

Other Voices

A N O T H E R N I C E M E S S

DJ MARCELLE

Get to know DJ Marcelle/Another Nice Mess, a forward-thinking Dutch dj with little patience for nostalgia and convenience. We check in with the thoughtful dj to get a sense of her guiding philosophies on and off the decks.

OTHER VOICES is a monthly column by KRISTIN MALOSSİ aka DJ VOICES

DJ VOICES: I'll start with the question I ask everyone in this series: what are your non-musical inspirations? I've seen you mention Dadaism, fluxus, Month Python, art brut, and so on. Could you mention anything else beyond music that influences you and your sets, and how?

DJ MARCELLE: Well, these are non-music influences, are they? What I find inspiring about dada, apart from the often truly original and intense and honest art, is that the makers don't have a desire to "make it", to see it as a career. They do all this out of internal necessity and I find that essential in any art. When I limit myself to my world, music and the dj-world in particular, I find that too many people do it partly for the "wrong" reasons, see it more as a career, a tool to gain acquaintance, to be "cool," to please an audience. Music can come second place. They do it to be known, to give the people what they want. There can be too much escapism, hedonism involved. I prefer artists who are authentic and real, like the dada ones.

Monty Python showed me that if you turn things around in a logical sense, it's just as meaningful in a way and/or it helps you see through the falseness of politicians, television hosts, etc. So apart from that Python still is very funny, for me it also has a "serious" meaning. There is a sketch where a documentary maker goes up to homeless people and begs them for a documentary. They refuse and leave but they get followed by a desperate filmmaker shouting "please please let me do a documentary!" That's both funny and real and I would say ahead of its time, with far too much television just based on viewer numbers, doing documentaries so the filmmakers can pay their mortgages but in a way don't give a fuck about social issues and poverty. This is a generalisation, I know, but I hope you get my drift...

Dadaism is similar, it shows the absurdity of what is considered as "normal". Or becoming

absurd is the only way to deal with the often awful reality. It was partly a reaction against the atrocities of WWI, and that was so horrendous they found a way to deal with it was to use unknown words and phrases, like "dada". So in general you can say authenticity and "breaking what is considered the norm" inspires me. A shop which is run in a DIY way can be inspiring. Literature inspires me, it makes me question things, including myself! Female bands (or partly female) from my youth like The Slits, The Raincoats, Au Pairs also inspired me because as "non-musicians" they were far more creative and intelligent and addressing serious society issues, more than some of their male contemporaries like The Clash who were also much "posing the punk" as well and to some extent were also playing "straight rock".

There is no difference between me and my sets; I don't "act" or wave to the audience or whatever. See the next answer.

You are well-known for being a surprising DJ, and that's clearly very important to what you do. On the other hand, are there any rituals that are important to you, both as a DJ and as a person? I've noticed in a few sets I've heard of yours that you've ended with the same song, something by a woman singer-songwriter. What role does ritual play for you?

That song is a cover version of an old reggae song from my youth, by Althia and Donna, Uptown Top Ranking. I grew listening to lots of dub and reggae and liked that song. When British artist Scout Niblett did a cover version of this in 2004 I chose it to be my set-closer all the time. I met her and she told me that as a child she partly misunderstood the lyrics and thought they were "I got no style I, I am strictly roots" - that resonated with me because it sums up in a way my attitude, I do my best not to be pigeonholed and I am real. I let my intuition and mood coincidence to guide me, everything is

possible as long as I like it, in the moment.

Apart from that I don't have rituals I think, I always try to see architecture, go to flea markets, swim wherever I am, but it's not a necessity...

The only "rule" I have is that when I perform live I play with vinyl.

My own produced music is only released on vinyl. I have just finished a new album, which will be again released by the fantastic-because-open-minded music label Jahmoni from Munich. The album is called 'One Place For The First Time'.

I'd love to know more about your website. It's very playful and unique, especially for a DJ. Did you design it?

