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Saeed Younan

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Artist Spotlight

Ind producer Saeed Younan is your favorite DJ's favorite DJ. The use is lauded for his precision and effortless blend of house, tech globe-trotting performer with a case full of DJ awards, he's famous dancefloors of Ibiza, Tokyo, Mexico, Hong Kong, and the . As a producer his trademark sound continues to evolve, from revered artists like Carl Cox, Danny Tenaglia, Mark Knight, Nic Dice.

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Melisa Yuriar

9 min read

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Saeed Younan

Saeed Younan - Heavy Shaker Original

 SOUND CLOUD

their peer, he was a young protege and novice DJ, yearning to have his own club show.

“Greyhound bus from DC to New York in the mid-90s, go check out a gig at Twilo, hop back on the Greyhound and go clock in, work a gig—now they call it Whole Foods—and then do it all over again. They’d even give me weekends off, which was great because I needed

In the digital age, Younan is a successful touring DJ and label head of an imprint whose name was a fortuitous accident.

“It never meant to be named after me. Somewhere along the way, a friend started a company called Younan Music and we just kept it,” explained Younan. “The label was created to shed light on new artists, people who were trying to get noticed. We wanted to focus on smaller acts, people who were starting out who wanted to get their name out there.”

   

He has churned out over 300 releases including singles and EPs, according to Saeed. Supported by Carl Cox, Hot Since 82, Carlo Lio, and many others, the label continues to forge on preserving and maintaining its original mission—to keep things underground, to not stray from the original sound, and to let the new kids on the block build out their legacy, just like the old ones did.

“We’re not interested in signing big names or big stars. We’re interested in finding up-and-coming artists who have something to say and can produce their own stuff, they’re making their own music in the studio—no ghostwriters. We focus on humble people who

make something happen for the culture, for music," said Saeed.



mble artist with a tenacious work ethic and an unwavering love
imed early on in his life. Born in Baghdad in the early 70s, Saeed,
o sisters lived in Iraq until they fled in 1981 due to an ongoing war.

country, but at that time you couldn't leave or go anywhere so
ere going on vacation," said Saeed. So the family escaped to a
punk music and fashion were approaching their pinnacle. During
e, Saeed turned to music as an escape.

at years old, recording music on a tape deck I always had on
boombox I would tune to little European stations. The tape deck
cassette and I'd record on it any chance I'd get when I heard
eed shared. "That was how it all started. Sitting in my room,

in stations and sifting through the channels for music, grasping and listening to everything I could."

1 house set in The Lab DC



music wasn't as accessible in those days as it is now. So his exploring different sounds and genres was through terrestrial producer, this meant he spent hours tuning through stations, and white noise for any clearly defined snippets of music—uded a lot of disco and ABBA.

nd stations sometimes with clear sound. I'd have to keep tuning tion wasn't clear and then, when I found a good one, I would keep of the music I was listening to was disco, occasionally some

London for a year-and-a-half while his father filed the work that would allow them to transfer to the United States as

like refugees then. We couldn't go to school," explained Saeed. There was a lot of politics going on and we didn't want to run

ole, or else they'd say we'd escaped the country. So we did the
ay quiet, in the meantime, until we got our paperwork."

I trained all his young life to fight in a war, the sudden move to
n him. "I didn't speak any English, and it was even harder as a kid,
ere it's already difficult to understand what anyone's saying," he

proved to be serendipitous. Arriving in the UK at the brink of the
the early 80s was pivotal for Saeed. "I grew up seeing punks
ohawks, the leather. This really opened up my eyes to a new
of music and culture."

in London, the family arrived in the US and settled on the East
led in school, and it was around this time that the burgeoning
in to embrace the arts. After school, he dabbled in breakdancing
ked up DJing when a friend gifted him turntables to tinker with
college.

chool was into hip hop and DJing. This guy was friends with Sir
oe at his house, listening to Sir Mix-A-Lot records. He had these
rted showing me how to scratch...I was blown away. I knew that
ited to do," said Saeed.

wo turntables and a mixer set up, but something clicked within
vard it and couldn't stop thinking about it. I would skip class just to
ouse and mess around on the turntables."

1 live stream El Techo (Washington D.C)



In 1991, the friends went their separate ways but promised to keep departed, Saeed's pal offered his turntables and DJ gear to the g he would put them to good use.

"I demos out to promoters, and booking small gigs at house oroms...any chance I got to mix, I took it. It wasn't about money to o play out," he said.

for music remains as diverse today as his early setlists. In the aid, he would only play hip hop because that's what was most ly, he began incorporating the dance and club music he enjoyed sets. A few of his favorites from his earliest club gigs included L.A. "In is Dead," Petra, Co's "Just Let Go" Dub version, and D.H.S.' "The

and seeing DJs bigger than I was, seeing the crowd reacting to the songs didn't even have words, it was just the rhythm, the seeing that did something to me," he shared. "That's when I'd go to record store to look for those exact records. I'd sit in record store sifting through [records], just to find that one record that I heard before. That's how I gravitated toward DJing."

taking Greyhound buses to and from clubs while working a part-time job, his love for dingy venues and clubs remains.

Jobs there's more of an intimacy, especially when it's a dark room, I, I love that vibe. I don't like the clubs that are all bells and whistles all over the place...that to me will never be the vibe that I

has headlined Ultra, Electric Forest, and EDC. While he agrees he likes playing for these festivals and the crowds they amass, they like the vigorous buoyancy generated at a club venue.

"You play at a festival, you can't get that same energy. I'll look at the crowd and sometimes I won't see as much movement. Maybe hands in the air, downwinds and the buildup, but it'll never be the same in the way the crowd moves. They're two different worlds," he said.

Besides DJs and producers, Saeed is not only an avid music listener—his passion extends to instruments. From drums to guitars, keyboards to didgeridoos, Saeed's instrument collection is expansive. He houses it all in Washington DC. Lately, his favorite instrument to tinker with is the newest addition to his collection—a Native American flute.

Saeed Younan

Hot Crate Classics 42 All Vinyl Techno Mix Saeed Younan

 SOUND CLOUD

ntly had to consolidate the collection due to the proliferating
ds overtaking his studio. "I've been buying records in bulk up until
hop records from 1988," he said. "I still buy records sometimes,
e I used to. I only buy them for my listening pleasure now since I
n out anymore."

iratorial skills come in handy when he records the impromptu
Hot Crate Classics vinyl series, which he uploads to Soundcloud weekly.
r-DJ has mixed around 40 curated sets.

d with vinyl collection
Saeed Younan, Facebook

nrehearsed, unplanned, and always hand-picked. The series
mixing—the way DJ's spun in the 80s and 90s.

play records at clubs, a lot of them don't understand how to set I show up and the tables aren't right, the needle will start re's people dancing behind you...Sometimes I bring my own stuff, and when you're traveling, trying to carry two turntables, and all diculous," he explained.

Before he rules out playing vinyl though, said Saeed. If there's a gs, minimal lighting, and a crew that knows how to set up the 's more than happy to spin the hits, and his latest, the old school

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