

TEEBEE

Norway's Finest

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Some say love is the universal language but when drum and bass heads get together, music most definitely is. Talking with world-renowned Norwegian DJ/producer Teebee proves this point hands down.

Currently busy running his own Subtitles Record label, touring and producing tunes for release on a host of other labels including Metalheadz, Teebee was also the winner of the 2001 Knowledge Magazine award for the Best International Producer. With a discography getting longer by the minute, including two previous full-length albums and a possible third album the works, Teebee is as qualified as anyone to discuss drum and bass (if not more so). At the time of this interview, he had 10 tracks already lined up for release over the next four months.

Raised in Bergen, Norway, what he calls, "A beautiful little place surrounded by seven mountains, right on the sea front . . . not known to have a musical history whatsoever," Teebee has a different background than many of his dnb A-list compatriots. But when it comes right down to the music, his skills as a producer and DJ hold their own.

In some aspects, Teebee's early musical experiences were similar to those of many other people growing up in the '80s and '90s, and speaking with him it is easy to forget his Norwegian roots. He credits early exposure to breakdancers outside a local mall with peaking his interest in music.

Although he was only about six at the time, he remembers watching some kids do crazy moves and being impressed. He also remembers being impressed with the music as well. "I'd never heard anything like it," he says. "It was just beats, and that's the first time I got drawn into something as far as music was concerned."

This interest stayed with him until he was almost 13, and (after acquiring the requisite turntables and mixer) he started playing hip hop and electro. But Teebee was one of the only kids DJing in his area. "People considered me mad because I was doing this thing," he confesses.

Slowly it caught on, and Teebee formed a bit of a crew who started throwing their own parties a few years later. They may even have organized Norway's first ever rave.

Although he didn't realize it at the time, a school trip to England in 1990 was instrumental in steering Teebee down drum and bass' evolving path. While in a record store in London, he came across a mysterious white label by accident. "It didn't have any name on it, nothing," Teebee explains. "I just brought the whole

stack (of records) with me to the counter. I was listening to these things and came to the white label, and there was this mad breakbeat thing.

“I’d never heard anything like it. It was just so raw and just sounded dirty, but it was everything I’d ever wanted. Of course, I instantly bought it.”

Once he returned to Norway (after much investigation), he eventually discovered the track was LTJ Bukem’s Demon’s Theme, and it had him hooked.

With a growing passion for the music and a distinct sound and taste of his own developing, it wasn’t long before Teebee started making his own tracks. “There was a shortage of what I like out there and, actually, I was reaching a point where I didn’t really like much,” he says, adding that he still had an appreciation for the music he was hearing but felt like he was settling for less playing tracks that didn’t really have everything he was looking for.

Once he decided to start making tracks in 1995, Teebee went out and bought himself a cheap computer and released his first 12” about 7 months later. It should be no surprise that his initial releases were not quite the same calibre you can expect from one of his tracks today. “Luckily for me, the record got mis-labeled, so I got credited with somebody else’s work, which was way better than mine,” he confesses.

These days, there may be a few tricks up Teebee’s sleeve and some secret weapons hidden away in his studio, but he freely admits he is not a plug in kind of guy. Although he now has a studio stocked with trusty hardware such as his EMU Ultra Platinum sampler, Yamaha 02R digital mixing board and Virus, Teebee admits his studio has humble roots.

Working with Fast Tracker software and a computer that kept crashing because it wasn’t powerful enough, it’s an accomplishment he could release anything at all. Add to this the fact that the computer’s limitations meant he could only use four channels for sound and couldn’t do anything in stereo, and you get the picture.

Teebee credits DJ K with showing him some of the basics of making music. Also, by being involved with the evolving drum and bass scene from such an early point, Teebee was able to make many strategic alliances with some of the scenes biggest names including Randall, Goldie and Marley Marl. Many of these alliances grew into solid friendships as time passed.

Teebee recalls meeting Rob Playford at Metalheadz’ legendary Blue Note sessions. Playford had already heard his music and told Teebee he should submit a CD of his material to Moving Shadow.

“I didn’t really believe him at first so I kind of let it go and did some things for Rugged Vinyl for the next few years,” he says, explaining how he ended up losing out as this business relationship fell apart. “They signed up about 12 of my tracks

and released them all, and I never got paid.”

After this rocky learning experience, Teebee moved over to Moving Shadow around 1997. “It’s a wicked label, great people to work with and never any problems with money,” he adds.

Teebee’s energy is now focussed on his own label, Subtitles. It has been around for the last two years, but Teebee took over running it single-handedly about six months ago. Big things are now in the works. “I’m going to expand it and do another label as well,” he says. “I might call it Widescreen because it fits the name subtitles.”

Although the current plan is to keep the Subtitles camp pretty tight, Teebee says he still welcomes submissions and always listens to everything he gets. He admits it will be hard for an aspiring producer to break in on Subtitles unless he receives something exceptional.

As he describes his views about the progression of drum and bass, it is clear that Subtitles will continue to represent different aspects of the genre. “It’s not always about the rewind . . . it’s about the music, and if we’re going to keep drum and bass in the future we’re going to have to progress,” Teebee says. “Subtitles will always be on the forefront of experimental drum and bass as well as fitting in with the boundaries of the floor.”

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