



  October 2, 2015  Jada Griffin

After the Sandstorm: Interview with Darude



Twitchcon 2015, the first official gathering of Twitch streamers and fans, has come and gone. For those who celebrated at the official afterparty, they were treated with a performance by one and only Ville Virtanen, better known as Darude. Virtanen is an electronic dance music producer and DJ originating from Finland and has been in the music scene for over 15 years. He is best known for his 1999 instant hit single "Sandstorm" which swept both the Europe and US dance scene by storm and even now continues to be a crowd favorite. In 2011, he launched a label called EnMass Music and most recently released his fourth studio album, Moments. Prior to the show, I was lucky enough to sit down and speak with him about his

views on the past, present, and future of EDM.

NR: So first off I'm a big fan. I've been listening to EDM for over 15 years. What's your vision for the future of EDM?

VV: I wish I had the crystal ball to answer that...I don't like the term EDM in the terms of describing one style of music, but what most people understand is that EDM is a very energetic festival type of drop sound. I think that is slowly but surely now getting other kinds of music next to it that are still as valid when it comes to the club situation, because it's getting a bit saturated like trance did back in 2000-2001 too.

I don't know where it's gonna go but what's been big in the past few years for the music industry is the Hip-Hop, R&B and house and trance are being fused together and it's interesting to see. What that means for dance music, I'm not sure. What I do know is that now we have what I've always wanted in the US... for everyone to know dance music.

NR: Who are some other artists that you like to listen to?

VV: People ask me this often. Who is my favorite DJ? I recently met again with someone I consider a friend, Ferry Corsten, the dutch DJ who is a very nice guy... very great producer and a very, very good DJ entertainer. He's a people's DJ. He reacts with the crowd. He's one of the really long career-having DJs that I still look up to.

NR: Where do you see yourself in the future? What's next on the plate for you?

VV: I've got a record company with Randy Boyer, and we're cultivating that and releasing records that we would play in our DJ sets ourselves. We obviously don't discriminate if a big artist wanted to sign and release on our label. Mostly we're finding people that are giving us promos, and if we like it and would play it ourselves, we sign it as a way to give up-and-coming new talents a way to get their music out. I don't think I'll ever want to quit the music industry, but maybe in 40 years when I'm too old to tour. I still want to be involved

NR: Do you find any difficulties connecting with the younger audience?

VV: I'm a techie guy but at the same time being a techie guy and understanding technology does not mean I know what a 15 year old thinks these days. One of the things I do for that is the label. We don't have a 15 year old but we have a 21 year old's track who's way more closer to the ground, with being gamers. So I use that to know what's up.

NR: I saw you did a sound pack for Counter-Strike. Is there anything else in the works?

VV: I can't reveal any actual plans, but personally I am very interested in the video game industry and music. Artistically it's really cool and very different, from creating music like I do normally, but at the same time applying what I do know. It's a whole new world out there for me, so I'm definitely interested in it. I have good connections like my Counter-Strike pack with Valve, and they do a lot more with that so of course

there could be something for me to do there as well, and I hope I get to do that.

NR: Any big franchises you would like to do a bit of music for?

VV: In my case Dota 2 is something I should look into because that's another big game. [They] have been big on my "Sandstorm" meme.

NR: When you tour and perform, do you have anything retro or old school that you bring with you?

VV: In the gadget department I'm where everyone else is, but I think that my attitude is a little old. When I DJ, I don't try to play the biggest hits of the moments. My goal is to play good music which means I don't run after whatever is the latest, but I play tracks that I love and I know, at least I hope know, that will make the crowd enjoy themselves. Whether it was released last week or 10 years ago, I string those together so that it sounds good. It might be an experienced DJ way of doing things or an old school thing of believing in the music than the names in the title.

NR: Do you have any advice about up-and-coming artists trying to make a name for themselves?

VV: Do exactly what you like, not what you think people like, because if you start going off of your course, it will be seen at some point and people sense if you're not [authentic]. From an interaction standpoint don't be a dick. Don't be an entitled person who thinks I need everything right now and for free. Also know at least a little bit about those who came before you, because that's just a respect thing and that will teach you a lot, and finally self-promote but again don't be a dick.

NR: Who would you recommend for people to go back and listen to and maybe learn a few things from?

VV: One of my all-time favorite bands in the electronic scene is Faithless from the '90s to mid-90s. They had a huge track *Insomnia* among others. Their music is milotic; it's spooky but it's not cheesy. Another if you want to learn from is Skrillex. From the production point of view, he's amazing whether you like dubstep or not. Finally check out a [young] Britney Spears album. Even if you don't like Britney, you will still learn a lot. Listen to how those albums are made because there is a reason why someone like Max Martin, who has written a lot for Britney and all kinds of boy bands, has had so many hits. They know both song writing and the production side of things, and whatever you're doing, dissect other people's music that you like, because that is the best way to learn in my opinion. Listen to how others have done it and analyze it.



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