



# MOBY

## Old-school techno adds a touch of vulnerability to his latest project

"I'M AN ONLY CHILD WHO LIVES ALONE and usually works alone," declares Moby flatly. The techno pioneer isn't bemoaning his lot in life— it's just his explanation of why, after more than 20 years of producing his own records, he brought in Mark "Spike" Stent to co-produce his 11th album, *Innocents*.

"I like to work by myself," he says, "but I lose objectivity. The only sounding board I have is me. I thought it would be interesting to have someone else around to gain their objectivity."

The choice of Stent (Madonna, Lady Gaga, Beyoncé, Muse, U2) was enhanced by their shared history. "Spike and I grew

up listening to the same records," says Moby. "His background is with bands like Throbbing Gristle and a lot of weird electronic music in the 1980s, and then Massive Attack and Björk." Moby's trajectory similarly went from '80s punk rocker to international techno auteur to highly licensed hit-maker whose song "Extreme Ways" runs over the closing credits of all four of the *Bourne* films.

Another new turn on the moody, soulful *Innocents* is its abundance of guest vocalists—the Flaming Lips' Wayne Coyne, Skylar Grey, Cold Specks, Damien Jurado and Screaming Trees' Mark Lanegan. "It wasn't deliberate," Moby says of the star-power recruiting. "The vocalists we used were the ones who could add to the emotion of the song."

The last thing Moby and Stent wanted to create was a polished pop record. To that end they brought in old analog gear, hissing tape machines, wobbly reverb units and offbeat drum machines. "When Spike and I started, he was clear that it had to have a strong quality of vulnerability," says Moby. "Which seems contrary to the way most electronic music is made these days, which is big and bombastic—and I'm not saying that in a negative way. But I wanted to make a record that was vulnerable and humble. If I was a 22-year-old pop star, I might have felt differently. But I'm 47 and making a record that likely won't be played on the radio."

For Moby, the dodgy equipment was an uncontrollable element of imperfection that became a metaphor for human frailty. "There's the recognition that life is short and art is precious," Moby adds. "So why not just make music that moves you?"

—Linda Laban

