

## **The Random Interview with Motor City Drum Ensemble**

The modern day chiefs of electronic music have many guises; some are known for their outstanding ability to uncover gems amongst the riff raff of sample CD based clutter and present these to a baying audience. Others are known for their prowess behind the mixing desk, avoiding sampled CD based clutter and putting something special sounding together. Some others are known for their dedication to clearing away the aforementioned clutter, and giving the genre a brand new lease of life by forming labels and releasing timeless music for people to lose it to on misty dance floors. Miraculously, some manage to combine all three.

Over the last 18 months under the moniker, Motor City Drum Ensemble, aka Danilo Plessow has helped steer dance floors away from the continuous stream of one-stab 4/4 wonders and presented the dancer with something a bit more soulful, a bit more raw; and a bit more Detroit sounding. But as the name may suggest, Danilo's not a native Motowner but a descendent of Germany's own 'Cradle of the automobile': Stuttgart, further proving that Chuck Roberts was right and that "house really is a feeling".

We felt it was only right to find out more about Motor City Drum Ensemble: the DJ, the producer and the label owner.

### **Tell us about your musical background...who and what have been the big influences on your sound?**

I started playing drums when I was 6, and got into the school big band aged 11/12. This was my first contact with jazz, and although it was mainly mainstream stuff, I found my love for this kind of music. At the same time, I was influenced by the sound that ruled the street – golden era hip hop. It was 1997; sound of the season was Nas "Illmatic", Gangstarr, Jeru the Damaj, Atcq etc. I got cheap sequencer software and started to do some hip hop beats. I soon realised that the hip hop stuff uses mainly jazz/soul samples and as a reason started to search for samples in this style – and as the town I come from (near Stuttgart) only had one record store, which was focused on metal and guitar stuff, I was very restricted with what I got, but at the same time I could buy some really good and rare records for next to nothing. Being bound to these little possibilities, it helped me to form a good musical starting point.

Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Sun Ra, some Blue Notes, some Black Jazz Records. And also a strange little house album entitled "Silent Introduction" by Moodymann.

### **When and how did your love affair with house music start?**

When I bought "Silent introduction" back in 1998/9, I was 14 years old and couldn't really understand what this record was about. I had just bought it because I found the samples quite interesting but I didn't get why it was so repetitive, minimal. This changed when I first went to a club - Suddenly it all made perfect sense. It was a good time in Stuttgart, around 2000, there were some really good clubs and the crowds were way better than they are today. My favourite club was the "LeFonque" where I was introduced to house music, but also broken beats, "nujazz" or whatever you wanna call it.

### **What came first: decks or drum samples?**

Drum Samples... I started to DJ when my first record came out, 2001. I had collected some vinyl before, but it was mostly for sampling reasons and I used some old crappy record player to listen to them.

### **Your tracks contain some rather wonderful soul samples and always have a very "real" feel to them, what non-electronic music have you found yourself returning to over the years?**

I'm still collecting all kinds of music, from Jazz, Soul, Funk over 70's Psychedelic Rock, Kraut,

Disco to Folk and Hip Hop. There is so much good stuff out there, I can't imagine to be able to stop this obsession one day

### **What's in the MCDE studio?**

In the last five years I more and more switched from Plug-Ins to the real deal. I have a few old school synths, like the Yamaha DX7 which is probably the most used synth on my MCDE productions. And I also collect Drummachines, hence the name MCDE.

### **The Jayson Brothers recently released the outstanding Monster Box on your MCDE label; who are these guys and where did you find them?**

They are friends originally from the US who moved near Stuttgart already years ago. They are not really producers, more like music lovers with a big collection of disco and the likes. I convinced them to search for some stuff which might fit together and some time later they came up with some pretty nice ideas, and we finished the 12" at my studio altogether. And there's more to come!

### **You've previously released under the name Inverse Cinematics alongside Joachim Tobias with the sound more focused on the broken beat side of things; what does the future hold for this project?**

It has always been a little hard with Joachim and me, as we had different priorities in life, So I ended up doing most of the IC stuff myself in the last 4 years. But now it looks like he's got some perspective and also ideas and the motivation – so maybe we are going to work on something in the coming year. But it will defiantly sound different than the last stuff – I was quite disappointed with the feedback on the album.

### **What's coming up next on your Four Roses and MCDE labels?**

We are currently planning some new stuff for Four Roses; next release will probably be a split EP from Mujaba and myself. On MCDE, there's gonna be the next "Raw Cuts" release soon, As well as some other stuff I did, plus we are currently working on some other artists etc.

### **Your calendar seems increasingly full, any recent stand out gigs? You are playing at Sub Club in Glasgow, one of my favourite clubs...**

Really looking forward to Sub Club as well, never been there before. All my recent gigs have been really nice, Goa in Madrid was probably the craziest, 10000 people partying on a Sunday afternoon.

### **Which artists/labels have really impressed you recently?**

There's some quite good music around at the moment, but what really impressed me the most must be the fantastic album by Terre Thamelitz aka DJ Sprinkles on Mule. It has been in my car stereo for quite some time already.

### **How did your release with the legendary 2020 Vision come about?**

They've been in touch with me through MySpace for quite some time until we agreed on a 12".

### **You mentioned in a previous article that you are planning to take the MCDE sound on the road; how's that shaping up?**

There are some ideas, but nothing fixed yet. First step – I'll buy a Macbook this week.

### **As a producer, DJ and record label owner, what advice can you give new producers who are**

## **looking to get their music heard?**

The one thing I've learned over the last couple of years: Always stay true to yourself and your music; don't follow any trends or whatever. It's necessary to have a unique sound in order to survive in this crazy market nowadays. And once you have found this sound, it doesn't really matter how you promote it - people will find you faster than you'd think.

## **What can we expect over the next 6 months from MCDE?**

So far, the fixed list looks like this:

Remixes for DJ Sprinkles on Mule, Losoul on Playhouse and Tom Trago on Rush Hour.

One track features for Four Roses and Quintessentials, 2 12"s for MCDE, and maybe another track on 20:20, plus loads of gigs, check the MySpace site for updates.

## **Finally, you reference Sun-Ra on your MySpace and this writer is pretty ignorant to his stuff; any stand out tracks or albums I need to check out?**

There's lots of brilliant Sun Ra stuff – my favourite album is probably "We travel the Spaceways".

By Si Apr 16th, 2009