



For a while now Graham Goodwin aka [Sian](#) has been churning out some solid techno. With his own label, Octopus Recordings, the Dublin born DJ/producer is broadening his reach with remixes and new releases by up and coming artists. After a hectic year. Sian is back in NYC this weekend with the Propaganda crew at Sullivan Room. His good friend and CGNY writer Markus caught up with him to see what's been shaking for Sian!

CGNY: You have been very successful in your field for quite some time now. What are some of the changes you have noticed in your dj-ing in terms of preparing or last minute changing of your sets or even winging it on the spot? What are some of the classic "mistakes" a beginner might try to avoid? What are some of the typical signs to watch for in a crowd?

S: Well I don't know if I have that much success yet. I feel like I'm in continuous state of learning, that's what makes this business of making music interesting, it's a long chase.

I have definitely learnt a lot so far in terms of preparation, although I feel the best sets are raw, random and spur of the moment, the things you've got to prepare are simple logistics, more like the managing of time, sleep and travel! Those are the things that count sometimes, what state you are in when you arrive to a new city to do a gig I guess. I'd say to beginners, get out all of your rave, party and drug messing early, the faster you learn to manage that stuff and have fun, focus on your music and work hard, the better. Everyone parties hard, but getting up early and making stuff happen and being onto of the creative side is what all the big and long term guys have in common.

CGNY: The phase of "warming up the dance floor" prior to the headliner seems to be an underestimated art form. Besides remaining within a reasonable decibel range in the master volume would you say it additionally makes sense to stay within a certain bpm range? Which, if any particular tempo would you as a headliner then start and end with?

S: Yes, I totally agree and more than not, the classic situation of arrival to the club to find a warm up DJ banging the hell out of the floor, or playing too fast is all too common. I think anywhere below 125bpm is simply more comfortable to dance to whilst getting the dance floor moving. I only get up to 127 when the mood really takes me and the crowd has to earn that!!

There is lots of interesting theories about human heart rate etc, being more suited to 125bpm and 4,4 signature, so that's also a natural reason to keep it steady and bouncing, rather than too quick and jive.

CGNY: How has the "Maschine" changed your style and approach to producing?

S: It has completely changed the way I work. Thankfully. I was getting sick of using a mouse or keyboard to make music, so now I have moved entirely over to hardware controller Maschine, by Native Instruments. This allows me to actually "play" with parameters, and use my ears, rather than staring at a screen. It still sounds the same, just that I can make music faster and without so many software angles getting in my way. It feels like more physical and intuitive approach, since I came from a drum machine background, like the MPC 2000 era.

I'm really pleased to have this new flow. It's given me some mad inspiration for drum patterns etc.

CGNY: Your label Octopus Recordings has been pouring out amazing releases and showcasing interesting new artists over the past 2 years. What spurred you to start your own label? Was it out of frustration with existing labels or the wish to fill a missing void in genre and influence the market with innovative new artists and ep's of your own choice?

S: It's really been like that, born of frustration I guess. We have an unusual slant on techno and it wasn't being catered for. I was releasing on some labels and never felt at home. Just knowing that what we do is new and exciting is why I started this, I felt there was a pocket for our strange breed of techno to fit in. The fact that we can now release very heavy or quirky techno tracks and hit good chart positions gives me more confidence to push a bit harder and introduce some slightly more obscure or tough music. To break a new name is difficult now, so we are really interested in remix culture; that's an important feature of the label, mixing diverse sounds or attitudes in the collaborative spirit, for example with our new Versus series.

CGNY: Some dj's have mentioned the lack of time to scan through the increasing numbers of releases on platforms such as Beatport for example and therefore finding themselves relying solely on promo's they receive from other producers to choose the tracks for their upcoming sets. How do you find your "hidden gems" ? And applied to your label, what are some of the factors that flow into your decision to add a young, new artist to your roster?

