

TALKIN' BOUT AN EVOLUTION

by Jeffery Taylor

There comes a time in everyone's life when they need to step back and take a look at where they are and decide where they want to go. Some people, whether out of fear or comfort, get stuck in a certain place and one day realize they are not as happy as they would like to be. Change is scary, however, and many decide to stay where they are, spinning their wheels and digging themselves deeper into the rut they have created for themselves. Others look within to find the courage they need to shift gears and begin to move forward in a different direction. Some are lucky to have friends or family to support them on their journey, while others have only their inner strength to rely on to make the necessary changes. Victor Calderone had established himself as one of the most successful DJ/producers in the world with a string of remixes for some of the biggest names in pop, residencies at the hottest clubs around the country, and headlining appearances at any major Circuit event he chose. But, he was starting to feel stagnant. He needed to change. He needed to evolve.

"It was a scary moment for me," Victor tells *noize*. "I had success

playing the Circuit, producing the commercial pop remixes. So, really, I could have been comfortable doing that, but I wasn't happy. So I took the risk to change it, shake things up a bit, and it paid off." Victor reemerges on the scene stronger than ever with the release of *Evolve*, a 13-track CD featuring his signature sound reinvented for today's dance floors. Inspired by his hugely successful parties of the same name, this album gives listeners an earful of the most popular tracks you're likely to hear at Calderone's new parties.

Although well known for his diva anthems, Victor's heart is in the deep, dark, after-hours vibe. His music has always had that sexy feeling – listen to any Victor Calderone production and you can identify it by its heavy, driving bassline and erotic sensuality. For years, his fans have been undulating to his percussive rhythms on dance floors all over the world, getting lost in his musical landscapes. His sound resonates with his listeners, taking them to places that only good music can.

His remixes for Madonna, beginning with "Frozen," the first single from her groundbreaking *Ray of Light* album in 1998, gave him widespread exposure and led to numerous other pop remixes for such artists as Destiny's Child, Bette Midler, and k.d. lang. His reworking of Sting's "Desert Rose" in 1999 sent



dance floors spinning as the song spent 80 weeks on the Billboard dance charts, while his reinvention of Mary Mary's "Shackles" from his 2001 release *E=VC²* Vol. 2 on Tommy Boy Records worked the boys into a frenzy with its pulsing, driving beats, and dynamic builds.

His original productions were no less impressive. "Are You Satisfied" featuring powerhouse Deborah Cooper was a huge success as well reaching #1 on the Billboard dance music charts. He had worked with Cooper back in 1999 on his legendary collaboration "Do It Properly" with Grammy Award winner Peter Rauhofer.

But screaming divas and pop princesses were not all that Victor Calderone was about. "You need to take risks. You need to experiment," he explains. The first step in his evolution was his 2003 release *Resonate*. Although not as commercially successful as his previous two *E=VC²* albums, this CD set the tone for Victor's future sound. "Resonate was the start of my transition," says Calderone. "That was me kind of searching for where I was going. I didn't know where I was going to wind up. I was just trying something different. I think now I'm really settling into a sound."

It's obvious that his new sound is resonating with his fans as evidenced by the success of his "Evolve" parties. Playing regularly at Stereo in Montreal and Crobar in New York (now Studio Mezmor), Victor has been attracting more and more fans, and not just of the Circuit variety. His crowds have become more mixed and are there

because they love his music, not just because he knows Madonna.

His intention was to make the parties more about the music and less about the spectacle – a change from the lavish Gay Pride events he threw at the Hammerstein Ballroom in New York City a few years ago. "I wanted Evolve to be a music-driven party and have other people that I thought were doing great things musically as far as DJing and producing. I didn't want Evolve just to be about me. I wanted to introduce the audience to new talent. So I started working with guys like Chus & Ceballos, DJ Vibe, and Tom Stephan."

He also wanted to make it less about the ticket price and more about making it easy for everyone to come and enjoy the music. So he set the ticket price at \$20. Though these prices may not allow Calderone to hire a 50-piece orchestra to accompany him as he spins like he did in 2001 at his blowout party "Caligula: A Roman Orgy," it is more than a bargain to hear some of the world's top DJs and producers at some of the best spaces in the world.

Victor has continued to expand his musical reach globally, playing not only at Twilo in Miami and at Sonic in Toronto, but in such international destinations as Tel Aviv, Dubai, London, and Ibiza. Playing for audiences he hadn't played for before, Victor is sometimes surprised by the energy and the excitement from the international crowds. Remarking about a recent performance in Bulgaria, Calderone comments, "I never knew I had so many fans there. It was one of the most incredible parties."

The Brooklyn native's heart belongs to New York, however, where he just bought a new loft in DUMBO,

Brooklyn's hottest new residential area. This sprawling space is home to Calderone and his beautiful wife Athena, as well as their four-year-old son Jivan, whose name means "life." The birth of his son was a major milestone in Victor's development both as an artist and as a person. "We gave life to Jivan and he completely gave me new life and inspiration," Victor says. "I think, from that moment when my son was born, a lot changed for me in such a positive way," he continues. "It changed my outlook on life. It inspired me to do whatever I was doing at the moment better and apply myself and work hard." The loft space also houses a new state-of-the-art recording studio where Calderone can concentrate on his production work. He's excited to be able to act on inspiration in the comfort of his new home while staying close to his family.

He's also excited by the success of the Evolve parties in New York. This past New Year's, Evolve played host to 6000 revelers and Calderone closed to a completely packed dance floor, spinning from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. on New Year's Day, after playing New Year's Eve in Miami and Montreal. "I slept for two days," he laughs.

"For me, what's been going on in New York has been really special," he says. "I've had a really special thing in Montreal for quite some time and I feel like it's kind of developed new in New York for me. People are really looking forward to the party. I'm getting really positive feedback.

"I feel a sense of freedom when I

play in New York that I didn't before," he continues. "I feel like Evolve has established something that I hadn't had before and it's really exciting for me. I really look forward to it."

He shows his gratitude to his fans with the release of his *Evolve* CD. "I wanted to take some of the tracks that were really big for me at the Evolve events and get them out there for the fans." Victor has always been very appreciative of his fans' support and understands that they're an integral part of his success. When asked about the fans that are disappointed with the absence of vocals in his new sound, he replies, "I know I lost some fans, but I know I gained a lot of new fans as well. I don't want those people that are holding onto the old Victor Calderone. We need to move forward."

He goes further, saying, "I think my sound still has that excitement, still has that sexy element to it, and I think it's a lot of fun to experience on the dance floor. Unfortunately, there aren't as many vocalists out there as there were back then when I was doing all those remixes and productions. It's not that I don't like vocals, it just needs to be the right vocal." He also confides that his development will continue as he works on fusing his new sound with vocals, appealing to both his old fan base and his new one as well.

It's important, especially as an artist, to stay true to yourself and to listen to your inner voice. You can't please all of the people all of the time. Victor Calderone is not only making himself happy but also the legions of fans who are flocking to his dance floor to revel in his new incarnation. "I needed to find the new sound for me and I feel like I have. It's really exciting right now. I feel like I'm just beginning again."