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Exclusive Interview – Catching Up With Darude In Seattle

[Stephen Bellrichard](#) | 2 years ago | [Interview](#)



Last week we had the opportunity to catch up with Ville Virtanen, or as many dance music lovers know him: Darude. This was a great opportunity to learn more about the revered producer and DJ, while familiarizing the world with his upcoming album plans, tour schedule, and some facets of his personal life. What a guy Ville is. Record label co-owner, music production master, athlete, hobbyist, and a touring artist – all while being a family man is beyond cool. Before getting to the interview questions, here is a brief overview on who Ville is and what he has accomplished during his expansive career in the music world:

Multi-platinum award-winning producer and international artist Darude, has to date sold over 5 million records worldwide and is recognized by many as one of the most influential artists to emerge from the dance scene in the past decade. Hailing from a small village called Hinnerjoki in Finland the patriotic Finn now once again resides with his family in Finland.

Although famed for the global smash 'Sandstorm', which became the world's best-selling 12" vinyl of 2000, Ville Virtanen aka Darude has had a long and successful career as both a live performer and club DJ. In 2011 Darude made the decision to start EnMass Music to push not just his own music, but also that of artists whom he believes in. Darude has lots of big plans between his label, an upcoming album, tour dates, and balancing his family. We look forward to seeing what you have in store! Interview questions below:

1. Ville, you recently moved back to Finland from Atlanta. Are you excited to be back home?

Ville: Yes, I most definitely am. Kind of a crappy winter though because we didn't have much snow. But yes that is where I'm from so I'm definitely glad to be back home.

GLT: Big skier/snowboarder I take it?

Ville: Snowboarder! I was kind of bummed; I played in Vancouver last weekend and have been in Seattle with some good friends for the past week. I had the chance to ride Whistler and opted not to go because I had no one to go with. Half the fun of riding is being able to laugh and high five your buddies once you get to the bottom.

2. We hear you are working on completing a 4th album, with an anticipated release for later this year. Can you tell us about the upcoming album?

Yes, yes, I have been working for a while now. I basically have more tracks than needed for an album, and have been incorporating a lot of these ID tracks into my sets for some time now. I'm still working with my record label to choose which tracks we want to release. Even though I could do a release at this moment, I definitely want their support to create a release that will work best for both parties. Basically we are still looking for two or three solid tracks we can add to the album, which I'm currently working on myself as well as partnering with a few others to achieve something catchy, but certainly not cheesy. The writers are great and you'll be hearing some of my newest tracks in my sets. Being an artist is simple when there is no money involved. Promoting work for free is much simpler when you have less to worry about and on another note I probably should have released a few tracks three or four years ago. The only thing that sucks is that music stuff takes time and things happen. I have a 4-year old son and a wife, and they take up a good chunk of my time as well.

3. Can you reflect on having to balance having a family while touring or even what it means to be a DJ as your career in 2014?

Ville: In a way it's not difficult, because my wife is so amazing. She actually used to tour with me and was my tour manager for a couple of years, so she knows what I do and brought in the deal originally back then. You know it's hard having a four and a half year old son and have to be away from him for a week here and there. But at the same time he is turning out to be quite the music lover. He is playing the piano now which is awesome and when I'm playing some tunes I swear to god he knows what's good music. When there is something bad on the radio he does nothing, but when something good or funky comes on he'll be jamming. It's awesome.

GLT: Did your family live with you in Atlanta when you were there?

Ville: Yes they did, my wife is originally from Atlanta. We lived there for a few years together and then we moved back to Finland.

4. Since 2011, you and Randy Boyer have been running the EnMass Music record label. What do you have coming up in 2014, and are there any upcoming artists we should lookout for on the label?

Right now we are looking for tracks to release. I think our biggest project, especially Randy's, is the focus on his Boyan & Boyer project. This guy called Boyan is around 20 years old. Randy has been co-producing with him and the cool thing is that they have never even met in person. They have done everything over Skype and they have made a bunch of releases together. The tracks are just bangin', the shizzle! I've been playing a lot of their stuff and I think it's most probable that out of the artists on our label they could break out pretty big. They made a remix of Ferry Corsten's track "Diss" for their own play. Ferry heard the track, liked it, and hosted it on his Soundcloud to be shared for free. Might even still be there. Getting that kind of recognition doesn't do anything financially for the label because it's not our track, but it allows their name to get bigger and have bigger opportunities in the future. We are a small label right now and are trying to find new talent in hopes that one of them hits big. Essentially the talent we sign is also what we want to be playing ourselves.

