



If you ask anyone about techno it's almost impossible for Chris Liebing's name not to pop up. Not only he is a famous dj and producer with a long history behind him but his label CLR and attendant podcast have become synonymous with the deep, dark industrial techno that drive techno lovers wild! His first NYC CLR night is coming up on Dec 16th and Chris made time out of his schedule to have a little skype chat with us.

CGNY: Hi Chris! Thanks for taking the time to chat to CGNY. So you have a huge following for

the CLR podcast. I know first thing on a Monday morning my routine is turn on the computer, tune into CLR! How did that come about? I know you have a crazy schedule with your producing and djing. How do you find the time to a) pick the artists and b) do the chat because you don't just upload a mix – you keep us informed with your talk and updates. How does it come together?

CL: it started out –if you really want to hear the beginning, it started out back in '97 when a satellite radio station that was purely dedicated to electronic music opened up in Cologne, in Germany. Back in '97 I never did radio but I was invited to be a guest on a show on that station and I went there and I was like “Wow radio is a lot of fun”. I really love the idea to be behind a microphone, to pass out information and not really know who is listening and even if only 10 people are listening – it's just like a fun thing to do. So it was a really raw radio station, really new and they were happy for any support. I asked them if I could maybe do a show. And they said sure why not. At that time I was not a really well known dj or anything you know? So I finally ended up doing 2 years there – every Friday a 4 hour radio show which was live. It was my first steps doing radio and I really enjoyed it. Sadly that station had to close down due to financial difficulties in '99 but pretty quickly I found a radio station in my home town of Frankfurt. I did a program there for 3 years 'til 2003 until that station closed down! But I really fell in love with radio – with just presenting music and giving a little bit of handy information (well I think it's handy!). Sometimes I know it's a lot of talk. But you can listen to mix tapes and mix cds all over the internet so why not talk you know? So when that closed down I was a little sad – I wanted to do more. Back in 2003, 2004 and 2005, I was very active on Ibiza and on Ibiza there are 2 radio stations that do all the clubs' music and I started to do a weekly show on both of these stations. And usually you only do that during the summer but I kept it up during the winter because I was so happy doing it there because (Ibiza Sonica and Global Radio)they were also present on the internet so you could listen to it worldwide. While doing that I was also getting a good team together, people who could help me with the show; help me with scheduling of the artists. Of course I choose the artists but there is a lot of work involved. And I was thinking about 3 years ago, “Man we do all this work for 2 little radio stations in Ibiza and I'm not even sure who's listening to it” and I thought why don't I make a podcast out of it. That would be the easiest thing. So we just turned that radio show into a podcast and I just changed my voice overs from “This is my radio show” into “This is the CLR podcast”. So you see we can quite some years of preparation for that!

CGNY: Yes quite a journey!

CL: And building up a team as well. I have Benny who helps with all things CLR. He was living on Ibiza and taking care of all the press releases and contacts for the radio station and putting together the podcast so the final package is ready on Sunday to be uploaded on Monday. Because I can't do that. I'm mostly on the road. So we have a pretty good system which doesn't

really demand that much time now and the time that it demands I'm really glad to put into it because this is part of the whole thing of the label work also -picking the people for the podcast- is part of the CLR label work because you have contact with these artists, you exchange news regarding your tracks- staying on top of everything. It's an amazing synergy that comes together. So I think the first one was March 2009 and I'm pretty proud of the fact that we've been able to do this every Monday since then.

CGNY: Yes, it's quite an achievement! The whole CLR sound is unique and yet quite identifiable even within the many different artists and genres of techno, you can pick out the CLR sound. Was that something you thought to create deliberately or did it evolve?

