



CLARK RETURNS WITH ANTICIPATED NEW ALBUM "TOTEMS FLARE" OUT JULY 13th (TBC)

Artist: CLARK

Title: TOTEMS FLARE

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Ask **Chris Clark** a question and he will answer it. This might sound like stating the bleeding obvious, but in the case of music producers it is pretty unusual. Mystique and abstraction are everything for the kind of musicians he generally gets compared to: musicians who tend to put intense effort into obscuring their personalities, or at very least enforcing a sharp separation of personality and music. Not so Chris. Ask him about family, friends, lifestyle, music-making, whatever, and he will tell you what he thinks. His answer might be delivered with sharp wit, or be followed by a shrewd observation that gives you a new twist on the topic in hand, but at its core it will be straightforward.

This straightforwardness bears examination, because it is something which has always been present in Clark's music too, and which is emerging more and more with each release, culminating in the triumphant drive of **'Totems Flare'**: a record so immediate and ambitious there is no knowing where it might take him. That's not to say that **'Totems Flare'** doesn't have all the hyperactive intellect and technically dazzling detail that you would expect from a WARP artist – it does, in bucketloads. But there is a sense that all the production finesse, all the cleverness, all the tricks work together in the construction of lethally powerful delivery units for the insidious melodic hooks and rave rushes that are constantly centre stage in the tracks. There is musicianship at work – Chris uses guitar, drums and piano, albeit unrecognisably heavily processed, and his programming is virtuosic – but there is no noodling here, nor is there any sense that this is music only for the cognoscenti. As Chris says *"the ridiculous brute force of modern pop engineering is definitely not something I've ever shied away from"* - and that is the context in which this album needs to be heard.

This refusal to be more-underground-than-thou, and the willingness to take influence from anywhere and reach out to anyone, can be traced back to Chris's first experiences in music. *"I've had issues with people who insist on being in one music 'gang' since school",* he says *"It always just seemed like ignorance to me, like a misguided contempt for other things just for the sake of fitting in. I ended up having about four groups of friends because I liked Seattle grunge type music, I liked acid and electronics, I liked hip hop, I liked all sorts and I wasn't going to separate out one that was 'my thing'."*

As a 14-year-old in London satellite town St Albans, music was already Chris's only ambition: *"like a lot of kids I wanted to be in a band, it seemed like an idyllic life, but that quickly formed into something more concrete where I started planning towards it with a constant thought of 'this could genuinely be wicked'"*, he says. His "left-wing intellectual" father and mother working in social services were not so keen. *"I was passively discouraged,"* says Chris, *"in that very English way that says 'this really isn't sensible', you know. But back then I was much more arrogant – I was probably a real little shit between 14 and 20, in fact – and I seemed to do nothing but go to parties, hijack the stereo and turn my tracks up loud. They were just noise really, then; I lost a few friends along the way, but I gained quite a few too..."*

Signing to WARP at 20, while still at Bristol University, forced Chris to drop the arrogance, though. *"I had to,"* he says. *"I didn't need to push myself in everyone's faces once I was signed, I'd achieved that, and now it was time to put up or shut up: I had to make the work."* Despite his prodigious work rate, though, this was never a strain for him: the idyllic life he'd dreamed of had become a reality. *"Seriously, I don't need anything if I have space to make music. If my flat has a bed and space to arrange my kit so it's comfortable to work I don't need anything else. OK, I do strike a balance between being a working musician and having a certain amount of decadence going on, but even when I'm on a roll and not sleeping for three days because the tunes keep coming, it doesn't feel like work – this is what I want to be doing."*

Eight years, five albums, untold EP tracks and stints living in Brighton, Birmingham and Berlin later, Chris's

sense that he is where he wants to be hasn't changed; indeed, his work rate and exploration of his own sound has made him feel even more sure of his position. *"I don't ever want to sound arrogant,"* he says, *"because I know there are thousands of musicians who would like to be where I am, and in a sense I know I am very lucky – but at the same time there is a feeling of confidence that I have been doing the right things. I've put the work in, I've done so much travelling and so many gigs, and it's paying off now."*