Yes, it was all my idea but it was done by other people, I am not very good with computers... also all my record sleeves are done in the same manner....I just like colour and playfulness! Our house looks the same! And I also like the fact that sometimes people who don't know me and see the design of my dj-booth, website and own records, they might think I play "seventies retro music" or something like that! But then they hear I am actually very modern, cutting edge and very left-field! I like discrepancies like that! On the other hand, when I go out to record shops to listen to piles of unknown vinyl to find new treasures, part of the judgement I base my choices on, are the sleeves. When a sleeve is rough, unclear, it attracts my curiosity and I listen to them. Regularly the music is fantastic! So in a way, when I would see my own records in the record shops I maybe WOULD NOT select them because it's too jolly :-). I like that idea!

You've said before that music should be political. I'm curious how you feel about the act of dancing in this context. There are ways in which we can still consider dancing

to be a political act, I'm thinking of the origins of dance music and marginalized folks uniting on the sacred space of a dance floor. On the flipside, I sometimes wonder if there's also a political element to halting dancefloor momentum as you sometimes do, making people uncomfortable, interruption the mind-numbing ecstasy. The history of confrontational art and music is long, but I'm wondering how you think this applies to DJing?

Obviously dancing can be liberating because regularly people, including a lot of young women, tell me they were inspired by my "independence" and that for me, is the essence of my deejay style - absolute freedom and the urge to stay ahead of the audience. The public is almost by definition conservative, they like to hear what they already know and don't like surprises, even in 'progressive' musical circles. I like to push things into uncharted waters - for me, this is what every musical scene needs in order to survive. Limiting oneself to a single musical genre is a shame. This "wild" mix can be so much fun and inspiration. Never knowing where you're going and enjoying that travel is for me an important essence of my life and therefore my deejaying. The two can't be separated.

In an exaggerated way you can say that dj's, clubs and bookers are "dead-scared" of the audience. The sole thing that matters is to be loved! It's an industry, just like banking. And although music is my living too, I try to stay away from the dj-world, but at the same time I am in the middle of it! Another paradox!

I am convinced that any particular style of music sounds better as an individual track when played against another different style. It makes the listener more lively and involved. You never know what you're going to get and the deejay is not showing off and acting cool, but she is genuinely sweating to get the records played simultaneously in an exciting way.

In a predominantly male dominated scene I find it a shame that so many female deejays make the mistake of trying to copy their male counterparts by putting too much emphasis on technique and faultless, one dimensional mixing, when I feel they should rely more on their own strengths; use intuition, exploration and let go of 'rules'.

Why don't we play more with the perception of what a deejay should be?

I try to tell a story and take people by the hand for a walk into unknown territory - I like to play records that astonish, full of bizarre and unexpected twists - one minute you're thinking how beautiful life sounds, the next how scary, then how strangely hilarious. Just like real life! This leads me to experiment with new records and mixes during the set; I am constantly juggling with a passionate urgency and on the verge of collapse. Accidents can happen - again as in real life. The audience is not only entertained but also permanently challenged. And when that works it is a tremendous evening.

That's very beautiful. Is there a moment from a recent set of yours that stands out, a happy accident gone well?

I play so many sets that I can't come with an answer now but in general I always experiment, as I said, play records I have just bought that afternoon and don't know well, for example.

Or just sticking a record on and see how it combines with the other records, let coincidence also be part of my way of dj-ing. Often these things go surprisingly well....I also "hear" in my head the next sounds that should follow the records before. It's not something you can think of before, it always happens in the moment. I believe that's one of my strengths...

What other djs inspire you? Not many others are doing what you do.

No, not many. I used to like DJ/Rupture a lot, but he is not that active anymore I believe. A Polish dj, DJ Morgiana did a few support slots for me, and her attitude I found very good, i.e. just doing what she wants, mixing heavy industrial with noise, using turntables itself as instrument and never giving you an idea how the set evolves. Another problem I have is that the majority use USB-sticks, which is too easy, too boring and in general not showing a lot of love for the aesthetic medium that is a vinyl record. They are soulless and when people say well USB sticks are easier in a way I take them less seriously because music is not about "doing it the easy way" and comfort. I also believe that the 'quality' of deejay sets and radio shows sometimes deteriorates because it is too simple and cheap to obtain music and therefore people become less critical. DJing can be a craft and no better way to do it with vinyl. And I do it with three turntables, sometimes playing records simultaneously therefore creating something new. I am all about context, less about an individual style. About being brave.