CL: Maybe there is 5 percent thinking involved. And the rest is how I feel and what we feel, even with the releases, the podcasts, the artists we choose, it's basically just gut feeling. I find something, I like it and I will go for it and I see how it goes then. That's been the case since I've been running labels. In the past 3 years we've put a lot more energy and effort into the label work. I think that kind of formed the label a little bit better and it's a bit more defined in what kind of musical areas we're working on. And while doing this, I think it's an automatic effect that happens, is that artists come to you because they maybe enjoy the sound. So it's a give and take thing. I don't really think too much about it. You can't really plan that. Maybe 10 years ago you were able to plan it a bit better when it comes to albums "Ok we plan this album for early summer next year and this for fall". In today's world with the internet, the production process being much faster because of not worrying too much about your hardware side of things, you can be more spontaneous. So planning is not really that important. The important thing is to keep the family alive, somehow. I love to keep in contact with artists even if they have no releases at the moment to make them feel like 'Hey sitting in the studio! Do something am waiting for whatever you come up with!' I am listening to new stuff, trying to discover new artists. Other artists that might be established and well known might show up and say "I've got something for you that might be good" This is a fantastic time to do this and you can be really spontaneous about releasing new things

CGNY: So tell us about the CLR night in NYC. Sadly I'll be missing it but I think there will be a big turnout and a big buzz about the night! How excited are you to do a CLR night in New York City?

CL: Very! Apart from the CLR night we did in Detroit this year, this is first CLR night we're planning in the States. I love New York, really, really much! It's one of my favorite cities in the world, when it comes to the energy there. I've had really tough times in New York. I really worked hard to get something going there in mid 2000s. I tried to build up a residency with

Limelight which was working really well for a while but then you know how it is in the New York club scene; the managers change, the owners change, the ideas of what to do changes. It's a really fast city so you can't invest a lot of time in building up something because it needs to work or it doesn't. But somehow I feel that investment has paid off. I can say in the past 3 years I've had amazing nights in New York wherever I play, Like Santos Party House, an amazing sound system and my regular appearances at Cielo are a lot of fun. The turnout there is always very interesting because people you would not expect going to techno parties end up at Cielo on a Thursday night and they might enjoy themselves so they're like "Oh what's that kind of music now, I never heard that before, I usually listen to hip hop but I enjoyed that!" So it was kind of a natural thing that we thought to do another off location party and maybe do a CLR night and I'm happy to bring Speedy J as a guest and Brian Black who's living in New York right now who is one of the new artists on CLR and I think we're going to have a fun night. I'm super mega excited!!

CGNY: So with CLR the label – you just mentioned that Brian is a new artist there. – (loved your remix of Moby's Lie Down in Darkness by the way). How do you scout for artists?

CL: I basically keep my eyes and ears open. I get sent a lot of demos but I have to admit I can't listen to all of them so maybe some people who read this now are "What the hell when did he listen to my demo!" (I still haven't!) Because listening to demos for me, I cannot do it anywhere. I have to be in the mood to listen to demos. The bigger chance to get noticed in terms of CLR is just to be out there with good productions, doing your thing. Also with the podcast I'm always checking in with artists. They tell me what's new, what's hot. So the information flow is pretty much there. And of course I do have a certain amount of demos that I listen to from artists that I know a little bit better. I tend to listen to their stuff more. However it's not only important what the artist does musically but how the artist is; who is this person. I couldn't work with someone I didn't like, if I didn't like their attitude. They could be the best musician in the world but if there is a cocky attitude and it's a hard time to work with them I wouldn't do it - no way. I would rather take on an artist where musically I know there is way more potential than what they have achieved so far but because of the person themselves, I might be able to influence or help out a little bit. That's another thing about the CLR nights. When we get together everyone gets along with each other. They might have different interests musically but they all get along with each other. That's really nice!

CGNY: I was in Detroit this year and true story, actually stopped Speedy J from hitting his head on a speaker in the booth backstage when he tripped accidentally!

CL: Well thank you! Who knows how the techno world would have changed if you hadn't caught him!!

CGNY: Indeed! Are you going to go back to Movement next year?

CL: Oh definitely. The thing with DEMF is first its run by very good friends of mine, the Paxahau people. I knew them way before they had anything to do with Movement. They are really good guys and that's why the festival is so good because they just know what they're doing and very professional. They only book the same artists every second year on the main line up to vary it. So since I didn't play on the official line up this year I'm back on the official line up next year. And the years where I'm not on the official line up I just do an off location party. So I basically get to be there every year.

CL: What do you like to do when you have a little down time? Are you a gamer, reader, cook?

