

Heiko Laux

Biography

This artist, born in the city of Bad Nauheim in Hessen, which is close to Frankfurt, regards Farley Jack Master Funk's 1986 release 'Love can't turn around' as one of the most important influences in his early career. "I wanted to make my future audience as happy as this house track made me. I wanted to play this energy and to pass it on to others" remembers Heiko. It was at this point, that it became clear to him that he would become either a DJ, or a musician. He decided to become both.

It started in Hessen

On leaving school, he started an apprenticeship. By day, he worked as an Industry Wholesaler. By night, he mixed countless tapes for friends. These tapes soon became highly desirable Collectors Items and the cost of a genuine Laux tape rocketed.

In the mid 80's, he began his career as a producer with a Casio Keyboard. The presets and patterns were edited and the resulting sounds were passed, via his brother, to the only club in town 'The Soccer Club.'

At the end of the 80's the young Laux was a frequent guest in the new club 'Omen' in Frankfurt. "Omen has been the most influential club for me and from 1989 onwards, I was there several times a month".

Meanwhile, 35kilometers away in Bad Nauheim, the studio in his parents' house was filling up with more and more machines and had become a central meeting place for like minded musicians. When his brother opened up a pub, Heiko seized the opportunity to move the studio. Although the space moved, the idea: 'to find a new way and an own sound in this new musical movement', remained. Anthony Rother, Johannes Heil, Patrick Lindsey – who became the first league of the Kanzleramt artists - were regular guests in what was soon to become the legendary pub 'Kanzleramt'. While honing his DJ skills, Heiko discovered his love for the work of Jeff Mills and the idea to develop a label. In 1994 the label he founded was named Kanzleramt.

Numerous publications followed and Heiko became known as 'The Hessen Techno Tiger'. And, although other DJ's seemed stuck in musical limbo, his notoriety was growing on the scene. Soon, Sven Väth from Omen, the club that was so hot it had guttering mounted for the sweat, signed Laux. It was here that Heiko played his first live gig. He remembers "my set was to be one hour long. But, I was so excited that after just 30 minutes I was through and for the rest of the evening I had to improvise. "It was like a boiling kettle back then. If you listen to Kanzleramt No.14, you can hear the excitement"

In 1996, during his last live gig at the Popkomm, Heiko met a young producer named Christian Morgenstern who gave him a demo tape. He was so impressed with his sound that, just a few months later, he released Morgenstern's debut album on the Kanzleramt label. It was around this time when Heiko was offered the prime time slot as resident DJ, at Omen. And this is where he fulfilled his promise to give energy and luck to the people through his music. His reputation as a 'Concrete Techno DJ' was growing.

More personal success came in 1998, when he released his own debut album 'Liquidism' on Kanzleramt. "I think this album has the best flow. It represents me so well. It's like looking at a picture of my self".

Berlin

At the end of 1999 Kanzleramt moved to Kreuzberg, in Germany's Capital city of Berlin. Despite a long phase of becoming established, Heiko was able to replicate his previous success. New opportunities arose and other artists joined the now, internationally renowned, label. The so called 'Next Generation' comprised: DJ Slip, Alexander Kowalski and Diego.

Almost simultaneously, alongside his move to Berlin, Heiko released his next album. 'Sense Fiction' was the lightest album he's ever produced. It sounded easy, jazzy and funky at the same time. Critics praised him for his successful musical research of the senses and they stressed the albums subtleties. In the meantime, to add a further component to his DJ sound, he began working with 3 decks. An art many cannot master. "I got the idea with the 3 turntables after seeing Marco Carola in the Palazzo. He only used a third record every once in a while. I watched him and wanted to do better. Eventually, it worked and I managed to keep the three stable. Then, my sound got much deeper."

In the meantime Kanzleramt was busy. Slip and Diego both released debut albums, the 'Sense Fiction Remix-Series' was celebrated and Riccardo Villalobos' mix charted No 1 in Groove Magazine's Top 50. After the Europe wide, 7 year anniversary 'Fully Fledged' tour, Heiko devoted his time to producing the album 'Ornaments' which became one of the most important milestones of his personal development. This album symbolises the renaissance of the individual as a feeling being. The inspiration for this album came from Heiko's own experience of moving to Berlin. The man who moved, from the countryside, to the big city had finally arrived.

Now, with his talent recognised and revered globally, opportunities to view life from different angles and perspectives are plentiful when touring. On one such occasion, around Christmas 2002, he extended an Australian DJ gig in Melbourne to 4 weeks and his experiences with nature left a lasting impression and influenced his music.

By the beginning of 2003 Heiko was ready to explore a new musical openness. He had already demonstrated on earlier albums that he was able to move away from '4-on-the-floor' rhythms, but the collaboration with his studio neighbour Teo Schulte, a Berlin-based Jazz musician and Producer, accelerated this development and the 'Offshore Funk' project, described as "Funky Flow with Club Entertainment", was successfully released. "In the early days, me and my siblings were in a marching band. I think the beats, from playing the snare drum, got into my blood and influenced the Offshore Album. So, I think it's fair to say that some of my Techno roots can be traced back to that early Hessen marching music." Heiko is proud of his humble beginnings and demonstrates his fondness for his hometown by spending most of his mealtimes in the Kreuzberg 'Markthalle' Restaurant, whenever they have a 'Hessen' week.

Text: Jeanette Stoakes