient and modern, and the idea was to create a contemporary club night using electronic dance music but have a real shamanic theme to it, and that exploded and we took it across the world to South Africa, Australia - we've been to America a few times. So that was my first step into trying to create an event with consciousness and it was great. So then I had this idea - when I was traveling one day - I just had this idea of the whole world dancing at the same time. I thought if that could happen, that would be a really powerful thing because one of the oldest rituals of humankind is to dance together as a tribe, and I thought the whole world dancing as a tribe, with music and dance, no boundaries, no need for words. I came back to London, brainstormed and started networking with some people I knew internationally. The first Earthdance we did, we had 18 cities take part. It became this viral network. I made lots of phone calls, lots of e-mails, getting promoters

involved...we basically started communities that just kept spreading. It was great and it's grown since then.

Q: Now, as far as the focus on Tibet - that seems to be a core cause of the Earthdance project.

A: Right.

Q: How did that take shape?

A: I've always been a great supporter of the Tibetan cause. It's one of these causes that doesn't get a lot of support by international government for one. It gets media support, and luckily some of the Hollywood stars got involved, otherwise nobody would hear about it. Especially in the UK where we were living, it is so underplayed in the media the atrocities that are going on right now in the 21st century, it is incredible to even believe that the governments of the world are allowing it to happen.

Q: Could you talk about it a little bit because I'll admit that I'm a media victim in that respect...

A: Sure. For example, 6000 monasteries being destroyed...monks at this very moment today are being tortured in prisons with cattle prods in their mouths - electrified, their teeth are falling out because there's so much electricity. There's beatings, whippings, all sorts of torture - the Chinese are experts at torture. Basically they're systematically over a period of time breaking the spirit of the country. It's cultural genocide, and over a period of time they've flooded Tibet with Chinese, they've raped the environment, it's got one of the most saddest histories of environmental damage. It's the roof of the world, it has a very, very frail ecosystem. And they're continually blowing it to pieces, taking all of the forests down, it's a very fertile land and they know it too, it's a great wealth of resources and their just mining it to bits.

Q: One of the things that struck a personal chord with me about the Earthdance project is the whole idea of globalism and concern for fellow humanity - and when you mention the word genocide, to me, it's one of those things that happens a lot. People actually kill people just based on them being different...

A: It's incredible that it's happening. Here I am nestled in sunny California and life's really cool and I'm shopping organic foods but across the other side of the world...there's actual documented proof that women very advanced in their stages of pregnancy are being dragged into little vans and be taken out into the middle of nowhere and aborted.

Q: In China?

A: In Tibet. Tibetan women. It's really sickening.

Q: Are there any other countries such as maybe Croatia, Bosnia, Rwanda - things that you might eventually direct your Energy towards?

A: Well actually yes - originally the focus has been Tibet, only because it has the spiritual message behind the actual cause. It's also very deep and for me it symbolizes the essence of dance culture. The whole dance culture tagline PLUR (Peace Love Unity & Respect?) that's Buddhist - that's exactly what the Tibetans are practicing.

Q: Oh really? I didn't know that...

A: Peace, Love, Unity & Respect...even though their country is being taken over, they're not wanting to fight back. They're incredible people really. Very peaceful, it's incredible. So, dance culture for me also symbolizes a great gathering of the peaceful tribes through a peaceful union of music and dance. And it's a great cause for dance culture...

Q: To rally around...

A: Yes. It's a real call for the underdog as well. The governments are all making their big plans with the growing economy of China, and nobody wants to attack it - well, not attack it or make an issue or stand up against China...

Q: Or even question it...

A: They're definitely questioning it. If Tibet had loads of oil that America needed it would be another situation like what happened in the Middle East - it's all politics, and it's a shame that a whole race of people have to be put into a political agenda.

Q: And you were saying that this year some different things were happening - some expansions of issues?

A: So the last three years, we've noticed that some of the promoters in different parts of the world have wanted to support their local issues. We expanded the Earthdance causes this year and you can choose from four causes as a promoter. The Environment, The Children, The Indigenous Tribes or Tibet. So what's happening now is that the Brazilian promoters are choosing the rainforests, the South African promoters are choosing the starving children in Africa. It's allowed the whole thing to open up and peace be the issue. There's so many issues...

Q: Think globally, act locally...

C: Terrific...

Q: One more thing about humanity before I move onto the Earthdance project. What is your position on the AIDS epidemic and how that's pretty much decimating a lot of our population?

A: The AIDS epidemic...you mean in our society?

Q: Generally our society, and it seems to be attacking the third world with a vengeance...

A: That's a difficult question. AIDS, and plagues, and all these sorts of things are a symbol of where society is at with our lack of using a conscious use of resources. A lack of conscious use of spirit and all sorts of things. I don't really know - there's so many different theories about how it was designed in a laboratory and spread into the third world, and all sorts of conspiracy theories - definitely. I'm not one to give an opinion on how it formed. All I can say definitely is that it's a bad situation.

