

“When you get a publishing check and it’s from somewhere you can’t pronounce, that’s the craziest feeling. Man, my record got played there?”

– *Kenny ‘Dope’ Gonzalez of Masters At Work, May 2, 2013*

OPEN HAUS

A German boy scout discovers New York House.

For more than two decades now, New York and house music have been intrinsically linked. Yet the impact of its legacy extends well beyond the city’s borders, reshaping dancefloors around the globe. Curious about the impact of New York house on foreign shores, we asked Gerd Janson—a key member of the Red Bull Music Academy team and one of Europe’s most respected DJs—to think back to when house first arrived in Germany and recount some of his initial impressions.

Before I ever heard about house, I knew about techno. In ’90 or ’91, I was a boy scout. Our group leader had a tape by Sven Väth. He would play us the tape and always mentioned that he went to a club called the Omen every Friday to hear house and techno—and Sven Väth was definitely techno—but when I asked him what house was, he couldn’t really explain it to me.

Luckily, I had another friend who also went to the Omen every week, and he had a house tape. Listening to the music, I began to figure out the difference. I thought, “Okay, this is a bit slower. It’s not as aggressive. People sometimes sing. There are melodies. So this is house music.” For us at the time, there wasn’t really a distinction between New York house and any other kind of house, because New York ruled the world. When I was 13, Louie Vega played a club in Frankfurt and I was dying to go, but I was sure that I wouldn’t get in. A few years later, my friends and I regularly wound up driving for three or four hours to go and see artists like Masters At Work.



In our minds, the whole of New York was dancing to house music. The whole thing felt very flamboyant and sophisticated. We even imagined that there was a certain way a house DJ had to dress. A techno DJ might have on club wear and a baseball cap, but a house DJ from New York? He had to wear a white shirt tucked into his pants with a leather vest and maybe some sort of strange cravat on top. It all seemed so fashionable.

Back then, there wasn’t an Internet, so we grabbed every music magazine we could find and pieced the puzzle together as best we could.

—SHAWN REYNALDO

WHITE NIGHTS

Nuit Blanche New York is the creative group behind the art installations throughout the Academy building as well as the visual effects at several of the shows. We spoke with NBNY creative director Ken Farmer to learn more about their process and intent.

Who are you guys? We started in 2010 with the creation of *Bring to Light*, which references a tradition that started in Paris about a decade ago where museums and other institutions stay open all night and art takes over the city. We’ve been doing this in Greenpoint and working to make it a city-wide festival.

What are you doing with the Academy? We got involved in the Red Bull Music Academy through a temporary venue that we created in October of last year called the Autumn Bowl, which was a month-long performance series. Based on that, and some of the other work we’ve been doing,

RBMA asked us to be the visual and installation team for ten of the shows.

Can you tell us about the art that you’ve curated for the Academy building? The Academy building itself is a unique crossover space with white walls and clean environments. But you also have these very dramatic architectural features from [architect] Jeffrey Inaba that promote a sort of meandering, labyrinthine space, which I think has been an exciting thing for the artists to react to. Given the nature of the Academy—it’s really an artistic environment where people are constantly creating and collaborating—the participants are kind of living with and among the art.



Can you talk about the visual installations at some of the RBMA shows? The Drone Activity in Progress show at the Knockdown Center was a particularly elaborate installation in a 110-year-old factory in Queens. We also did an Andy Warhol “Silver Cloud” installation, showing films from Warhol, Kim Gordon, and Gast Bouschet/Nadine Hilbert. E.S.P. TV did live sound-reactive projections. For the Glasslands show [with Mykki Blanco on May 7] we’re going to be working with a group called Georgia, doing a projection that wraps around the room, creating a kind of immersive sea-foam-illuminated haze. It’s bringing the ocean and space together.

How do you incorporate music into the installations that you’re organizing? It seems like every musician is also an artist now, too. A territory we’re really interested in is that convergence of sound and image, whether the image takes the form of projection, light-based installation, or something more sculptural. There’s a lot of overlap between art and music, grounded in this idea that there’s such a yearning for the immersive experience. So we are thinking about how sound and image come together to create the concert experience that’s beyond just the standard house lights—it seems like everybody is longing for more than that.

—OLIVIA GRAHAM



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New York 2013

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