



MAKING CONTACT

In an exclusive mix CD for DJmag — ‘Sounds of Can Elles’ — Richie Hawtin shines a spotlight on the next generation of unsigned producers who’ve been invigorating his DJ sets this year.

It’s impossible to think of one man who epitomises techno more than Richie Hawtin. One of electronic music’s greatest innovators, the English-born, Canada-raised and Berlin-based DJ/producer has been at the very vanguard of the music since his first tentative steps into the music industry back in 1990, when he launched the Plus 8 label with John Acquaviva. Era-defining productions as Plastikman and F.U.S.E. followed, in addition to a fearsome reputation as one of the best DJs on the face of the planet. Adjust the pitch to the present day and

Hawtin is at the zenith of his game, a minimal techno avatar, known for jaw-dropping digital DJ sets, blending shards of hundreds of records into fluid, fresh, funk’n’ electronic compositions.

Celebrating 10 years of his boundary breaking imprint M-nus, 2008 has been more hectic than ever for the DJ/producer, with his label showcase Kontakt on the road and a ton of new releases from the likes of Gaiser and Heartthrob doing the rounds. In an exclusive mix for DJmag — ‘Sounds of Can Elles’ — the electronic don shines a

spotlight on the next generation of unsigned producers who’ve been invigorating his DJ sets this year. We find out more...

How does it feel to make it to double figures with M-nus?

“Tiring! When you’re doing what you love you don’t really think about how many hours or how much work it takes. For me, it feels effortless sometimes, it’s what I do, I love it. But when you’ve got to an anniversary of 10 years you have to really think about how this is a major milestone — how did we get here?”

“It made me think about all the things that we’ve been through and how much has changed. I’m not a big person to reminisce, but it made me stop in my tracks and take a moment to enjoy the whole journey and how we got here.”

How has the label and techno in general changed over the course of time?

“When we started M-nus it was at the tail-end of me being into harder-edged techno and getting into the minimal sound, and I think that at that time electronic music was bigger and more commercial. Now the scene is still huge

“Part of what I’ve always wanted to do with Plus 8 and M-nus is to help people with similar ideas and aspirations to reach more people than they possibly could by themselves.”

Words: BEN MURPHY Pics: JAMIE SIMONDS CD cover pic: ALEXANDER GNÄDINGER

but it seems to be better and more well balanced with a lot of good people involved again. The last few years have been about rebuilding with new producers, clubbers and label owners. It feels really young and healthy.”

You’ve released several new albums in 2008, by the likes of Heartthrob and Gaiser. Is the label stepping up a gear?

“I do think that. To many people M-nus is Richie Hawtin’s label or very connected to my name. Now we’re seeing M-nus having its own identity, where it stands for a

whole lot of great music, a lot of great artists, and now we can grow that label, let our artists grow and hopefully have long, successful, inspiring, profitable careers.”

You’ve represented underground techno for many years but have never compromised your sound. Do you feel vindicated that the music is more popular than ever now?

“I don’t really think in those terms. It goes back to the days when John Acquaviva and I started Plus 8 Records, and the one main inspiration for us was

the integrity of Mute Records and (label boss) Daniel Miller. I think that has kept us on path, to know that there was continuity between our next project and the one that came previously — to do what comes naturally and always believe in yourself and your mission.”

Based in Berlin, do you feel like you’re at the hub of electronic music?

“The Berlin move was a key moment for the label’s progress. We’d done as much as we could in North America and we needed to be closer to the fans, bring all the artists together and be somewhere inspiring, creative, young and open, and also very close to the gigs and the audience.

“Berlin is a wonderful city and has always stood for culture and creativity, and that’s why you see so many people at this centre-point right now.”

The Kontakt tour saw you and other M-nus artists take to the road to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the label. What was the concept behind these events?

“It was a way to push forward again. What kind of show can we do that’s different to a typical M-nus showcase? What kind of new technology can we use on stage and use at the party to heighten the experience? We were really trying to step up to another level of entertainment, theatrics. It was a big undertaking for us. We wanted to have fun and we didn’t want to do the same thing that we’d done before — it had to be something different.”

You introduced The Cube to the events, a glowing alien-like object. Was this a tongue-in-cheek sci-fi jibe or a more serious embracing of futuristic technology?

“It’s really a bit of both. The promotion and everything we did for Kontakt was specifically not minimal. We wanted it to be a little bit playful, like a movie. We also wanted to find a way of making contact with people, a physical thing for people to come and make contact with, to run the Bluetooth, SMS and gateway technology, which is also what The Cube is for.

