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Matthias Tanzmann 0

 Written by: [Salvador](#) 28 Oct, 2010

Matthias Tanzmann is one of Germany's best-loved electronic music sons. Hailing from Leipzig, he started DJing as a teenager, and founded his Moon Harbour imprint when he was still at university. In 2010, the label celebrates its tenth anniversary, and in November, they will release a compilation marking the birthday with a selection of new tracks and a mix from Matthias of his favourite tracks from their back catalogue. On 30th October he plays the opening of new night Modern Amusement in Leeds. We caught up with him to go over the decade...

So, how are you and where are you?

I just got back from Amsterdam Dance Event. I am a bit exhausted after the long weekend, but we had a great time there and ADE once again proved its relevance as a major conference for electronic music.

Your label – Moon Harbour – celebrates its tenth anniversary this month with a double album. Does it feel like the ten years have rushed by?

Yes, when I realized that the label will turn 10 this year, I was surprised how time flew by. I wouldn't wanna miss any of the last years though. I have met great people on the way and travelled to fantastic places.

Where did the name for the label come from?

It was quite random to be honest. I was looking for a name and found both words in an english text I was reading. So I just combined them to Moon Harbour. But that has always left some room for interpretations.

For the release you have one CD of new material, and one of some of the label's back catalogue. How much enjoyment did you get from putting together the mix? It must've been really difficult getting so many records down to just 13.

I so much enjoyed to put this mix of Moon Harbour classics together. There were many tracks I haven't listened to in years. Choosing amongst them of course wasn't easy, but I think in the end the mix tells a broad story of the way Moon Harbour has come. And as a side effect to this, some older tracks of the label have returned into my DJ sets after I rediscovered them.



You have a very tight group of artists that have released on the label. Was it always your intention to bring together your own group of talent and keep the label very much like a family?

It was a slow and natural process of growing over the last years. We started with a small group of artists and now we consider ourselves a little label family. Most of the releases revolve around this group and this is also how we see the future of the label. But there is certainly some room for the family to grow. Besides that we always had records by friends and guest artists that we like.

When you started it ten years ago, did you think you'd ever reach fifty releases and celebrate your tenth birthday? How much of a plan did you have?

I honestly didn't think that far in 2000. When we started the label we were not experienced with this side of the music business. So we were kicking off the project and looked where it would go. Over the years everything obviously turned more and more

professional.

You have two sub-labels, Curl Curl and Cargo Edition alongside Moon Harbour. How hard is it to keep three labels going at the moment with the economic climate and the explosion of digital labels?

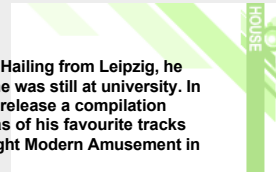
Actually only Cargo Edition is a sublabel of Moon Harbour. Curl Curl is run by my partner André Quaaas and Phil Brökelmann, who is based in New Zealand. Running these labels has definitely become much harder during the last years. Most of the vinyl releases don't break even these days. So labels have to be booking agencies and publishers as well now. This is another reason why we are focusing on a group of artists.

If the you of today could go back to 2000 and offer some advice to the 23-year-old Matthias Tanzmann what would it be?

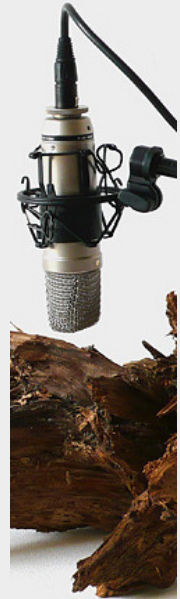
There is an Island called Ibiza. When you get there, be careful with a drink called Hierbas!

Like many German labels, you still release on vinyl. How important is it to you? Do you ever see a day it'll die out?

We will try to release on vinyl as long as possible. But I am not naive. There will be less and

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less people buying and playing records. And other than many of my colleagues I think this is something inevitable and even natural. There must always be a progression. Both in content and in media. I can definitely see the bad sides of it when for example people who never spent months and years of practicing the skills of mixing can easily claim to be a DJ just because software can help them out.

But let's be honest, beat matching is not atom physics. Everybody can learn it. With all the opportunities given by technique, DJing nowadays can be much more than just fading over tracks. Incorporating samples, loops and effects merges DJs and live acts. And track selection and judgement of what to play at the right moment will always require musical knowledge and experience. So I prefer to consider this development the next step rather than the end of something.

