

Claude VonStroke

Written by CGNY

Monday, 11 July 2011 18:10 - Last Updated Thursday, 18 August 2011 13:08



CVS...not the name of your local NYC pharmacy! Yet there is some good chemistry going on behind Mr. Claude VonStrokes decks. Djing for Verbotens party at XV1 on July 30th, and with his new dirtybird release of "MAKEOVERS" on July 27th, CGNY caught up the SF native ahead of his gig.

CGNY: Riddle me this, 'If it wasn't for the music, where would you be?

CVS: I would still be running a DVD duplication company or editing TV commercials. But that was 7 years ago so maybe I'd already be doing something else. I'd probably have a music blog for sure.

CGNY: Is it true you worked on the production of the 1997 Fran Drescher film 'Beautician and the Beast'? Is that why you left Hollywood?

CVS: Haha yes!! That's funny because Fran Drescher was actually one of the coolest ladies. Even if that film was the worst she was cool and so was the director Ken Kwapis. That film was definitely not why I left Hollywood but for sure I questioned what I was doing with my life a few times while working on it. There were plenty of jerk filmmakers, (The Jackal, The Relic..ahh hemmm) but the real reason I left was because I realized that being an assistant is just a way to continue kissing ass your whole life. The real way to break into any kind of entertainment is to make your own original material whether it be screenplays, music, films, etc. I was working so

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many hours being an assistant that I saw there was no way I would ever have time to do the creative part and so I left.

CGNY: What is the funny story behind your moniker Claude VonStroke? I've heard tidbits here and there but I want details. Sounds perverted!

CVS: It was just a joke name. We were drunk and high and making fun of serious European techno DJs. Of course this one stuck to me like glue as soon as I said it. Once I played a gig under the name there was no changing it.

CGNY: Also curious about your label name – DirtyBird? Also sounds perverted!

CVS: The funny part is that we didn't even think of what this meant in the UK, it just sounded funny to us and it was about 10 times better than the original name "Rook Records." I had been drawing a bird character since I was a little kid and the name fit the drawing so we rolled with it.

CGNY: What are some of your favorite US cities to tour? Favorite countries?

CVS: I love San Francisco the most. That's why I never leave. It would be so much easier to live in Berlin or London but its SF that rules my world. I fit in here the best. My favorite cities to tour are very random... Paris, Leeds, Bristol, Lyon, Chicago, Detroit, etc.

CGNY: What crowd has surprised you the most and why?

CVS: Recently in Malmo Sweden I wasn't expecting it to be so insane. When I walked in everyone looked very well behaved and reserved. There weren't even that many people there. By the time I was done it seemed like people were coming out of the woodwork; the entire stage was full, everyone was freaking out, going full force, shouting and jumping - completely losing their minds. Awesome.

CGNY: Does DirtyBird have any other residencies outside of San Francisco?

CVS: We do a party at Watergate in Berlin once or twice a year and Fabric two or three times a year. I play at We love Space 3 times every summer and this year Justin will be joining me for some of that. We had a residency in Chicago for a while but scheduling got too difficult to maintain it 4 times a year.

CGNY: You seem so passionate every time you talk about your infamous Gold Gate Park parties. Besides the amazing music and chill crowd, what makes these parties so special?

CVS: They are free, we pay for everything. We feed you, we give you music, and there is sunshine and friends and music. It's hard to beat for a Sunday afternoon in SF.

CGNY: I know these parties are unannounced, but this NYC gal is planning a trip to San Francisco this year to visit family. I would love to plan a trip around one of those parties. If I promise to keep it to myself, would please have mercy on me and share that schedule?

CVS: It's not possible. Actually this is "the year it got too big." We have to start from scratch again because over 2000 people just showed up out of nowhere to the last one and you can't just have 2000+ show up to a BBQ in this city without some trouble from the park rangers and the government. So now we have to find a new field and build a new way to get the right permits. If that many people are going to show up it's a much bigger production than the family picnic vibe it used to have.

CGNY: What is your favorite record store in the world? What makes it your favorite?

CVS: My favorite record store is probably Justin Martin's hard drive. I get soo happy when he makes a new track because I know I will rinse it and it will kill everywhere I play it. As for a physical shop, my shop was always Tweekin in SF on Haight but now it has a new name and new owners and I haven't been in there. It's more indy rock now.

CGNY: As a dedicated fan, I could expect anything from House to Electro to Drum and Bass etc from you. How difficult is it to decide how to play at a party? What is the secret? Do you easily read a crowd or does location decide how you play?