“What’s special about Kontakt are those things that you can tap into when you’re there, and all of those things are what I call invisible, unseen technologies, that are around us all the time.

“We wanted to focus people’s attention to come to the party, make contact physically, make a connection to something, and then experience all the different possibilities of a Kontakt show.

“I really believe that with all the wonderful technology available today, there’s a lot of young people who live vicariously through the web and think that seeing us play on Youtube is experiencing what we do. We wanted to make a show that was incredible, that really made people get off their arses to come down and enjoy a

show, which is hopefully different to what's normally out there."

With your own DJ style often incorporating hundreds of tracks blended into a fluid whole, do you see your role as DJ or more as composer, knitting tunes together into something new?

"As technology has become cheaper and easier to use, our jobs have become harder because there's more information to filter, to select and manipulate. Once we've gone through that filter stage it's up to us to creatively compose that stuff and deliver it in a way that's unique to ourselves.

"It's the human being that is the selector, that filter, who is creatively manipulating and that's the most important aspect."

"Techno should be everything that we're not today — it should be about tomorrow."

Your mix for DJmag is more conventional but with a strong concept behind it...

"You have to explain that I was only allowed 15 tracks! But in a way I thank you for having this limit because it got my creative wheels going, and made me think, how do I present something that's gonna be interesting for me to do, and inspiring, and that's gonna make sense

on the front cover of this magazine, and which my fans or new fans are gonna enjoy and get a bit of an idea of who Richie Hawtin is? So that's where this whole CD concept comes from — there's the DJmag Top 100, well, let's look at the flipside of that.

"As the idea came together I was going through thousands of demos that had piled up over the last few months, and it struck me, it's the DJmag Top 100 magazine, it's one of the issues that gets a hell of a lot of attention, with everyone scouring to find out who are the hottest DJs in the world. I said, 'You know what? Let's make a CD to introduce the world to maybe 15 of the next generation, who might be at the top of the charts later.' "Part of what I've always wanted to do with Plus 8 and M-nus is to help people with similar ideas and aspirations to reach more people than they possibly could by themselves."

How about your own studio work? Do you ever feel compelled to resurrect your Plastikman moniker?

"I am compelled to rewire Plastikman, I'm working on some ideas right now. I have to thank DJmag because I've been in the studio tinkering with things while doing the mix and it was really nice to be back in the studio and I'm planning in the next two months to get back to work. It's long overdue for some new Hawtin productions."

Is techno for you primarily a dancefloor expression or is it a conceptual and listening experience too?

"A great techno record can be listened to on all those levels. You can put it on and dance to it, put it on at night, or you can be smoking and be totally sucked into it. Techno should be everything that we're not today — it should be about tomorrow."



TRACK BY TRACK

The producers behind the tracks on 'Sounds of Can Elles' hip us up on where they're from and where they're at...

1. Gernot Lange 'Resistance'

Written and produced by Gernot Lange in 2007. gmlaudio.net

Age: 32

Born: Freiburg, Germany

Influences: The Advent, Bandulu, Hardfloor, Matthew Herbert, Wishmountain, Plastikman, Josh Wink, Dimbiman, Swayzak, Akufen, Bruno Pronato, Cabanne, Sven Väth, Richie Hawtin, Zip, Joschka Truemmer, KRS and Constar.

Best musical experience? Sven Väth in Omen.

Best record of 2008? Various 'Milkshake' (Minibar MBCD 001)

2. Ryoh Mitomi 'Watch Your Step'

Written and produced by Ryoh Mitomi. myspace.com/ryohmitomi

Age: 28

Born: Shiga, Japan

Influences: Richie Hawtin, Anja Schneider and Amil Khan (Technasia).

Best musical experience? Intermix Asia tour IM Network.

Best record of 2008? Polder 'Poldermodel' (Intact)

3. Oliver Dodd 'Nervous Part 2'

Written and produced by Oliver Dodd. oliverdodd.com

Age: 34

Born: Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Influences: Autechre, Plastikman, Underground Resistance, Armando, Dopplereffekt and Chain Reaction.

Best musical experience? My first trip to the Winter Music Conference in 2002.

4. Psyk 'Clown'

Written and produced by Manuel Anós (Psyk). myspace.com/psymusic

Age: 20

Born: Madrid, Spain

Influences: Richie Hawtin, Jerome, Adam Beyer, Marco Carola, Paul Ritch, Shonky, Sleeparchive and Rino Cerrone.

