



**"SOME PEOPLE COMPLAIN ABOUT THE SMOG IN LA, BUT FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS THERE HAVE BEEN CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS WHO LIVE AND BREATHE IT, AND WE WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY"**

# SMOG

The hair on my arms undulates, tickling me as if by a breeze, but I'm inside a dark room. What could be sky scrapers are strategically placed around the dancefloor, ensuring maximum vibes for the dance. Off to the left, people cue for their next round. I'm even having a little trouble seeing straight, but I haven't even made it to the bar yet. Every breath I take requires a little more effort than normal, but its not the air pollution this city is famous for. The Los Angeles night air pulses thick with sine waves and snare drums rumbling forth from one of the largest soundsystems pushing proper sub weight in SoCal.

Judging by the temperature in here, it can only be summertime in LA and the party people are glowing like neon in a blacklight tonight. Faces smile back at one another thankful they provided earplugs at the door, but only so they can spend so much time on the business end of a dancefloor. It's a packed house, sweat dripping, waists winding, gunfingers blazing, hands held high, they dip to the thump of the subs and the flash of the disco lights and cameras. The dubstep paparazzi is in full effect tonight, ensuring another well documented event, perfectly capturing each glamorous moment, a perfect counter point to the photobooth recording all the smiles permanently affixed to the faces of people who, at least for tonight, love every breath of SMOG they take.

We at Big Up mag were lucky enough, through bribery, blackmail and a little extortion to corner one of SMOG's co-founders, and with a name like this you know its gonna be good, Mr. Drew Best.

**Obviously people are curious how you got into promoting smog, and dubstep in general, so how did it all come together?**

When we first started out Smog, there weren't any other dubstep events happening in LA. We had been influenced by things like Mary Anne Hobb's Dubstep Warz program, and had seen video's on YouTube where the camera was focused on an ash tray at dubwar bouncing off the table, or the urinal at DMZ where the bass made wakes in the pool of piss. We saw that and said, "Thats awesome - we want to do that!"

**"WE DIDN'T EVEN THINK ENOUGH TUNES EXISTED ON VINYL FOR AN ALL-DUBSTEP EVENT TO HAPPEN"**

**So you were big into the sub weight Dubstep was representing. We can all understand that. No one was making it happen and you guys stepped up. How did you pull it off?**

We set out to do the first dubstep event in LA. We knew a few people from here and there that were experimenting with djing dubstep - but we were skeptical that an all-dubstep event in LA could even be possible. We didn't even think enough tunes existed on vinyl for an all-dubstep event to happen.

photo by Gilbert Mojano

**Well, obviously no worries there! They've been doing all dubstep nights in the UK for TIME! So aside from the locals you knew, who was your heavyweight talent? Did you guys book a name DJ for your first outing?**

Originally we sought out 12th Planet (At the time going by Infiltrata) who we had heard was part of Argon Records and had been making some dubstep beats... but he had a gig in Germany for the night we were talking about. So we decided to go to the source. We contacted Nick Argon and asked if he and Matty G would be interested in playing at LA's first dubstep event. They were stoked to do it - and we couldn't believe they agreed to drive down. But we made it happen. So we started the motions to put together SMOG.

**Nice one! The Argon boys are Bay Area dubstep legends, and those two are really cool guys to boot! I'm sure they brought the heat! The event has recently relocated, what was the original venue?**

The first SMOG took place at an Irish bar in Downtown LA called Casey's. They had this large outdoor patio area that was all brick floors and walls and was sunk in from the street. We hired Mobius to run their Turbosound rig at our event. Being an outdoor party, you could hear the bass blasting from blocks away. Dave Q from Dub War was in town, and we were able to get him in for a 30 minute set. I remember he was blown away by the amount of noise we could make in the desolate downtown LA saying "If this was NYC the cops would be here instantly." The free event that we promoted as an "Experiment in dubstep" turned out to be a giant success.

**So was there a lot of support locally for the sound? The LA scene today is pretty vibrant; was the scene this close knit from the inception?**

I can look at the photos from back then, and there are a lot of faces who I didn't know at the time, but now looking at those pics I can see all of the key players in the LA scene. That night sneezed out what the LA dubstep scene is today.

