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The Power of Ten – Matthias Tanzmann

December 4, 2010 By [martingewitt](#) [Leave a Comment](#)

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There are a couple of notable birthday celebrations taking place this winter. Across the Christian world people prepare for Christmas, while in Leipzig, a particularly prominent label recognises a decade of deep house.

Head honcho Matthias Tanzmann has garnered the affections of the global party populous since he arrived in the mid-90s. Successful early releases on Steve Bug's outlets preceded the birth of Moon Harbour in 2000, alongside the Gamat 3000 music project. Five years later, and a second imprint, Cargo Edition, followed.

Since then he's retained a residency at Circo Loco in Ibiza, and continued to tour the world from behind a booth. In between meetings, a volleyball game and an undeniably hectic club schedule it's surprising he has any time to shoot the breeze. But with a decade of change in the international house and techno scene, along with 'functional records' on the agenda, we grabbed a few minutes from the young upstart turned stalwart's afternoon. This is what we talked about.

P&S: So, what's changed in Leipzig since your formative years there?

MT: "I think when I first started the techno-house thing was still pretty new. Not really new, but still quite fresh almost. Now, after 15 years, almost it was getting kind of saturated and so new things came up. Everything got a bit, er, like the naivety of the first few years has gone. It has become much more professionalised in a way. We still have one club - Distillery - but beside that everything has changed. But still we have a consistent scene here. It's really close to Berlin, so there's a lot of influence and input. In that way it's nice to be in Leipzig."

What happened to all the other clubs?

"Same as anywhere really - clubs are coming and going. At the moment, I think Leipzig is just half a million people, so it doesn't really have the scene for two or three big clubs. So there is one proper club, and then other parties across the city in smaller clubs of course."

Obviously, it's Moon Harbour's 10th anniversary. What was your intention when you set it up?

"At the time I was already releasing through Steve Bug, and felt like I wanted to set up my own platform to release our music, and the music of our friends. Also, I had found a friend who used to run a club and wanted to change, but still stay involved with the culture - or sub culture - of music. So we found we had pretty much the same ideas, and would be perfect sharing the jobs in the label. That was a good enough setup for us to want to start it, that's why we did it and why we still do it."

Were you trying to promote sounds similar to Steve Bug and the then fledgling Poker Flat camp?

"At this point I was putting more out on Dessous, his other label. And I was also doing a music project called Gamat 3000. That was the kind of sound we were looking to promote. So really with Moon Harbour we wanted more melodic, kind of deep house sounds. That was the main idea behind the first releases, and the first two or three years."



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"Then it changed as I was touring and DJing in more clubs. The sound turned to include more functional records too. But I still like the fact that a lot of what we put out still has a deep house background to it. Basically, this is where we are, and where we are coming from."

What thoughts went into the tracklisting for the new birthday mix album then?

"For the first CD we wanted to ask every artist who was involved on the label, or Cargo Edition, or our booking roster to contribute to 10 tracks, from 10 artists, all new and exclusive, to celebrate 10 years of Moon Harbour. And for the second, I just wanted to take old records, some of which I'd forgotten about, and put them out together. I was checking back through the label catalogue and was like "Wow! Oh, yeah, I haven't heard this in years." It really was a fun mix to put together."

So what makes Cargo Edition different? Why set up a second label?

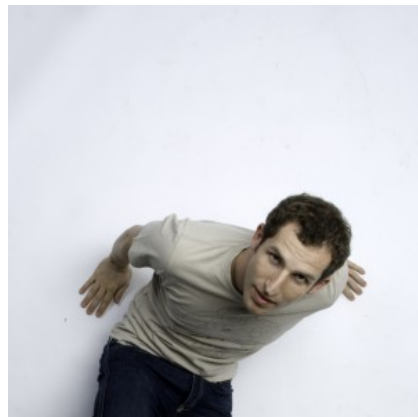
"It was five years ago, and at this time we wanted to bring another label in to have another group of artists. A little bit of a different kind of music, still linked with Moon Harbour, but maybe with a little more room for experimentation. With Cargo Edition things don't need to be functional. I think if you look back over the last five years of Moon Harbour there has always been one functional track on a release. Cargo Edition can just be really deep, or dry electro-funk kind of stuff. So we had the idea to do the label to have a wider spectrum of sound really."

You visit a lot of places. Where is the best party right now?

"Erm, actually the UK is really good..."

Really?

"Yeah, seriously. The last time I was over it was Manchester, and I played Leeds the same night and Newcastle the night before. And when I have been to London recently, everywhere in the UK is feeling really good. There's an enthusiastic crowd, and people seem to really love the DC-10, Circo Loco thing too. So if we're talking about where the great parties are right now then of course, we have to mention the parties there in Ibiza, which is really one of the best places for me. And then also Berlin."



When you do play two gigs in one night how does that work- do you prefer not to do it?

"I sometimes do it, if it makes sense. I had two really nice requests for the same night. Leeds it was the opening of a new club, called Vox, and the lineup was great. Then in Manchester it was a Moon Harbour showcase with Martinez there too. Plus I love Sankeys, so I wanted to do them both if possible. They're only 45 minutes or so apart, so it was OK, but I'm glad I don't do that every week. That's when it becomes a job, it already is a job, but it's a hobby too. And it's a party. When you play double nights you need to keep sober, and focused. It has to be properly organised- and strict."

When you're playing out then, has vinyl been fully forgotten?

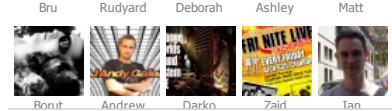
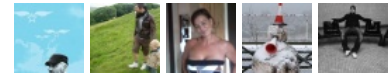
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"I still carry a little bit with me. But actually this is more as a backing to Traktor. I play Traktor right now, with timecode CDs rather than records, like many of my German colleagues. I don't miss vinyl that much, even though I played it for about 12 or 14 years. In the last month before I changed to Traktor I was already playing more than 50 per cent of my music on CD.

"I really like the stability of them, they are really reliable. You get so many problems now with turntables. Needles, everything's not always in the best shape because not many people still play vinyl anymore. So you just have trouble, and I decided to stay with CDs to control Traktor. I don't play internally, I still want to touch, and there are some interesting options on Traktor, effects and loops."

Have you ever had any problems using it?

"What Traktor?"

Yes

"I never used the early versions. I started about two years ago maybe, it has crashed once or twice and I play well over 100 gigs a year. So that's a pretty good quote. The weekend I mentioned before, in Newcastle the entire system went down. My laptop stayed on, and when power came back to the system everything was still playing, and nothing needed to be reset. Even when your computer freezes, Traktor still seems to play. It's pretty impressive."

Absolutely. And what can we expect to be impressed with from Moon Harbour over the next 10 years?

"Well, I hope we are going to release a lot more vinyl. It's difficult. We put everything out on vinyl, but if I'm not playing it then ... But, yeah, vinyl releases for as long as possible. We hope to continue working with the same artists, maybe get some more. More Moon Harbour showcases too, and maybe one or two more acts playing in clubs. I'm also thinking about an album."

How far along with that are you then?

"Well I think now is a pretty good time, it's been a few years. It's just really an idea though, so we'll see how it goes over winter, when I have some more time to spend in the studio, and work on some good ideas. I'm not going to put pressure on it though, and say I have to produce something by March or whatever. But if it all fits together, and there's enough material for an album, then I'll go for it. Otherwise we'll just do EPs."

Ten Years of Moon Harbour mixed by Matthias Tanzmann is out on December 6th



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