5. Is your next album going to follow the same musical trends (trance/progressive) you have followed in the past?

I have grown to like big room house and electro house, and was mostly influenced by Randy to listen to that style of music. That's like the 128bpm and the 130bpm bassline and kind of simple yet hooky melody that I've played a lot myself now too. If I play a longer set in the 2-3 hour range, towards the end I still play 134-136bpm trance. A lot of it is in the slower end of the spectrum. I try not to play the big names that everyone else is playing because it wouldn't really make me a DJ of my own, but I'm not playing obscure and weird tracks all the time either. And there is a practical reason for that – I often don't follow my promos like I should. For example I missed "Levels" and SHM's "Don't You Worry Child". Honestly missed them! I get promos a couple of months in advance, and at one point I realized that trying to go after the newest tracks doesn't work for me because I don't always have time for that. Sometimes I play new tracks when I get one that I like, but I don't always look for them. This allows me to play the kind of music I like which often is progressive, electro, or big room, but not from the big names, however equally as good. The most rewarding thing for me is when I'm able to play five or six tracks in a row and not many people in the audience knows what they are, but they are still digging it. That moment right there is a testament to those tracks saying that they do work.

6. In addition to the record label, you have a monthly radio show that features tracks showcased in your live sets called *Salmiakki Sessions*. What is the origin of the name of your radio show?

You don't want to know the origin of that... Just kidding it's actually pretty cool. Salmiakki is a candy we eat a lot in Finland; it's like a salty licorice. I like it a lot and it has vodka infused into it. For someone in America who hasn't tried it, they often don't like it because of the saltiness. I gave my buddy Jason one and it sat on his shelf for a year.



7. What are some of your daily routines – Music, general life stuff, and fun? What are some things people might not know about you?

If I'm home, five days a week my wife and I juggle getting our son to school. After that I usually spend time working on music. A lot of that time is usually taken up by checking emails and doing managerial and maintenance stuff. The mornings I don't take my son to school I go play ice hockey. I really love ice hockey. I wake up at 6am and am on the ice by 6:45am. I do not like waking up early so that should tell you how much I like ice hockey.

8. Last month you played on the Groove Cruise – EnMass Music's 3 year anniversary celebration. This must have been very exciting! How does playing on a floating venue compare to playing at a normal festival, and how do you enjoy the experience?

If you want to have one of the craziest weekends of your life, I highly recommend Groove Cruise! Groove Cruise L.A. is coming up in October. The average age of the crowd is a little older, probably around 30. They call it the Spring Break for grownups. What's cool about Groove Cruise is that it gets 80% sold out before anyone even knows who is playing. People have a general idea because I usually play and so does Funkagenda, but the rest is a mystery.

9. Lucky tonight, Toronto tomorrow, and Finland in April. Any big plans for festival season and upcoming shows in next few months? We loved seeing you at Paradiso last year!

There is definitely constant touring, so every couple of weekends I'll be on the road. In April I have those gigs in Finland and probably a few more in Finland in May too. There are some US gigs to soon be confirmed as well. Definitely also have to spend time working on making my music. I did learn about a pretty big festival I'm playing at this summer but I couldn't publicly announce that – yet.

10. Trance finally seems to be gaining popularity in the United States. Being a producer that has been in the Trance scene for over a decade, how have you seen it evolve over time? What have been the biggest changes you have noted?

Trance in general is quite a wide umbrella of different things. The US has likely changed things globally because of the popularity and growth of the “EDM Movement”, which much of Corporate America has embraced and started using EDM in their advertising. In addition, event organizers have started throwing huge EDM events nationwide. This can be a good thing in itself, but then we also have a saturation of the market as well, especially in terms of sound. The sound gets kind of diluted and it happens in cycles. Something big pops up which is what happened with dubstep a couple of years ago. Not that dubstep isn't big still, but it popped up all of the sudden and everybody and their mothers were “doing” dubstep. The big guys who produced it then are still doing well but there is a lot of that copycat sound. I think the same thing is going on now not necessarily with trance, but the whole so-called “EDM Scene” and the big-room electro sound. There are definitely a lot of great albums and releases but also a ton of copycat tunes. The difficulty when you create new music is trying to tap into that new market. To be honest I do make music that I like and it comes from deep within, but at the same time everything affects everything. My tastes, what I hear, and also my expectations play a part in the process so it would be dumb not to try and incorporate some elements that are going around right now, as well as incorporate some elements from my old style that can bring something new to the table. So it's difficult creating new music trying not to be too obvious, cheesy, or create “copycat” tunes. It's a difficult question you ask about the trance scene and how it has changed. I'm actually happy now in terms of the word “trance” or genre “trance” and how some of these tracks are actually making it into DJ's playlists who were generally not into the old school trance stuff.

11. Do you have any funny, strange, scary, or weird stories from your years as a touring artist?

Ohh boy. This is not the biggest or the funniest, but was the first thing that came to my mind. I played in Washington D.C. and was picked up from the hotel and taken to a club. We were driving around the parking lot and they had this valet guy who was basically just helping out to show people where the empty spots were. He stopped our car and our driver said, “We are bringing in a DJ”.

“Well who's the DJ?” asked the lot attendant

“Darude”

“JARULE!?! I thought his ass is black!”

On a side note, Darude.com is easily the most informative artist webpage we have come across. Comprehensive artist info, achievements, FAQ, and studio information left nothing up to chance, and painted a great picture of who you are as a professional. Hats off to you, Ville.

Warm Regards,

Stephen and the entire GLT Team

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