

“FIFTEEN” QUESTIONS

INTERVIEWS / ABOUT



Fifteen Questions Interview with La Fraicheur



Reading the Room

Part 2

What are some of the considerations that go into deciding which track to play next? What makes two tracks a good fit? How far do you tend to plan ahead during a set?

I don't really plan ahead but I would say I have at least the vibe or genre-orientation of the next half hour in mind. I love to run a wide gamut and take people out of their comfort zones with surprises, but in order to do that and make it work, you have to create something that is still consistent in terms of narrative. I don't jump from one to another, I try to make you slip into it naturally without you realizing it.

To pick what track comes after, it's all a matter of whether I want to build up a climax or give you a breather, whether I feel the crowd is following me on that journey and have trust in what I am gonna create or if I feel I haven't quite grabbed them yet and need to try a few things, reorientations, or, in the contrary, give them time to get into where I want to take them.

What makes two tracks fit together is solely dependent on what narrative bubble I want to create for that specific moment and whether I'm focusing on emotional melodies or rhythmic patterns. What matters the most to me is the evolution of the narrative. The rest, the structures, the efficiency, thanks to layering of melody loops or percussions, I can always build myself.

Would you say you see DJing as improvisation? As composition in the moment? Or as something entirely different from these terms?

DJing is controlled improvisation. You still work from pre-existing tracks you know by heart, you know how they feel, where they go, what the break creates in people (expectation or exaltation), what sonic tools they hold that you can use to your advantage to create the moment. So, it is improvisation but not from scratch. The more I am in position to request very specific technical setups and minimum set length, the more I can get creative with layering and it feels like live production.

How do playing music at home and presenting it in the club compare and relate? What can be achieved through them, respectively, and what do you personally draw from both?

Those are two completely different situations in my opinion and therefore bring different sets of effects. I personally very rarely listen to electronic music/club music outside of the club environment. Dance music has the purpose to liberate your body through a trance you can't control. There's something spiritual and shamanic to it. The music is bigger than you and takes hold of you. Music that I listen to at home is there to set the mood depending on what I'm doing (cooking, reading, fucking, working). It's a mirror of a moment; it's there to accompany it.

How would you describe the relationship between your choices and goals as a DJ and the expectations, desires and feedback of the audience? How does this relationship manifest itself during a performance and how do you concretely tap into it?

I've always considered that my job was to give people something familiar enough that their body would dance automatically, without thinking about it because the body has developed this natural response to electronic music, and yet surprising enough to keep them on their feet, interested and curious about what comes next. My job is to keep them one foot in and one foot out of their comfort zone.

I don't really know how to tap into it. I mean cheers, screams and hands in the air are obvious clues, but a lot of people tell me I don't look at the people so much. I don't need to, honestly, I feel the energy of the room in my body, I know exactly what it needs when. Or more precisely, I can feel how much trust I have managed to gather from the crowd and from that I build my set. If I can feel people are following, then I can take them anywhere, most of the time it's a surprise to me too.

Especially thanks to the storage facilities of digital media, DJ sets could potentially go on forever. Other than closing time, what marks the end of a DJ performance for you? What are the most satisfying conclusions to a set?

Ending is the hardest part for me because, even after 6 hours of set, I rarely want to leave the decks. I could go on for hours and whenever I'm offered a 5+ hours gig (yay warehouse parties!) I jump on it. If there is a DJ after me then I'll talk with them, depending if they want to start their set with an intro or mix it into mine. If they want a cut or a smooth transition, then I'll adapt my last track.

If I'm closing then I make a big peak statement on the track



"The thrill of DJing comes from reading a crowd and grabbing them whether or not they were ready for you, and that can only be created in the moment."

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before last, to bring people to the high and ultimate release they deserve, and then a track of a complete different genre to make people understand this is the last track, it's over, no negotiation. I don't do "one more traaaaack, come oooooonnn" even if people beg. I'm happy I made them happy and they want more, but when the story is over, it's over! Would you go to a writer and say "I loved your book so much, I think you should add a chapter"?

No matter how frustrating the end of something you enjoyed is, you have to respect its natural evolution. I also very much respect the laws and sets of rules of all the different clubs from around the world. My job as a DJ is also to be responsible in making sure those places stay open, and no extra encore track, no matter how good it is, is worth the police shutting down the place cos it stayed open 5 minutes after it's supposed to. We are living in a very oppressive era for clubs around the world right now, conservatives in power making it more and more difficult to keep an underground club culture going. It's also my responsibility as a DJ to care about that.

Art can be a purpose in its own right, but it can also directly feed back into everyday life, take on a social and political role and lead to more engagement. Can you describe your approach to art and being an artist?

To me, art and music have always been political, from the hip hop and rrrriot girl rock I listened to as a teenager, to today. My purpose with some of my music, especially the ones using samples of interviews and speeches of activists, is to spark an awakening. I fear that this generation, or rather, the humans living today no matter the generation they are from, are the most asleep ever to the realities of the world. I don't think the world is worse off than before, but I do think that strategies and technologies of diversion and distraction are making us soft and silent and accepting of atrocities that would offend us if we weren't so busy feeding our brain with a constant flux of information rather than give it some down time to actually think. In my opinion, dancing is when our brain is the most open and free, disconnected from the constant flux, therefore it's the most relevant time for me to play some political music that will reach people, they will have time to reflect on it while dancing.

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QUESTIONS
