

A Conversation With Saeed Younan

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Saeed Younan is a DJ from Iraq who has been living and working in Washington since the early '80s, garnering worldwide recognition for his technical ability and precision, not to mention his seamless blend of techhouse and percussive grooves. M3's Maria caught up with Saeed to discuss underground clubs, the differences between DJing with physical and digital media and the sounds of the future...



<http://m3event.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/saeedyounan.jpg>

Saeed Younan: Hi, how are you?

Maria: Hi, I am good. How are you, Saeed?

Saeed Younan: I am doing well.

Maria: It is a pleasure to speak to you, I am a huge fan of yours. I am from Bulgaria, have you played in Bulgaria?

Saeed Younan: Oh, yeah. I've been to Bulgaria many times and I love Bulgaria.

Maria: You have? That's awesome!

Saeed Younan: Oh, yeah. I've played in Bourgas, Varna, Sofia and I've been in Golden Sands. Yeah, I've played a lot in Bulgaria. I haven't been there recently, but I used to go a lot.

Maria: Nice. I did not know that. But I would love to see you playing somewhere in Bulgaria again.

Saeed Younan: Yeah. I know the scene has been a little bit tough over there. And that's why I haven't been coming there lately. Plus the flight cost and everything. US DJs were having a hard time coming to Europe.

Maria: Yeah, I've seen this. And actually lately there are not so many DJs coming to Bulgaria anymore. Before the scene was more open, there were more parties and now it's just getting too commercial and the music is also changing.

Saeed Younan: Yeah. I heard that a lot of the clubs I used to play at are all shutting down. Especially the one in Golden Sands, I played at Dance Club Masai, but I think it is also closed now.

Maria: You've played in Masai? That's awesome. Did you hear of Club Yalta Sofia, one of the most famous clubs in Sofia? The club has a long dance history.

Saeed Younan: Yes, I know Yalta, but I've never played there, I know that Roger Sanchez, Victor Calderone and John Digweed played there a lot.

Maria: Yeah. Yalta is one of my favorite clubs. It is really the only club that still keeps the style of the real partying going on, the real dance music and how it was back in the day.

Saeed Younan: Yeah, that's what I've heard, it's really underground, it's really a great club.

Maria: Great lights, smoke machines, and dancers – like a real club is supposed to be! It holds place 20 at the DJ Mag for best clubs around the world. Like what you would see in Ibiza, Berlin, Detroit.

Saeed Younan: I have to make a trip out there soon then.

Maria: Yeah! Do you want to tell us something about yourself and what inspired you to start

working with electronic music?

Saeed Younan: Sure, Basically what inspired me to work with electronic music is that, when I started DJ-ing back in 1988. I started when I was in High School. I was a hip hop DJ. And I wasn't really into hip hop but I was really into DJ-ing. So in order to be a DJ and play gigs, I had to play what the people wanted to hear which was hip hop back then. I slowly got into dance music. I actually got into New Wave, and really more things like New Order, before I got into house music. Then, a friend of mine, who worked in a Record Store, I don't know whether they have it in Europe, but there is a record store called Tower Records. And they used to sell a lot of vinyl. And my friend kind of decided to show me house music and hip house back then, Franky Knuckles, Jr. Vasquez and all that stuff. I really started to get into that, and my first production was on Groove on Records and Yoshitoshi Records. Actually, my first production was on Gossip on Records back in early 90's. Then, from there, I did stuff on Yoshitoshi Records, then I moved to more Strictly Rhythm. From there I launched my first record label, Addictive Records which was me and a partner, and after Addictive Records, after the whole vinyl thing kind of started dying I launched my digital label Younan Music, that's where I am today.

Maria: Interesting, and what do you think about the record store nowadays? It seems like a lot of people are downloading music and nobody goes to the record store anymore. And would people still go, for example, to live performances and DJ parties or will they rather download music? It is a hot topic in Europe right now, also with the SOPA and ACTA acts. What do you think about this?

Saeed Younan: I am an old school person. I started back when vinyl was vinyl. I mean I love to touch and feel of vinyl. I still have all of my vinyls in the basement. I see the whole download digital thing as a good thing and a bad thing. The bad thing about it is you don't have the whole experience of a DJ playing vinyl and anybody, almost anybody can try to be a DJ now because you have the technology and the software to work for you. So that I think is a bad thing, because everybody thinks they are DJs, just because they can create an iTunes playlist. That's the negative thing about it.

