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Sinden (Grizzly / Mad Decent) Talks DJing, Production, Dance Music, US Rap, LA +

by admin on Feb 23, 2012

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The UK's **Sinden** has always bridged multiple strains of dance music, bringing together the disparate sounds of anything that will please a crowd – from Kuduro and Funky, to 3Ball and electro. That view is shared through his DJ sets, releases on his label **Grizzly**, and his own productions. But he's always harbored a love of hip hop. And while it was never really hidden and definitely shined through his output, it recently has taken on a more substantial role. Sinden put together an **official remix mixtape** for Gucci Mane last year, has released a few records with rappers from California in the past couple months, and moved to LA in part to be closer to the hip hop scene there. Below he discusses what's so exciting about rap today, the relevance of geography in music, and his interest in muddling genre boundaries. – **Mike Steyels**



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[Sinden - "High Demand" feat. Jesse Boykins III | Grizzly, 2012]

What is your production set up?

It's really compact and designed so that I can fold it up and travel with it. When I was in the UK my studio was a little more elaborate with a couple of outboard synths. But once I moved to the US, I literally just travelled with my laptop, MIDI keyboard, soundcard, **UAD Satellite**, and I re-bought the **Genelecs** that I used in my old studio. I've always been low key about that – nothing fancy.

DJ set up?

Serato and CDJs. I switched to Serato a few years back. I like how you can either rock it on a rudimentary

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DJ set up?

Serato and CDJs. I switched to Serato a few years back. I like how you can either rock it on a rudimentary level or you can get deeper with it. I don't fuck with any MIDI controllers or anything, just queue points and the keyboard shortcuts. It suits my needs as a DJ, but I'm thinking of going more 'live'. There is something about limitations that I love though.

When making a record, do you have a particular audience in mind?

Sometimes I should be more aware of it when making music. As open minded as audiences are, they still have expectations of an artist and their sound. If you are deviating hard from your last track it can be risky because you could alienate your audience a little. I like to dabble in so many fields – one track could be a dance track for the big rooms, one track could be some emotional RnB type thing with **Jesse Boykins**, or one track could be a rap production with **G-Side**. I've always gravitated to these disparate scenes though, I guess it's what defines me – but is also a little confusing at the same time ha.

Why did you move to LA?

I guess mostly it's the people that drew me here. Also rap music and the weather. You know us Brits don't see enough of that... Switch moved out here a few years ago and really bigged it up to me, and I was sold. To me it's the circle of people you get in with that makes you want to stay somewhere, and there's a healthy camaraderie with the artists in the scene. I'm looking forward to immersing myself in music out here more.

Have you performed at a lot of US festivals? What is your impression of them?

To be honest, I haven't performed at too many US festivals except with for the **Mad Decent Block Party** and also **HARD Fest** a few years ago. I ended up doing some pretty big shows on that HARD tour though – bussing across North America for 2 weeks was a total trip. Kids go pretty wild out here at the festivals and that's the exciting thing about it, this next generation. If I was dropping E for the first time and listening to dubstep that would change my life too. The best is still to come – it's going to get even more open in the US and that's the most exciting thing. I've seen that all happen in the UK and it's like there's a whole new wave of kids doing it here.



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How did the Gucci Mane mixtape come about? How did you choose the remixers?

Kevin at Warners approached me about it, following up on **Diplo's first tape**. Of course, I jumped at the chance – I'm a big Gucci fan. I just made a shortlist of all the producers that should be on it – I didn't get everyone. I understand it's not a paid gig and some producers expect money, and also not everyone gives as much of a shit about Gucci as me. I got most of the remixers I wanted though and a lot of the guys were big rap fans and Brick Squad fans. I'm proud of how legit this mixtape was, here's me in London building a tape for Gucci – when I saw the post on Gucci's Facebook page I was in disbelief!

How is rap opening up to dance music in the US?

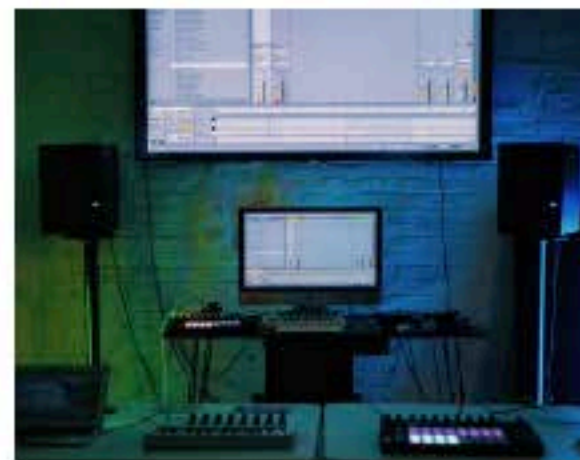
Rap is pretty open to dance music. It seems like the boundaries between the two are as blurred as ever. It seems like the game changed. Some rappers couldn't really step to the dance stuff. I think we'll see less of it this year and more of a return to real rap tempos. The biggest records will be the straight ahead rap things – still exciting though. I'm definitely more psyched about that right now than the dance / rap crossover.

What makes for a good rapper in your opinion?

There are so many things like cadence, lyrics, flow, good hooks, style, attitude. I've always been into rappers with strong characters though – distinctive voices on a track that pop out as soon as you press play. If I think about all my favourite rappers past and present – Andre 3000, E-40, Scarface, 2 Pac, Waka Flocka – they just stand out to me. Also I love rappers that are just absurd, that make you laugh. Listening to Waka Flocka adlibs or a Juicy J mixtape and him talking about excessive drugs just entertains me no end. It's undeniable.

Is region or geography important in today's music?

It's become less important with musical genres continuing to blur, but at the same time area is synonymous with a sound and a group of individuals that make that sound what it is. It's only when you travel to these cities and see it first hand, talking to these guys and visiting the studios, that you begin to understand the backstory, the political and social climate – the technology even is a big influence. But then again, Youtube makes the world a smaller place too. It's the best place to scout music more than anywhere. It evened the playing field totally.



Feb 6, 2019



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