Clark is seen by many as the most "WARP-ish" of the current generation of WARP artists, and certainly when his career was launched with '**Clarence Park**', his sound fitted neatly into the progressively-structured, melodic style of tracks that WARP had cultivated since the early 90s, albeit perhaps in a more haphazard form. But the fierce work ethic that Chris describes, and his refusal to sit still meant his sound moved on in leaps and bounds – 2006's '**Body Riddle**' in particular marking such a quantum leap that Clark's music could no longer be heard except on its own terms. Without losing touch with his roots, '**Body Riddle**' was the realisation of Clark's identity as an artist and the consolidation of his next level production skills; this was impossible to ignore, and global sales reflected its artistic success, particularly in **Japan**, where Chris is something of a star, topping the **itunes electronic charts in March 2009**.

That album and the two which followed – which Chris sees as forming a "trilogy" - have seen a steady and clear progression, from the baroque melodics of '**Body Riddle**' through the hard dancefloor drive of '**Turning Dragon**' (an album he says is as inspired by **Ed Banger** records as much as by the more obviously credible techno of **Cristian Vogel**, **Neil Landstrumm** and **Jeff Mills**) to '**Totems Flare**', which combines the key qualities of both into yet another huge leap forward. The increase in ambition, scale and panache of '**Totems Flare**' is as big as that which '**Body Riddle**' represented, and early reactions suggest the worldwide commercial response could be at least as significant. And, vitally, this further leap forward came naturally.

"The only hard thing with this album," says Chris, *"was selecting the tracks: I've got so many that it was a constant process of editing and chiselling down the structure until it was completely watertight. I've got enough tracks for the next three years if I wanted to rest now, but I've already gone off on new ideas which are so, so different: the next album is half-done, and that's going to be a complete departure from this 'trilogy'."*

Outside of his recording work, Chris has also been reaching out to as many audience sectors as possible: still that kid who refuses to join any one "music gang", he has shared stages not only with **Luke Vibert**, **Drexciya** and **Amon Tobin** but **Tortoise** and **65 Days Of Static**. His remix work, too, crosses genres, bringing his unique style to bear on works by **Friendly Fires**, **Scroobius Pip**, **Amon Tobin**, **Milanese** and **M.A.N.D.Y** among many others.

And so all of Chris's qualities have come to play on '**Totems Flare**': that youthful cockiness that he took in hand and wilfully transformed into a mature confidence that shows in his music ever more with each release; the refusal to partition music by subculture or allegiance; and more than anything, the straightforwardness, the natural desire to communicate directly without any wilful obscurantism. This is music that pushes technological limits, but never at the expense of reaching out directly to the listener, regardless of whether they are a "head" or not. Though it is hard, intense and rooted in the rave, '**Totems Flare**' with its instantly-memorable riffs and hooklines and immediately thrilling dynamics could very easily have a shocking degree of mass appeal: it is huge, moving music suited to the open skies and giant laser shows of festivals just as much as to dark clubs or insular headphone voyaging – and this could very easily be the album that brings festival-sized crowds his way. Chris Clark doesn't mess about, and neither does his music.

Joe Muggs, May 2009

Praise from preceding EP, Growl's Garden:

"WARNING! If you ignore these next 77 words then your life will never be the same. Clark has forged his best record EVER... This is the sound of Clark having fun. And it's the best dance music we've heard in 2009. Simple " – Clash

"It sounds MASSIVE. The snarling bass, kicking breaks and waves of sound of the title track could teach the Chemical Bros a thing or two about stadium sized dynamics ... it's simply awesome – in every sense of the word." Mixmag - 4/5

"This may only be a relatively short release, but in sheer compact force it outdoes even previous, formidable Chris Clark releases such as Body Riddle." The Wire

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