**Ok so the first night was a smash hit. Where did you go from there?**

After that things just started rolling. We were a little nomadic, doing events at clubs like Vanguard and Tokio Bar. Our first UK headliner was our good friend Cyrus. Around that time an article in the *LA Times* came out about dubstep in LA. The people at The Echo saw the article and called us up. We reached a deal and decided to move to The Echo. Also around that time, we linked up with Sam XL and helped him launch the Pure Filth nights - which were legendary in LA's dubstep history! It was an underground speak easy that was packed to the gills with people - Saturday night style partying on a Tuesday... every Tuesday - it was incredible!

**So you guys had outgrown previous locations, and had decided to move to The Echo after the fortuitous Times article. Any favorite memories in that location? Any big events that just stand out in your memory?**

Our first big night at The Echo was our first year anniversary. We brought out Youngsta and had Nick Argon and Matty G return. After that Benga and Hatcha came threw and blew LA away. Also Plastician followed - which also featured Breakage giving his first SMOG performance. I'd have to say that was one of my favorite parties. Around the time of the Benga and Hatcha and the Plastician shows we kicked off several after parties that became legendary. We'd go till six am partying - we have some great blackmail footage of Plastician that might be worth something someday.

**Haha!!! Yes! I'm sure you can at least get some leverage on booking him next time! So one year comes and goes, things start to coalesce, where did you go from there? What was the next step?**

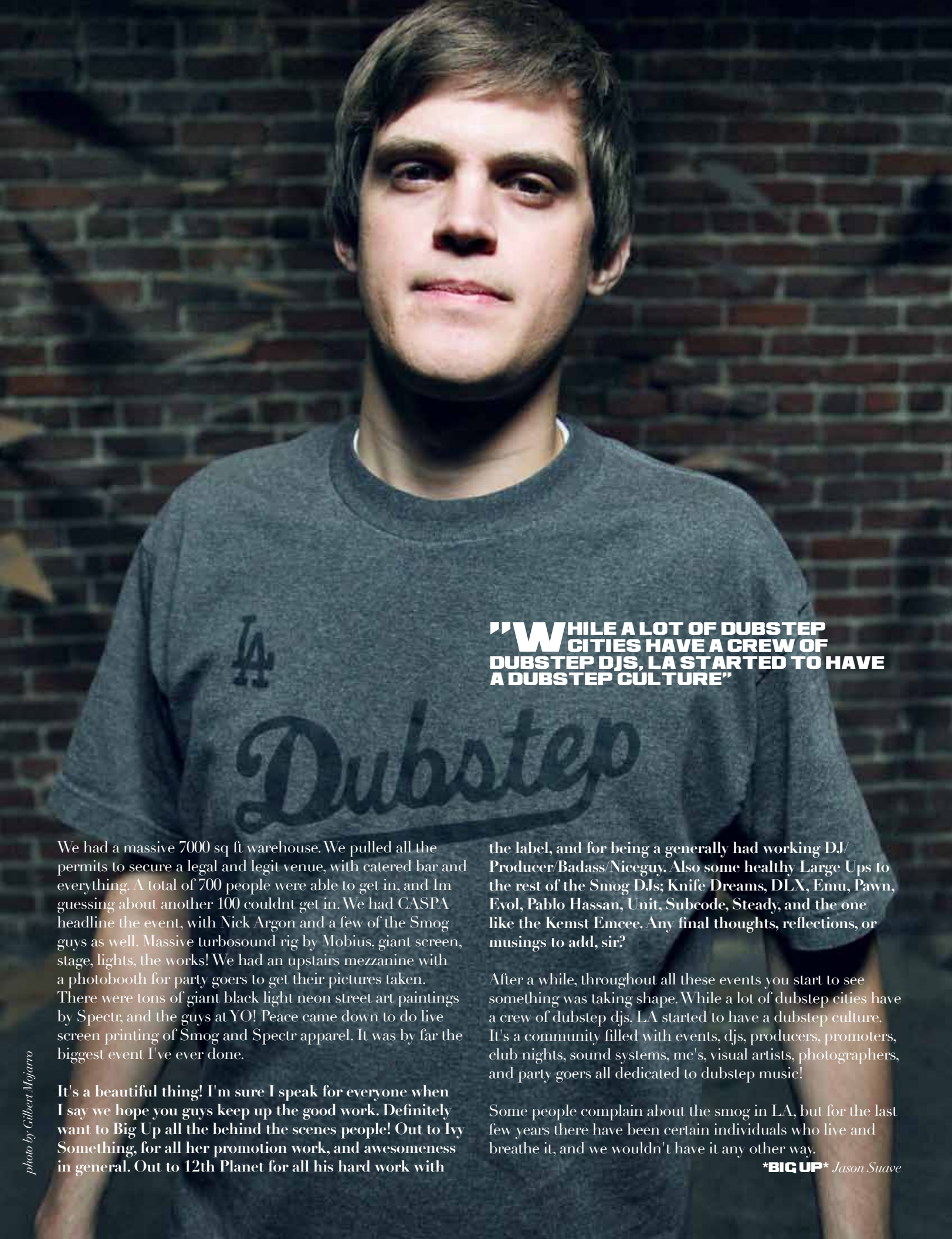
2008 proved to be a major year. Our first event was a label launch party in February. We struck a deal with Load Media distribution and set out to found our label. With the profits we made on the launch show, 12th Planet and I flew out to London for the DMZ third year anniversary and to try and generate some buzz about our label. Being into dubstep and going to London for DMZ is kinda like a Muslim going to Mecca. There's so much energy thriving in that city revolving around dubstep, its really amazing! We did radio promo on Plastician's Rinse FM show and Boomnoise and Poke's Sub FM show. We met our distributors, went to Transition to get some dubplates cut, checked out FWD and DMZ - and just met so many people along the way. It surprised us to see how many people had already known about SMOG.