S: It's such a strange new phenomenon. On the one hand I'm excited about how much music is coming out, on the other it's hard to filter everything, because anyone can now have a label, so of course the quality slides and sometimes great releases get lost in a wave of garbage. It's one of the reasons I don't listen to demos unless they are Soundcloud links. I never accept CDs or email links. It's just a clog of information overload and too many people send whatever they come up with in 10 minutes instead of waiting and really cherry picking the best they can. I really look for that in young artists: patience and quality control. It's so rare.

I have some very trusted promo service guys who send me great selections, but I do try to go scanning for new stuff. In fact other similar djs charts is a good way to pick up on some things you may miss too, and of course being in clubs and searching for new music is the ultimate, as it's the ear to the ground method.

CGNY: Choosing the right remixer for a release of a new artist can have a great impact on his eminent career. Do you try to match the style of the two artists or do you perhaps lead the young artist in a direction he or she might be already heading without even being aware of it?

Do the majority of established artists ask for a remix in return or financial compensation?

S: It can really help get someone noticed for sure, but we always try to purposely mismatch them actually for example a tougher production style with a more atmospheric sounding producer. This gives each release some variation and is also a good way to reach out to other sub genres. A lot of our remixers have been onboard since the beginning and have been super supportive. I personally had some swaps when we started, and I'm very grateful to the people who did this for me. They could have easily hit us with big remix fees, but they believed in the concept of Octopus I guess.

CGNY: It's not a secret that being a DJ comes with a certain raised popularity with the opposite sex. What are some of the more unusual approaches you have experienced? And what kind of an impact does this have on your life if you were to decide to commit to a relationship?

S: It's always a big issue, always, and to be honest it's only certain types of girls who make our lives difficult. I have an amazing girlfriend who has trouble with the business to be honest, she knows I am so faithful and devoted to her but when she hears stories about other djs, who are hanging with swanky women and after partying with random girls, she inevitable thinks all of us are caught in that trap. It doesn't help when a drunk girl throws a bra at your for example, which happened recently, or some cheerleader type explicitly announces her intentions in front of your girl. Plus life on the road can be a nightmare when Facebook and the dark side of social networking take over. DJs have no control about what stupid girls write on their profiles!! But that's more an ego thing with some people, and the stigma has stuck. There is no one that could lure me out of the booth and away from my girlfriend; I just wish she would understand that.

CGNY: Your brother, Gary (aka Calculus) has also released many superb tracks on your label. Since the two of you are very close, would you say that working together on a professional level adds challenges to your relationship? Have you ever considered playing a collab set?

S: Yeah turtle man Gary has been quite quiet up in his studio cabin lately, lots of people asking about when his next release is! Definitely we have very different approaches artistically and could be nice to play back to back, we did that before in Barcelona, always forms a strange fruit though! Very unpredictable and I can also do some mischief behind the decks!

CGNY: Your upcoming performance at Sullivan Room on December 8th will be your 4th appearance in NY already. How did they differ from each other and what do you expect to be different this time around? Is the NY crowd different from your typical European crowd?

S: I love NY! It has a vast history in music and when people make an effort to seek out underground music, they own it. New Yorkers sense of adventure and lust for weird venues and warehouse style bashes is great. Before clubs have cleaned up and are little sterile sometimes, it's nice to see so much rave action here now, after such a lull in the early 2000s.

I've played two warehouse parties, which were super unique spots. A dis-used gymnasium right in the heart of Manhattan and an old art theatre in Brooklyn, crazy sense of "once off ness" at both. Then I played a super cool basement spot in LES, total sweatbox and up for it crowd. And now on this tour I play Sullivan Room, which is one of the most established spots in NY nightlife, with massive booking history covering the whole spectrum of house and techno, so I'm stoked!

It feels like America is just on the brink of an electronic music explosion, and when it comes it will be like the 90s in Europe, a phenomenon. People worry about the popularity of the more commercial acts sometimes here, but I feel this will be the net to draw in a new generation to underground music, they will get hooked by Deadmau5 and Swedish House Mafia and then find us.

For details on Dec 8th at Sullivan Room - go [here](#) !

Interview by Markus Rhoten for CGNY.

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