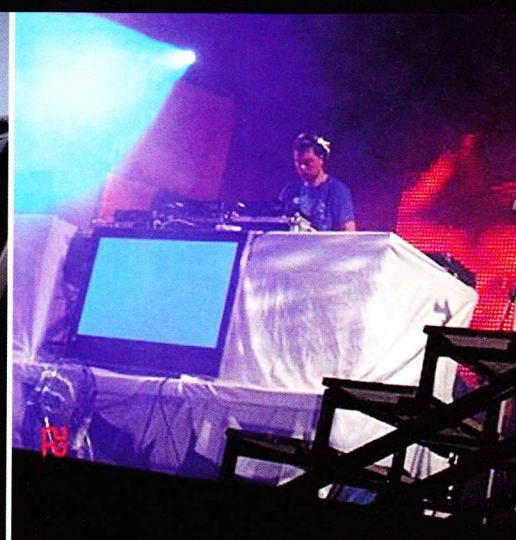


FRESH approach

By day he is mild-mannered Carlisle postie Martyn Thompson. But in the privacy of his spare room, Martyn becomes Fresh 27 – a DJ and record company boss who might soon have the music world quite literally at his fingertips. **Nick Brownlee** reports

Photography by Phil Rigby



Martyn produces the Kula Records music from his spare room. His biggest gig was a festival in Fuengirola in S

The Beatles arguably recorded some of the greatest albums of all time – a feat made all the more extraordinary by the rudimentary equipment they recorded them on. Indeed in a recent documentary about Abbey Road Studios, their producer George Martin sat surrounded by what appeared to be the dusty Bakelite contents of a junk shop.

Flash forward now to the studio of a very modern record producer. To the spare room of Carlisle's very own Fresh 27, in fact. For here, in a space too small to swing a cat, is the electronic nervecentre of Kula Records.

And it is here that the future of the music industry, once the preserve of brash Mickey Most and Jonathan King types, is to be found.

Fresh 27 is the nom-de-plume of Martyn Thompson, a wholly unassuming 30-year-old postman who lives with his fiancée Suzy in a modern house in a new estate just off the Wigton Road.

You may not have heard of either Fresh or Martyn. But it is surely a matter of time before one is a household name and the other is being mentioned in the same breath as other famous ex-postmen, such as ACDC's Bon Scott, comedian Steve Carrell, and, er, former Home Secretary Alan Johnson.

"I don't know about that, I've only been going six months," Martyn says with typical modesty. "But it would be nice to think that one day I could give up the day job and spend my time doing what is really just my hobby.

"Mind you, it's a hobby that is taking up

an increasing amount of my time. As soon as I get in from work I go upstairs and I can be in there for hours. It's a job that Suzy is so understanding. So understanding, in fact, that she does the marketing for Kula Records!"

In 2010 you do not need to sing or play an instrument to become a hitmaker. Instead, like Martyn, you must become a master of music software – a computer programmer as opposed to a performer.

At his cramped desk, which boasts two computer screens, a pair of hefty speakers, and a synth keyboard, Martyn uses the latest technology to mash up digital samples and effects into a coherent backing track. Over the top he then overlays a vocal track that could have been emailed to him by a singer from another part of the world.



'The aim really is to turn Kula into a brand, like Ministry of Sound,' says Martyn, aka Fresh 27

The skill is measuring the music to the locals, and coming up with that killer dance vibe that will drive club audiences wild.

It's no surprise that Martyn's heroes are the likes of Todd Terry and David Morales, DJs capable of mesmerising vast audiences with their skills at the turntable.

"I was never much good at playing musical instruments when I was a kid, but I was always interested in DJing," Martyn says, gesturing at a selection of vinyl and digital decks on the shelf.

"I started off in my bedroom, then managed to get to perform at Concrete in Carlisle. My biggest-ever gig was at a festival in Fuengirola, Spain, where I was up in front of 500 people."

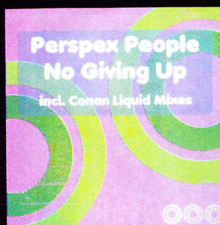
Having enjoyed a taste of performing,

however, Martyn quickly decided that his future lay behind the scenes.

Having observed how digital technology combined with the internet had made it possible for anyone with the wherewithal to tout their wares to the public, he invested in the right equipment, made some contacts, and Kula Records was born.

Initially the label was used to promote his own music. But soon he was collaborating with dance artists such as Conan Liquid, Scibi and predominantly Perspex People.

His latest release with Perspex People, **No Giving Up**, has already enjoyed some



favourable reviews from the gurus of the house scene, such as Graeme Park, Danny Rampling and Graham Sahara.

"The aim really is to turn Kula into a brand, like Ministry of Sound," Martyn says. "It's very early days so far, of course, but the initial response has been fantastically encouraging."

"There is no set formula for creating a hit record – if there was, everyone would be at it. But all you can try and do is keep plugging away and hope that one of your tracks will strike a chord."

And with that he turns back to his computer screen, where he is busy mixing what he hopes will be just that magic number. Watch this space.

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