When we got back from London, we went full speed ahead with SMOG events. We did about five major shows in four months - all of them went off without a hinge. Over the summer we had Chef, Dub War NYC, Hatcha, OSC (Antierum & Roommate), DJG, Youngsta, Seven.

**Man, you guys are staying quite busy then! Shows forging more of a scene, launching the label, several big releases on the label, and top talent from across the globe at the events! 2008 was a big year for sure! What was your number one favorite party of '08?**

The Smog two-year anniversary was the show I had been waiting to do. Big sound system, big promo, big event. A lot of people who try to do promotions try and go big for their first time, but this was something two years in the making. The budget got so out of control, that we just figured "we'll take the loss - at least we'll have a good time" - but everything worked out okay. We brought back our good friend Plastician for an exclusive visit to LA. Also joining us was Cyrus, and the entire Smog crew. We also had art work and live t-shirt printing by local street artist SPECTR.

**You guys do a lot of stuff with SPECTR: flyers, T-shirts, art for the shows, and the infamous Smog Dubplate shirt line. It's nice to see the whole scene come together to support each other like that. So that brings us up to current. You just relocated SMOG from The Echo to a new venue. Word on the street is the last show was off the chains! Talk about that a little bit.**



**"WHILE A LOT OF DUBSTEP CITIES HAVE A CREW OF DUBSTEP DJs, LA STARTED TO HAVE A DUBSTEP CULTURE"**

We had a massive 7000 sq ft warehouse. We pulled all the permits to secure a legal and legit venue, with catered bar and everything. A total of 700 people were able to get in, and I'm guessing about another 100 couldn't get in. We had CASPA headline the event, with Nick Argon and a few of the Smog guys as well. Massive turbosound rig by Mobius, giant screen, stage, lights, the works! We had an upstairs mezzanine with a photobooth for party goers to get their pictures taken. There were tons of giant black light neon street art paintings by Spectr, and the guys at YO! Peace came down to do live screen printing of Smog and Spectr apparel. It was by far the biggest event I've ever done.

It's a beautiful thing! I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say we hope you guys keep up the good work. Definitely want to Big Up all the behind the scenes people! Out to Ivy Something, for all her promotion work, and awesomeness in general. Out to 12th Planet for all his hard work with

the label, and for being a generally had working DJ/Producer/Badass/Niceguy. Also some healthy Large Ups to the rest of the Smog DJs; Knife Dreams, DLX, Emu, Pawn, Evol, Pablo Hassan, Unit, Subcode, Steady, and the one like the Kemst Emcee. Any final thoughts, reflections, or musings to add, sir?

After a while, throughout all these events you start to see something was taking shape. While a lot of dubstep cities have a crew of dubstep djs, LA started to have a dubstep culture. It's a community filled with events, djs, producers, promoters, club nights, sound systems, mc's, visual artists, photographers, and party goers all dedicated to dubstep music!

Some people complain about the smog in LA, but for the last few years there have been certain individuals who live and breathe it, and we wouldn't have it any other way.

**\*BIG UP\*** Jason Suave