The Art of Electronic Music DJs by Vineet Verma

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An old friend of mine used to complain that electronic music DJs have no talent. â€œItâ€™s just playing records,â€• she said. â€œI can play records.â€•

It isnâ€™t, of course. And she couldnâ€™t â€“ not like they can. DJing electronic music is about creation â other peopleâ€™s music and turning it into a journey. Itâ€™s not a journey everyone likes and it isnâ€™t a arriving at the destination you thought it would. But one thing you canâ€™t call it is â€œjust playing records

The reason not everyone likes all electronic music DJs is because there are so many different kinds of electronic music. And there seem to be more spawning every day. Iâ€™ve only been on the back burner for a couple of years and I already havenâ€™t heard of half the new stuff.

In my time it was a choice of houses â€“ hard house; deep house; techie house; minimal house; cheesy house. Or perhaps some breakbeat or a little bit of drum n bass. And all the electronic music DJs doing their thing in all of those different arenas were masters of their craft â€“ able to take a theme and a seam and run it through their whole set like a gold thread. So youâ€™d come out at the end knowing youâ€™d been travelling, and that youâ€™d returned bigger and wiser â€“ and lost most of a nigh the process!

These days the art of the electronic music DJs is even more complex than it used to be. Since Ableton Live hit the scene, thereâ€™s been a sea change in the way that DJs work, using live sampling and complex music programming technology on the spot to make whole studio-ready sets in clubs and underground bars.

The skill set needed to be an electronic music DJ hasnâ€™t changed dramatically, though I have heard some modern electronic music DJs say they canâ€™t use decks properly. Not the same the other way around â€“ the old guard made a transition from decks to laptops with ease. Particularly, if memory serves, Sasha, who made Ableton a core part of his sets as soon as heâ€™d mastered the technology.

The point is thereâ€™s much more to the art of the electronic music DJs than meets the eye. Their only equal is the hip hop DJ, who, like the original electronic music DJ, has to have an ear for beat matching, an impeccable sense of rhythm and the ability to create a whole new feeling with pre-existing sounds.

So next time you hear someone claiming that electronic music DJs arenâ€™t all theyâ€™re cracked up to get them to listen to Northern Exposure or go check out a Luis Armando set. Theyâ€™ll soon come round to your way of thinking!

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Vineet Verma is a passionate club kid, DJ and music producer. Heâ€™s currently co-running the Now Then Records label, DJ agency and party venue. When he isnâ€™t playing or producing heâ€™s doing th rounds of nightclubs in the UK, doing A and R for new artists and sniffing out hot new a electronic music DJs .

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