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# Saeed Younan

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## Artist Spotlight

Ind producer Saeed Younan is your favorite DJ's favorite DJ. The DJ is lauded for his precision and effortless blend of house, tech and globe-trotting performer with a case full of DJ awards, he's famous dancefloors of Ibiza, Tokyo, Mexico, Hong Kong, and the U.S. As a producer his trademark sound continues to evolve, from revered artists like Carl Cox, Danny Tenaglia, Mark Knight, Nic Fanciulli.

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Melisa Yuriar

9 min read

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Saeed Younan - Heavy Shaker Original



their peer, he was a young protege and novice DJ, yearning to  
club show of his own.

Greyhound bus from DC to New York in the mid-90s, go check out  
y at Twilo, hop back on the Greyhound and go clock in, work a  
—now they call it Whole Foods—and then do it all over again. They  
out giving me weekends off, which was great because I needed

the digital age, Younan is a successful touring DJ and label head of  
imprint's name was a fortuitous accident.

never meant to be named after me. Somewhere along the way,  
an Inc. became Younan Music and we just kept it," explained  
the label to shed light on new artists, people who were trying to  
d to focus on smaller acts, people who were starting out who  
to get their name out there."

**r Saeed Younan**

el has churned out over 300 releases including singles and  
rding to Saeed. Supported by Carl Cox, Hot Since 82, Carlo Lio,  
int forges on preserving and maintaining its original mission—to  
e strays, and the new kids on the block build out their legacy, just

ies, but we stay away from signing anyone that's too cocky or has  
n our label produces their own stuff, they're making their own  
in the studio—no ghostwriters. We focus on humble people who

make something happen for the culture, for music,” said Saeed.



able artist with a tenacious work ethic and an unwavering love  
formed early on in his life. Born in Baghdad in the early 70s, Saeed,  
two sisters lived in Iraq until they fled in 1981 due to an ongoing war.

country, but at that time you couldn't leave or go anywhere so  
were going on vacation,” said Saeed. So the family escaped to a  
punk music and fashion were approaching their pinnacle. During  
the, Saeed turned to music as an escape.

At 15 years old, recording music on a tape deck I always had on  
boombox I would tune to little European stations. The tape deck  
cassette and I'd record on it any chance I'd get when I heard  
Saeed shared. “That was how it all started. Sitting in my room,

in stations and sifting through the channels for music, grasping  
d listening to everything I could.”

## 1 house set in The Lab DC



t music wasn’t as accessible in those days as it is now. So his  
exploring different sounds and genres was through terrestrial  
g producer, this meant he spent hours tuning through stations,  
ic and white noise for any clearly defined snippets of music—  
uded a lot of disco and ABBA.

rd stations sometimes with clear sound. I’d have to keep tuning  
tion wasn’t clear and then, when I found a good one, I would keep  
/ of the music I was listening to was disco, occasionally some

London for a year-and-a-half while his father filed the  
ork that would allow them to transfer to the United States as

like refugees then. We couldn’t go to school,” explained Saeed.  
r. There was a lot of politics going on and we didn’t want to run

able, or else they'd say we'd escaped the country. So we did the way quiet, in the meantime, until we got our paperwork."

I trained all his young life to fight in a war, the sudden move to London on him. "I didn't speak any English, and it was even harder as a kid, where it's already difficult to understand what anyone's saying," he

proved to be serendipitous. Arriving in the UK at the brink of the the early 80s was pivotal for Saeed. "I grew up seeing punks, mohawks, the leather. This really opened up my eyes to a new world of music and culture."

In London, the family arrived in the US and settled on the East Coast. He excelled in school, and it was around this time that the burgeoning hip hop scene began to embrace the arts. After school, he dabbled in breakdancing and then moved on to DJing when a friend gifted him turntables to tinker with during college.

Saeed's school was into hip hop and DJing. This guy was friends with Sir Mix-A-Lot. He would come at his house, listening to Sir Mix-A-Lot records. He had these records and started showing me how to scratch...I was blown away. I knew that I wanted to do that," said Saeed.

He had two turntables and a mixer set up, but something clicked within him. He loved it and couldn't stop thinking about it. I would skip class just to go to his house and mess around on the turntables."

## 1 live stream El Techo (Washington D.C)



In 1991, the friends went their separate ways but promised to keep in touch. After he departed, Saeed's pal offered his turntables and DJ gear to the young man, saying, "If you would put them to good use."

"I took the demos out to promoters, and booking small gigs at house parties...any chance I got to mix, I took it. It wasn't about money to me, it was about to play out," he said.

Over time, the music he played for remains as diverse today as his early setlists. In the beginning, he would only play hip hop because that's what was most popular. But as he grew, he began incorporating the dance and club music he enjoyed. A few of his favorites from his earliest club gigs included L.A. Style's "I'm Alive," Petra, Co's "Just Let Go" Dub version, and D.H.S.' "The

and seeing DJs bigger than I was, seeing the crowd reacting to the songs didn't even have words, it was just the rhythm, the feeling that did something to me," he shared. "That's when I went to a record store to look for those exact records. I'd sit in record stores sifting through [records], just to find that one record that I heard it before. That's how I gravitated toward DJing."

taking Greyhound buses to and from clubs while working a part-time job, his love for dingy venues and clubs remains.

clubs there's more of an intimacy, especially when it's a dark room, and I love that vibe. I don't like the clubs that are all bells and whistles all over the place...that to me will never be the vibe that I


has headlined Ultra, Electric Forest, and EDC. While he agrees  
like playing for these festivals and the crowds they amass, they  
the vigorous buoyancy generated at a club venue.

you play at a festival, you can't get that same energy. I'll look at  
and sometimes I won't see as much movement. Maybe hands in  
crowds and the buildup, but it'll never be the same in the way the  
club. They're two different worlds," he said.

As a DJ and producer, Saeed is not only an avid music listener—  
he also extends to instruments. From drums to guitars, keyboards to  
percussion, Saeed's instrument collection is expansive. He houses it all  
in his home in Washington DC. Lately, his favorite instrument to tinker with is the  
flute collection—a Native American flute.



[Saeed Younan](#)

 SOUND CLOUD

Hot Crate Classics 42 All Vinyl Techno Mix Saeed Younan

Itly had to consolidate the collection due to the proliferating  
ds overtaking his studio. “I’ve been buying records in bulk up until  
hop records from 1988,” he said. “I still buy records sometimes,  
e I used to. I only buy them for my listening pleasure now since I  
n out anymore.”

rratorial skills come in handy when he records the impromptu  
*te Classics* vinyl series, which he uploads to Soundcloud weekly.  
r-DJ has mixed around 40 curated sets.

d with vinyl collection  
d Younan, Facebook

nrehearsed, unplanned, and always hand-picked. The series  
mixing—the way DJ’s spun in the 80s and 90s.

play records at clubs, a lot of them don't understand how to set  
I show up and the tables aren't right, the needle will start  
re's people dancing behind you...Sometimes I bring my own stuff,  
ard when you're traveling, trying to carry two turntables, and all  
diculous," he explained.

efore he rules out playing vinyl though, said Saeed. If there's a  
gs, minimal lighting, and a crew that knows how to set up the  
's more than happy to spin the hits, and his latest, the old school

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