CL: I'm not a gamer! I would rather consider myself as a reader. I like to cook. I just like to chill out and take it easy and of course spend a lot of time with my family. I have 2 daughters. They're very young, 2 and 5. It's so much fun to be with them. If I can't be with them when I'm on the road or because they are sleeping, I just like to hang loose. You don't necessarily have to 'do' something all the time. I think that gives you a good balance as well. Sometimes I see people around me and every minute that they have they think they have to fill with some activity, to be 'productive'. But I think you can also be productive by even meditating for half an hour. That's what I try to do!

CGNY: There aren't too many women in the darker, heavier side of techno. Any thoughts on that?

CL: Well I think naturally this darker, industrial, heavier techno is kind of a male thing. As a female maybe you're more attracted to more harmonies or the lighter side of things? Which is funny because when I play out the ratio of men to women is almost equal? So apparently there is no difference in listening to it and having a good time and just dancing. I have to admit we keep our eyes and ears even more open when it comes to female artists in that genre. Because

we would of course be interested to have some more female influence. I think generally female influence on anything whether politics or music is always a good thing!

CGNY: Well said Chris well said!

CL: So any female djs/producers get in touch with us – send your stuff!

CGNY: I'm curious on your take on technology. You're very active on Facebook and Twitter and that's important in terms of getting your sound out there and connecting with fans.

CL: First of all I think the internet makes things more democratic in a way. That means less hype maybe involved? Potentially people get to listen to a variety of music they maybe they didn't hear 10 years ago. They were only surrounded by some friends who were listening to one style. But now they can go on the internet and for example stumble onto a CLR podcast. And maybe they enjoy and BAM! you have someone new who's interested in your music which is great. With regard to Facebook and Twitter, its amazing to see how more connected you can be with people who are interested in what you do and your music, to give them a bit more background information. If I look back to my childhood days when I was a fan of various bands, the only thing you had from them was their album cover in your hand and then maybe you'd get one or two magazines where there was an interview with them. But you didn't get to know them closer, what do they think day by day what are they doing, what do they tweet. It's so interesting to follow people! Some people might only tweet about their releases which is fine; some others only tweet about food! Some people just tweet about their own philosophy of life which I find really interesting too. So you can relate a little bit better to the artist that you follow. And it connects us a bit more. It's a tool and if people ditch it then they might have used the tool in the wrong way! Especially with Twitter. For me it's just such an amazing source of information. It matters who you follow – you don't even have to be active! Just follow some news agencies or whatever and you're covered. You shouldn't make it your life obviously but it can definitely be a useful tool.

CGNY: What might we surprised to know that you have in your music collection? Secretly a country music fan?!

CL: Hah! Definitely at the moment there is a lot of fun children's music in my collection. We've

organized some children's discos. Where my older daughter goes to school there was a lack of Sunday afternoon children's discos. So some friends started to organize that and they asked me "Can't you dj because we don't have a dj?" So I am just basically playing a mixture of kid's music, with old 70s funk! Which is an amazing combination! The kids love to listen to old Michael Jackson tracks. And this is how I grew up in the middle of the 90s when I started djing. I played old soul, acid tracks, jazz and hip hop. And it's great for kids! And the parents are happy as well because they are taken back 20 years in time! I'm a still a 'victim' of all the 80s synth pop era, like ABC, Heaven 17, Human League and of course Depeche Mode. But that is not very surprising so I don't have anything to hide!

CGNY: I was chatting to Tony Scott about his remix for Martin Gore/Vince Clarke project. And your next release is also a Martin Gore release!

CL: Yes we released the Motor album and the next single is the title single of the album which is sung by Martin Gore. So I'm very happy about that.

CGNY: It's great to see the cross pollination if you will from old school and new school!

CL: Absolutely, These guys get influenced by what we do today as well. I think it's great when these things come back together. And this is something I want to work on at CLR anyway so there's gonna be some more of these surprises coming up!

If you go to CLR.net now you can see a teaser video for the CLR X which is coming out on Dec 20th.

CGNY: Fantastic! Thanks again Chris. Have an amazing gig on Dec 16th and I know you're back in NYC in February correct?

CL: Yes I'm in Pacha in February 2012.

CGNY: Wunderbar! Danke schon Chris!

Chris Liebing

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Chris Liebing and Speedy J play the [Highline Ballroom](#) Dec 16th - brought to you by Blk Market Presents.