I'm also curious how much setting impacts your selections. From photos and videos I've seen you appear to play in many unique locations. Have your loves of water and djing ever converged?

When I played in Minsk last summer at a festival, I was invited/booked again by one of the audience members for a private birthday in their garden with pool only three weeks later. Then I actually was swimming in the pool, got out and played in my bikini alongside the pool..... shouldn't do this every week though, felt too decadent..

What's your favorite place you've ever swam?

There can be different reasons for what is favorite; once I swam in Marseille in the Mediterranean surrounded by beautiful rocks, but then the water was quite chilly. Last year in Dubai the water was fantastically warm but local women didn't/couldn't swim, San Sebastian in Spain has one of the most beautiful beaches and surroundings, but there is a very strong tide so its not relaxing.... once I swam at night in Barcelona and that was for us "cold Dutch people" a revelation, water was still warm and it was dark. So maybe I go for Barcelona in the dark late at night :-)

And last but not least - read any nice books recently?

I just finished a novel called The Glory Of Life by Michael Kumpfmüller, about the last year of Franz Kafka, when despite his severe illness, he was also happy with a new love in his life. A very touching book about the strength of love but also about death and how we deal with ephemerality.

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- Public Records is a new 3-room venue in the Gowanus section of Brooklyn NY that sports a HiFi bar with custom outfitted Isonoe rotary mixers, a club room with a superior soundsystem built by Devon Turnbull and Jason Ojeda, an all-day vegan cafe and magazine shop. Paul and Barbie of Love Injection play open to close on Sunday March 31st from 6pm-12am, and will curate nights on a regular basis. (233 Butler Street Brooklyn, New York, <http://publicrecords.nyc>)

- Classic Album Sundays March album of the month is The Cure's "Disintegration" celebrating it's 30th anniversary with guest host Andi Harriman, author of "Some Wear Leather, Some Wear Lace: The Worldwide Compendium of Postpunk and Goth in the 1980s" and head of the 'Synthicide' club night. (56-06 Cooper Ave #1, Ridgewood, NY 11385, <http://classicalbumsundays.com>)

- Some upcoming notable nights at Nowadays: 3/1: Anthony Naples & Jay Daniel, 3/3: Adventures in Flight with Douglas Sherman, 3/15: Working Women with Carlos Souffront, 3/22: Beautiful Swimmers All Night, 3/29: Honey Soundsystem All Night 3/30: Underground Resistance All Night, and there's a ton more. Visit the website for the rest. (56-06 Cooper Ave #1, Ridgewood, NY 11385, <http://nowadays.nyc>)

- Some upcoming notable nights at Good Room: 3/8: Let's Play House with Jacques Renault, DJ Boring & Earth Boys (Live), 3/9: The Carry Nation, 3/14: Krystal Klear & Alex Olson, 3/15: Fixed with Reboledo, 3/16: Nicky Siano, 3/23: Powder & Tim Sweeney, 3/29 Mule Musiq with Kuniuki (live) & Lawrence, (98 Meserole Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11222, <http://goodroombk.com/>)

- "Frida Kahlo: Appearances Can Be Deceiving" is the largest U.S. exhibition in ten years devoted to the iconic painter and the first in the United States. February 8 - May 12, 2019 at The Brooklyn Museum (200 Eastern Pkwy, Brooklyn, NY 11238, <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/>)

- Come Together: Music Festival and Label Market is back at MoMAPS1 on Saturday March 23 and Sunday March 24 (22-25 Jackson Ave, Long Island City, NY 11101, <http://moma.org/>)

- Optimo returns to NYC at Public Records. On Friday March 22 they play the club room, but word on the street is they'll play in the listening bar that week as well. (233 Butler Street Brooklyn, New York, <http://publicrecords.nyc>)