The positive thing about it is the quality of the software that you have now you can actually stand in front of the crowd, you can manipulate, remix and edit on the fly, which you couldn't do back then with two turn tables and a mixer. So now my sets will sound different every time, because now I'm looping, editing, and chopping Acapellas on top of the tracks running four decks at the same time, doing a lot more than you can do with Vinyl. I think that is the plus side about it. With everything there is some good and some bad, in the music industry is the same. To go back to your question about vinyl, in US right now you cannot find a proper vinyl store unless you go to one of those small mom and pops collectors vinyl stores. There might be few, very small stores that will still buy some new stuff, but the days of legit, underground house vinyl stores are gone, you can't really find those in the States. I know a few that exist, especially in Germany, I know a few. But that is the thing that we have going on in the States, so if we want to have good quality, up to date music we have to rely on the online stores.

Maria: And what is your type of music? What do you listen to at home, if you weren't a DJ what

would you play?

Saeed Younan: I like the down tempo hip hop, but I don't like hip hop now, I don't like the new stuff, the commercial hip hop. I will listen to old Tribe, De La Soul, stuff like that – this is really old school. I also like DnB, I like down tempo. When I'm at home I listen to house music, because I listen to a lot of demos and a lot of promos. I still listen to house when I'm at home, but if I'm driving or I just want to relax, I will listen to probably more down tempo stuff.

Maria: What do you think will be the sound of the 2000s in a few decades time? What do you think will dominate the 2000s?

Saeed Younan: Right now, I think, it's not really my thing, my favor, but I see it growing bigger and bigger in popularity, especially in the US, is Dubstep and that's really taking over. The big room sounds are taking over, the big stadium stuff. It is not my cup of tea; I like the more subtle groove and style, with good house, just good solid groove. That's still great and people appreciate it but what really is blowing up is the Dubstep and the big room sounds, becoming the new concerts of the futures. Instead of having bands there you have DJs playing that really in your face stuff, bass and sound, and I think that's where it is going. I am not particularly happy about it, but that's where it's going soon.

Maria: Where are you going right now? What can we expect from you in the near future?

Saeed Younan: Right now I am working on a couple of collaborations and I have got some stuff in the pipe line, I am working on a track with DJ Chus, also working on stuff with D-Formation, me and him are doing a new track together. I am working on a new remix of "Yeah Ha" which is me and Sebsten Lehder on Younan music. David Lara just signed on to my label, we got Stacey Pullen doing remixes, we are doing a lot of label stuff! For me, as far as touring, I'm doing a lot in North and South America right now, doing a YMT (YOUNAN MUSIC TOUR) which is my record label tour. So am on the road – Canada, USA and South America. And hopefully by summer time, Ibiza season will be open and we head over to Europe and bounce around couple of places there.

Maria: I hope I see you soon in Bulgaria.

Saeed Younan: I hope so too, I will make it work for sure.

Maria: Final question – how is it to be a DJ these days? What does it take for newcomers to become a good DJ?

Saeed Younan: To be a good DJ, I think the production speaks volumes nowadays. In order to be recognized as a great DJ your production has to be just as great. And I think that is another thing we didn't have back in the day. DJs were DJs back then. Nowadays, in order to stand up in front of the rest your production has to be top notch and I think they're different things. When I am looking for artists to sign I am looking at them as an artist more than a DJ. DJ-ing is great – if you are a great DJ, you are a great DJ! But for people to recognize what you actually do and get booked you

have to get a great music to back it up. So in order to be a good DJ you also have to be a great producer. So people can realize what you can do, your potentials.

Interview by Maria Rachinska

For more information about Saeed Younan, you can visit his official website

(<http://http://www.saeedyounan.com>) and find him on Facebook

(<http://www.facebook.com/OfficialSaeedYounan>) and Twitter. (<https://twitter.com/#!/saeedyounan>)

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The music industry is rapidly changing. The internet has enabled widespread piracy, as well as a variety of new business and distribution models. We want to offer an engaged audience in and

around the Euregion an opportunity to develop a coherent and detailed picture of the future of music distribution. On the 31st of May 2012 a music conference in Maastricht, consisting of oppositional debates, creative workshops and lectures, will provoke opportunities for intellectual stimulation, debate, as well as networking. We hope to utilise the skills and ideas of some of most forward thinking minds and operators in the industry in order to highlight some promising new ideas and areas which can be improved upon.

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