On a general level, any epidemic will bring people back to what's really real, - the human spirit, the human body, looking after yourself, and AIDS has definitely done that. It's brought back a sense of compassion. The whole AIDS movement for example in Australia - I had big contact with the gay community there, and many of my friends are gay, and it's really brought such a sense of solidarity in a lot of them as well - the whole community and that spreads to other communities.

On that level, when society goes off track, there's always natural, crazy things that happen like the [Bubonic] Plague to get us back into taking care of ourselves and taking care of our environment. If we don't take care of the environment...the planet is also a body, a living entity and when it has a cancer, the water is dirty, the air is dirty, we've got to start looking after that and we're part of that cycle and AIDS is another example of how we're not looking after ourselves and the planet.

Can you tell me about Eklipze Magazine?

Q: Sure. Eklipze Magazine is an underground magazine, based on electronic music, started by Honey Malek, I believe it's been around for about a year. It's still growing, definitely as magazine and right now all the staffers work for free including myself. And we're really just all about promoting awareness and really trying to put forward - not to be judgmental, but positive, drug-free side of the rave culture, and better living through circuitry, if you will.

A: That's exactly what we're all about. That was our whole thing with Return to the Source...my ex- wife was a dance therapist, and she did a lot of work with breathing techniques. She used to do these workshops - she used to hand all the kids in the clubs her card to come to these workshops for free. She taught people how to use breath and movement - first with movement to get themselves to get to a heightened sense of awareness and ecstasy naturally. And it was very successful.

Q: Wow - that's awesome!

A: You should interview her one day - she has a wealth of information when it comes to that...

Q: I think I'll take you up on that offer actually. Could you talk a little bit about the Medicine Drum project?

A: Sure. Medicine Drum is the idea of bring tribal beats and energy with electronic music - that's why my live drums are always woven into the music, and lots of ethnic sounds, etc. Now we have a singer from Russia who is classically trained and she sings a Middle Eastern/European style...she's great. We also have a violinist and keyboardist who does great solos. It's an interesting blend.

Q: Have you performed live?

C: Yeah - we've performed for years all around the world in all the big festivals...Womad...Japan, etc. Actually, we're doing a 'Return To The Source' party in Mexico in late October.

Q: That sounds so cool...

A: You'd love it. I've been wanting to start the club in the Bay Area...but Earthdance is just too busy for me these days. I mean - everything goes on the back burner when it comes to Earthdance. (Laughter)

Q: Of course, that's the marquee event...Speaking of Earthdance, one of the things I'm sure some people might wonder about is the 'Prayer for Peace'. Is it a non-denominational prayer? Can you talk a little bit about that?

A: Yes. One of the greatest feelings is building energy and [being] able to direct that energy into a moment...a really powerful thing. That was the idea behind the prayer, to create a moment when you could just feel all over the world everyone connecting up, while [doing] it locally with your brothers and sisters. It's a very powerful thing. We did this very simple track, an ambient five minute track that isn't specific to any specific genre of electronica, it's more like a breakdown. It has spoken word which is translated into different languages as well. It says, "We are the Rainbow Tribe...". It's a really simple and universal prayer for peace.

Q: And the prayer isn't directed to anyone directly?

A: Well it's more for the planet...since it's been for Tibet...we do [directly address] Tibet in the prayer. [It's] for peace for all nations, peace within ourselves and peace for Tibet.

Q: Is there anything in particular that you would want an Ekliptze reader to know about either Earthdance or Chris Dekker - the individual, that I haven't asked you about?

A: Well, another thing we did last year is that we had the first Earthdance Conference (March, 99) where we invited promoters from around the world to join together in Dharmasala, India to discuss how we can make Earthdance better and more efficient. The highlight of that was his almighty holiness, the Dalai Lama. We had 26 promoters come, and many had never met each other before because it had been organized by the internet. That's definitely been a highlight.

Q: So, there'll probably be another conference next March?

A: We're going to plan a conference in South America - there's a contact we have in Ecuador who can take people deep into the rainforest on a Shamanic journey and we definitely learn about the rainforest and the ecosystem and the fertility there. Planning a conference there in that setting would be quite powerful.

Q: One of the things I also asked Mr. Rae (Collin Rae of Higher Octave) about was the whole idea of 'underground' vs. 'commercial' if you will...

A: Yeah, that's a good question.

Q: And he was saying that he wanted the Earthdance CD to kind of, rise out of the underground to get the word out. What's your feeling about that?

A: The great thing is that we're at a good point now to go overground because we've already established ourselves as 'strongly in the underground'. We've actually grown to big to handle ourselves at an organizational level as an underground organization because there's just too much work now. We need seriously to have some overground exposure because we really want to make this thing as big as possible. My ultimate vision of Earthdance is to create a day when the world is dancing regardless of genre. The Latino community is dancing, you can have the country and western people dancing, you can have the Christians dancing, everybody really loves dance. Salsa nights, you name it - there are so many sub-communities of dance culture. We really want to break this thing out because the blueprint is really simple. You want to dance? Gather your community together and join up. You can have it in your home, or you can have it in a hall, or have it in a club...

To find the nearest Earthdance party to where you are, log onto the [Earthdance web site](#). There you'll also learn more about Earthdance 2000 and all the latest updates!

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