Best musical experience? Ciao (Madrid) 4 Seasons with Xpansul, Damian Schwarz, Tadeo and Format B playing.

Best record of 2008? Paul Ritch 'Aquarel'

5. Octave 'Past Flash'

Written and produced by Sylvain Le Goff.

6. Jobody 'Spades for Hands'

Written and produced by Joe Farr. myspace.com/jobodymusic

Age: 27

Born: Gloucester, England

Influences: I'm influenced by electronic music, classical, visuals, my equipment and my friends.

Best musical experience? Narod Niki at Sonar 2007.

Best record of 2008? Radio Slave 'Grindhouse (Dubfire's Planet Terror Mix)'

7. Gary Beck 'Consumed'

Written and produced by Gary Beck.

8. Marco Dassi 'Varese Ist Leer (MiniCoolBoyz Remix)'

Written and produced by Marco Dassi. myspace.com/marcodassi

Age: 22

Born: Varese, Italy

Influences: My mum's cheesecake!

Best musical experience? That the people can listen to what I make.

Best record of 2008? I think the best track that I have made in 2008 is 'Edera', which is unreleased so far.

Remix and additional production by MiniCoolBoyz. myspace.com/MiniCoolBoyz

Age: 24

Born: Varese, Italy

Influences: Jean Michelle Jarre, Mike Oldfield,

Daft Punk, Richie Hawtin, Dubfire, Alexi Delano, Gaiser, Marco Carola, Paco Osuna and Alex Under. Best musical experience? Time Warp Best record of 2008? Radio Slave 'Grindhouse (Danton Eeprom Remix)'

9. Luciano Le Bihan & Exequiel Brandan 'Flying'

Written and produced by Luciano Le Bihan & Exequiel Brandan. myspace.com/lucianolebihan

Age: 26

Born: Argentina

Influences: Kraftwerk, Plastikman, Minus, Cocoon and Drumcode.

Best musical experience? Every time I DJ.

Best record of 2008? 'Compilation H' (Cocoon) myspace.com/exequielbrndan

Age: 23

Born: Argentina

Influences: Richie Hawtin, Time Writer, Claro Intellecto and Swayzak.

Best musical experience? SAMC 2007, Buenos Aires

Best record of 2008? Luka & Lazo 'Dust No.4 (Barem Remix)'

10. Antonio Pocaí '14-12'

Written, arranged and produced by Antonio Pocaí.

Age: 35

Born: Lucca, Italy

Influences: Troy Pierce, Mathew Jonon, Martin Buttrich and Loco Dice, Mathew Dear, My My, M-nus, Wagon Repair, Sonar Kollektiv, Cocoon and Spectral Sound.

Best musical experience? All musical experiences.

Best record of 2008? Loco Dice '7 Dunham Place'

11. Jorge Savoretti 'You Taste Better Than Danger'

Written and produced by Jorge Savoretti. myspace.com/jorgeds

Age: 26

Born: Argentina

Influences: Perlon, Plus 8, Basic Channel, Force Inc and many artists from Detroit, Chicago, Argentina, Madrid, Canada, Chile and Berlin.

Best musical experience? So many! But lately, playing in my favourite clubs like Watergate, Fuse, Weekend and Harry Klein with Seph, Barem and Franco Cinelli.

Best record of 2008? Damian Schwartz 'Carolina's Favourite'

12. Larrson 'Ability To Jump'

Written and produced by Lars Brämer. myspace.com/larssonmusic

Age: 30

Born: Bremen, Northern Germany

13. Ken Kenichiro '4 AM'

Written and produced by Kenichiro Kubota. myspace.com/premodelo

Age: 36

Born: Saitama, Japan

Influences: Adam Beyer, Cari Lekebusch, Ben Sims, Chris Liebing, Dave Clarke, Hertz, Jeff Mills, Joey Beltram, Meat Beat Manifesto, Underworld and Richie Hawtin.

Best musical experience? Playing live at Maniac Love, Tokyo.

Best record of 2008? Heartthrob 'Dear Painter, Paint Me'

14. Joel Alter 'Spektrolit'

Written and produced by Joel Alter. myspace.com/deejayjorel

Age: 33

Born: Gothenburg, Sweden

Influences: Bands like Depeche Mode, J.M. Jarre and Front 242. In '91 I got into dance music.

15. Sebastian Russell 'You Freak'

Written and produced by Sebastian Russell.