



Subfractal (Syed Raza and Fahad Ahmad) are rapidly becoming known for the solid techno productions and also for quality techno parties in NYC. Feb 11th sees their party moniker Sama partner with Oktave to bring Tommy Four Seven to NYC. On a mild night in January on the rooftop of Bar 13, we caught up with one half of Subfractal, Syed Raza to find out how a former metalhead has seen the techno light!

**CGNY:** So tell us how you got into the electronic music scene?

**SR:** I've always been really interested in music. My parents were into the Studio 54 scene and all that. They used to live here. I was born here, lived here for about 8 years, moved back to Pakistan (where my parents are from). My brother got me into rock. I was in a band, played the bass, played metal. Then my best friend Asad, the lead singer (in the band) passed away when I was about 18 or 19. Every time I picked up my guitar, there were too many emotions and

memories. So I couldn't do that anymore. And around the same time, I saw my friend spinning, one of my good friends in school. I thought it was cool, the silhouette of him mixing at this underground club. This friend left his tape in my car and I was driving home one night and popped the tape in by mistake and I was like 'wow!'. I even remember the song; it was DBD, "Chanting in the Dark" and it blew me away. So then pretty soon after I got Fruity Loops for fun and started playing around with it. Eventually I put some stuff up online and it got really good ratings, good comments etc and I began to think maybe I could do this for a living! That changed me. Since then I've put everything aside and put 100% into producing music and djing. Bought my first set of turntables, started learning, dove more into production. I didn't go to college. I dropped out of computer science in Toronto (my parents weren't happy!) I pretty much taught myself everything. I went to parties, I asked dj's for advice. I remember asking Magda 'Hey give me one piece of advice!' And she said "I'll tell you the future, its Ableton". This was when Ableton wasn't even that big. And I downloaded that too. One of the first things I did was take a Plastikman track, Sheet 1. I remixed it and I sent it to Richie. I never thought he would actually reply. But he did email me back and said "This is a great take on my stuff and I really appreciate you doing this". It was definitely a big kick off point to my career!

**CGNY:** Yes definitely to get any sort of encouragement from someone as well-known and respected as Richie Hawtin – wow! So how did you team up with Fahad and how did you start the label (Subfractal)

**SR:** Well I was already doing production on my own. And then Fahad and I meet through a mutual friend. He drags me to a party with a bunch of friends. And he puts on a CD and I comment that its very good and who's work is it and it turns out to be his. I tell him this is the kind of music I play. At that time techno wasn't even a third as big as it is now so finding someone who played and liked the same kind of music as myself was unusual.

**CGNY:** And this was in Toronto?

**SR:** Yes in Toronto. So we started getting together and producing together. Learning a bit from one another, going back and forth. Eventually you know each other so well and become so good at the communicating that you don't have to even speak!

**CGNY:** So you've had a lot of support from name dj's and also releases on some solid labels. When did that start to happen?

**SR:** Well after our first year of releasing on not so great labels and not really getting anywhere, we finally began to get some interest from other good labels. Then in 2009 we had a track that went to No.1 on the minimal charts on Beatport ("Milk" a remix of a Larry Powers track). It was No.1 for 2 months so that really pushed us onto a whole other level. We sold a lot of copies and made some money and the game just changed for us. We started getting more bookings to play. Some people get lucky and get on a big label right from the start but we plodded away for a while, working our way up. Our strategy was to push as much music as we could out; I think at one

time we had a track or two coming out every week which was really a lot of work. We bombarded the market with Subfractal and every day people would see our name up there. So I think that strategy worked.

**CGNY:** You've also had releases on Brood Audio which is Erphuns label?

**SR:** Erphun is a good friend of ours and we've been working closely with him. He was like a mentor in a sense, took us under his wing, gave us some good information about the business. He's been a great help to us.

**CGNY:** In terms of djing – are you getting to play out as much as you like? Trying to balance it with studio work?

**SR:** It's always difficult. You have get your priorities straight and being here in North America where techno is still growing in popularity it can be a challenge. Not too many I know of the big names are based out of NY anymore. They all move to Europe, Berlin or whatever. Of course the Detroit techno scene and those guys have always been here in the States but we want to build it up in the city too. We've had offers to move to Europe and our booking agent would love that but we want to stay true to our roots and to New York. There's a handful out of NY; Tony Rohr, Alexi (and of course the guys on the west coast, Audio Injection and Drumcell, Dustin Zahn, Kyle Geiger) but NY is still not yet a 'techno base'.

**CGNY:** Yes but I think that's already beginning to change right?

**SR:** Yes and I think that's what we're trying to do also with our events. Our events are called Sama and we're trying to bridge the gap, bring techno here and make New York more of a home for techno, a scene. I know in the last 2 or 3 years, techno is getting bigger here, a lot more people are coming out to the parties. The commercial music scene is not what we're about. We got offered a contract with a major label and they loved us and said they loved to party to our music but wanted us to play more commercial stuff for the US market and they told us we could make a lot of money but we just couldn't do it! We want to stay in New York and make the kind of music we love. Not to diss the big names, Tiesto and all those guys because they actually expose a lot of new fans to the scene. Maybe they go home afterwards from a gig and google edm and end up finding us or some other techno artist so it's all good.

**CGNY:** So you're playing with Lucy and Tommy Four Seven on Feb 11th for the Sama/Oktave party?

**SR:** Yes very excited.

**CGNY:** And this is Tommys NYC debut

**SR:** Yes he's been on our radar for a while. We've brought over a lot of the CLR guys as you know and we're honored to have him here. New York needs more of this. He should've been here a long time ago but at least we are getting these kinds of artists to New York and exposing the city to this sound. It is interesting though that many are calling their music techno or their parties techno when its not! In fact I was booked to play a techno party in New York. I go there, I bring all my techno records. I'm playing and the owners come up and were like 'Dude you can't play this, we want house". I said "The party is called techno, it's on the flyer. Why did you book me? You know what I play!" So I packed up and got off!

**CGNY:** So February 11th will be techno for sure!! So what's next for your label?

**SR:** We have it in a good place right now and we will continue with releases. However me and Fahad are going to be working under aliases (I'm going under Repressor) right now to allow us both to grow in our own way. The label is doing great too – we just had a VA come out. We're trying to give smaller less well –known artists a shot who are known in other countries but not known here.

**CGNY:** We look forward to seeing you at the Feb 11th party!! Thanks for taking the time to chat with me!

Listen to Subfractal [here](#)

Details on the party [here](#)

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