CVS: All I know is that at one point I found myself early on about 5 or 6 years ago in Panorama bar trying to play what I thought they wanted to hear and I finally said to myself "fuck this shit, why am I doing this?" As soon as I got past that moment I feel like I really understood myself a lot better. No one is booking me to hear a housey house disco set or a German techno set. They are booking me to hear a Claude VonStroke set so to answer the question, yes I read the crowd as best I can but at the same time I also say screw you all I'm playing some bass lines whether they are in fashion or not.

CGNY: The news about Kim Kong is devastating. How did the benefit party at The Icon Ultra Lounge go? Did you reach your goal for the evening? How can individuals, who could not make it to the benefit, still contribute?

CVS: I only knew Kim through emails until that night. She has been doing online promotions for our party for a couple years. I think she is going to beat the whole thing. I'm not really sure how to donate to her cause; perhaps that info is on her Facebook so check it out. The night did very well, nice turnout and lots of people wearing funny wigs to support Kim. It was really cool.

CGNY: Speaking of contributing, tell fans what makes the Mothership label so special.

CVS: Its not that special, we just give the money generated by the label to a school in Detroit called the Detroit Youth Foundation. I am working on a benefit party this summer. Hopefully that will come together as well.

CGNY: DirtyBird has celebrated its 6th year in January. (Congrats BTW) While many American House labels have a hard time with success, what do you attribute to the success of DirtyBird?

CVS: Success is all relative. I think if you asked the label managers at Ghostly or Planet E or Ovum you would get the same response - this ain't as easy as it looks!! I think American labels are doing just fine. Maybe we don't have 1000 labels releasing 3000 tracks a week on Beatport but we do have a lot of quality and quality is job #1..lol.

CGNY: What is the best dance track you ever heard?

CVS: Percolator

CGNY: How great was it to do a remix of that track on your new remix compilation 'MAKEOVERS'?

CVS: Oh snap you already knew my answer...next level!! It was awesome and intimidating of course.

CGNY: After hearing the promo for your new remix compilation I can totally see why you decided to call it 'MAKEOVERS'; I don't think I would have recognized ½ of the songs if it wasn't for the title. (I like your 'Makeovers' better than most of the originals! Shhhhhhhh)

CVS: Thanks a lot. I'm really not trying to show up the originals with this. I'm just saying that it is possible to get really creative with remixes and do something fresh that is totally different to the original when you get asked to do a remix. There are so many philosophies on remixing. I like being really original which is why I don't do that many. Some people just like making new drums and getting paid over and over again, remix after remix. One of my friends told me he did over 40 remixes last year and I was like...hmmm... it's kind of telling that I don't have any of them in my box.

CGNY: Did you have any artistic input on the great cover?

CVS: Yes, I hired my fav. SF photographer, Merkley??? to do the cover (yes the question marks are part of his name!) I just think he has a really original look to his photography. The concept was for it to be like an Oprah makeover or any cheesy American TV makeover, but I had to figure out how that would look for dance music. I think it turned out pretty good.

CGNY: How long did it take you to complete this compilation?

CVS: Well, I finished the Katy B and the Wut remixes about 2 weeks before the cd went to the presses. But it includes remixes all the way back as far as 2006 so you could say it took 6 years!!!

CGNY: What is a typical non-touring day like for B.C.?

CVS: Breakfast and taking kids to school - Work work work work work - workout - swim in pool - dinner and playing with kids - kids bedtime - hang out with wifey - watch any stupid TV show - work work work work - tiny sleep - start again.

CGNY: I love reading your blog on dirtybirdrecords.com . In most of your blogs you provide some kind of list - for example, Top 7 San Fran, Top 5 to starting a label, Australia vs. US Cheeseburgers, Hangover cures, etc. Is there any list you can provide your fans, in this interview, that no one will see on your blog?

CVS: Top 5 really really lame things that I should be embarrassed for liking:

1. Cleveland Browns
2. Survivor
3. Entertainment Weekly
4. At home workout videos
5. Bob and Doug Mackenzie

<http://www.dirtybirdrecords.com/>

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Myspace.com/ClaudeVonStroke

"MAKEOVERS" release date is July 27th on DirtyBird.

Good Units
356 W 58th St (at 9th Ave)
Doors at 10pm / 21+

July 30th

theflawlessSound.com

Interview by House Diva!