With the label based in Leipzig, your home town, it means you're away from the glamour of Berlin. What's the scene like in Leipzig, and what clubs would you recommend?

Leipzig has a long history of electronic music already. The Distillery club is one of the longest existing in Germany. I think only Tresor is older. Life in Leipzig is of course slower and less versatile than being in Berlin. But I have my friends, family and business based there. For me this city is a good balance to all the madness I experience on the road every weekend.

Do you get to play much in your home town? Where would you recommend to people that haven't visited the town?

I used to play at Distillery on a monthly basis a couple of years ago. Now I can only do it twice a year since my schedule has become really tight. But these two dates are very special and I am always looking forward to them.



Being a visitor to Leipzig I can recommend you to take a cultural tour. The city has an incredibly rich history of music, literature and art. Goethe, Schiller and Bach lived and worked here. Just to name a few.

You're playing at a new night, Modern Amusement, in Leeds on 30th October alongside Nick Curly, Rolando and Efdemin. How are you looking forward to that?

I definitely am. I always loved the crowd in Leeds and can't wait to be back. Especially when playing alongside these artists.

When was the last time you played in Leeds? Where's your favourite destination in the UK to play?

Last time was Back to Basics. I am not really sure when exactly it was. I think beginning of the year. Other UK cities I love to play at are for example Manchester, Liverpool and of course London.

What else have you got coming up to celebrate the anniversary? There's a gig at Watergate on the 4th November...

There is actually a big tour scheduled for the Ten Years anniversary. We do showcases all over Europe, including ADE last week, and I just did a small club tour through Japan. And at the event of this anniversary we are of course releasing the Ten Years Of Moon Harbour compilation on double vinyl, double CD and Download.

You've been part of the Circo Loco family for a while now. How was the closing, and how's the season been this year? You must've had times when you thought it was all going to be

finished....

We had an incredible season this year. Everybody was so relieved after all the troubles we had with the closure last year. Now Circoloco started a new era with new talents alongside old heroes and this summer has certainly seen some unbelievable parties at DC10. Especially the opening and closing parties were totally off the hook.

There must be so many crazy stories from Mondays in the Ibiza summer. What's your favourite DC10 tale?

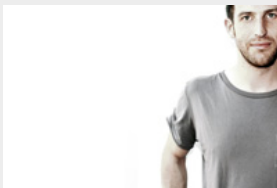
Haha.. What happens at DC10, stays at DC10!

Going back to the beginning, what music did you listen to when you were growing up?

I've listened to diverse stuff. I got in touch with electronic music at the age of 14 or 15. After that I started buying records from my pocket money. Maximum one record a week.

What was your first exposure to electronic music?

I once was taken to a techno club by some older friends. It was called Basis. One of the first clubs for electronic music in our area. Actually, it was not a club, more an abandoned industrial techno basement. But I was totally flashed. The music, the strobe lights and the smell of the fog machines. Quite a formative experience.



You've been DJing since you were a teenager. When did you first realise that it may be your career?

I never had to decide between a job or being a DJ. I was studying and DJing besides. It slowly grew so I can't really determine a point when it turned into something serious. When I graduated from university, Moon Harbour had already turned 5 and I was DJing internationally.

Who inspires you in 2010 to keep making music?

Music, people, places... Inspiration can come from everywhere. After all the madness of the Summer I am excited to go back to studio and lock myself in for some days now.

If you weren't a DJ and producer, what do you think you'd be doing?

I always wanted to be an Architect when I was younger. And I am still fascinated by architecture. So I suppose it would have been my way.

DJs spend a lot of their time travelling. What's your secret to taking the stress out of planes, trains

and automobiles?

I try to travel as convenient as possible. And I am lucky to be able to sleep in planes, trains and automobiles. Some of my DJ colleagues can't sleep in flights.

What's the best and worst thing about being Matthias Tanzmann?

To quote a fellow DJ from an interview I once read... Best thing: The drinks are free. Worst thing: The drinks are free.

If you had to give it all up tomorrow, how would you like to be remembered?

That is a difficult one. I hope it will never get to that point. But if that would be the case, I hope I can be remembered as somebody who puts serious love and appreciation into music, but is still able not to take himself too seriously.

Matthias Tanzmann plays Modern Amusement in Leeds on Sat 30th Oct. To catch up with everything Matthias is up to head to his web site - link below.

For more info on Modern Amusement head to the web site - link below.

Ten Years Of Moon Harbour is out soon on Moon Harbour, for more info check the link below.



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