



CGNY is always delighted to feature great dj talent on the site regardless of gender! Dani Lehman has been making waves on the NYC scene for a while playing clubs all over the city as well as the US and abroad. CGNY's had our eye on her for a while as a strong techno talent and despite her busy schedule she took some time to dig around in her techno history for CGNY. Just back from Florida where she played Hyde Park Cafe where this set was recorded, check it out below and enjoy this exclusive to CGNY set from Dani!

CGNY: Hi Dani! Thanks for your time to chat with CGNY! For our readers who don't know you can you tell us a bit about yourself? Where are you from? How long have you been djing and when did you get into music?

DL: Thanks Fiona! I really appreciate this opportunity to be a part of CGNY, I am truly honored!

So I got into music and started DJing at a very young age. I was still in high school, and had been practicing DJing vinyl for six months when I landed my first gig in Philadelphia. My first few years of DJing I was a regular in the Philadelphia scene, and landed my first residency at a small venue called Lounge 114. I was then invited by Thomas Colantonio to play a bigger venue called Emerald City (Now Lit Ultra Bar) and met two people who would change my career forever- Lance Blaise and Gabriel Ben. All three gave me incredible opportunities to play prime timeslots in main rooms and it was through them that I got much of my experience in learning how to work rooms. Shortly after, I was invited to play a couple of smaller parties in DC, but it would be in Miami during WMC on my 21st birthday where I met several NYC DJs, played an impromptu b2b set, which later landed me an opportunity to debut in NYC at Club Love. From there it was sort of a whirlwind... I started on the same line up as Kevin Saunderson and was invited by NYC's legend Connie Yin to come play a vinyl set at Halcyon. Shortly after, I was invited to play at Sullivan Room for Thursday nights and befriended Serge and was invited to play regularly on their Coco Loko nights. I was then on the NYC circuit playing everywhere from

Rebel (now Slake) Pacha, Love, Cielo and Sullivan Room. I was very, very lucky but SO grateful for every second. A few years later, I took a last minute trip to Miami to get a break from NYC and ended up meeting my first booking manager. They had heard some of my online mixes and seen some videos of me playing and shortly after returning to NYC I had a contract in my inbox. From there I was blessed to have played at Ultra Music Festival and landed a headlining tour in Mexico. While under that agency, I was able to network closely with other djs and producers across the USA. I ended up parting ways from my manager with in a year of being under contract, as we had different business ethics and I wanted to keep integrity with the brand I was trying to build for myself. It was one of the scariest things I had ever done but shortly after I was approached by many promoters on their own and quickly landed incredible opportunities in Los Angeles, Denver, Phoenix, Tampa, Miami, DC, Philly, Boston and became a regular in Las Vegas, all while still gigging in NYC almost every other weekend. I recently moved to Miami and was Djing full time for a year and a half but ended up back in my roots of NYC. It's been nothing short of mind blowing, especially to come from such a small town in NJ. But it's been over 11 years in the making and no matter how hard it can get, it's proven impossible for me to walk away from this. It's definitely in my blood.

CGNY: Why techno as opposed to say house or some other genre? Are you a clubber/dancer?

DL: Well, simply put... I fucking LOVE techno. I love music in general... but Techno... when those kicks hit, with those bass lines... It's like my heart stops beating and the music just breathes for me. I love drums and percussion to begin with. I always have, since I was a baby. It's one instrument I wish I took up playing but techno filled that void I guess. There's so much power behind it. It alleviates my stress, it frees my mind. To answer your second question, yes I was a clubber but I played so much that I was always in it I guess? I danced constantly, on the dance floor, while playing, on the train, walking to work, in my car. Constantly. Don't get me wrong, I have played deep house and house before and it's gorgeous! Truly it is, and I love dropping something deep or something beautiful and melodic in the middle of playing a heavy techno set- and it goes OFF however, it's that underlying beat and percussion that has my heart.

CGNY: What do you love about djing – what's the most exciting thing about your career?

"I fucking LOVE techno.... It's like my heart stops beating and the music just breathes for me"

DL: Wow... How do I answer this haha! There's SO much... One of the things that I have always treasured about playing music and djing is the interactions. Not just with the crowd, I kind of feel like that's a given but developing a connection with the cities themselves. I absolutely love meeting new people and learning new cultures and vibes. Getting to travel for this, for something you love is absolutely the best gift you can receive. I have been so lucky to feel as if I have built little families and networks in every city I have been so lucky enough to play in. I go to Denver, I feel at home. I go to Vegas, I feel at home. I go to Miami or Tampa and I feel at home. It's incredible to have so much support and love.

Another thing I will say that is so exciting about my career is the ability to create and collaborate. Be it in a live set, a studio session working on productions or collaborating with an amazing promotional team to create a new event or atmospheric party. I am SOOOOO excited to share that right here in Brooklyn, NYC we will have been developing a new techno party called APHOTIC. It's truly a blessing to be working with such an incredible team of professionals who really take pride not only in their events, djs, and music but in their city. The meaning of APHOTIC means "lack of light" and we have taken it to mean, no one is in the spotlight. We are all together, for the MUSIC. We are building our following in trusting in our music and dj selection. We are also focusing more specifically on the full spectrum of Techno and not on the trends. We are focusing on DJs from across the country that have often been overlooked and deserve to be showcased because they are SO talented. With that being said, we have had some incredible headliners such as Mark Farina, Terrence Parker and Petter B but the best part, is they were all our "surprise" guests and we build our following off of the sounds of our supporting DJs. The crowd is humble and all clubbers must check their ego's at the door. It's a really really fun and passionate party and I couldn't be more excited for what we have ready for 2015. It's going to be a lot of work but it never feels like it because we are all so in love with what we are doing.

CGNY: In terms of the sound/atmosphere you create, what do you like to think about when getting ready for a set?

DL: This always varies depending on what city, venue, sound system or headliners I am playing with. If it's a new city, I always try to do some research on the venue, crowd and the vibe. I also take into consideration what they want from me as well. If they love my harder style sets, I will bring something that packs more of a punch, if I am opening for a headliner in a smaller more intimate venue, I will tone it down quite a bit. I always take great consideration of how it would feel as a patron of the club. If the sound system is one of a kind, I try to pick tracks that will take that system for a ride and bring out the best in that set up. I try to think of it more of an experience to those that come and see me play and I always want to give them the best of what

I have to give. If I gave these people a show before, I try to give them an even better one the second, third or fourth time. I've been known to stay up for days before a headlining set to make sure I have everything set for the best possible experience.

CGNY: It sounds like a cliché but are there any particular challenges being a woman in this industry? Do you think there is a perception that women can't 'play hard'?

DL: Lol how do I answer that as a woman and not sound cliché? If I say anything negative about anything it's like "there goes Dani Lehman bitching about the industry again". First of all let me say, no matter what anyone says, there still is and always will be a stigma about being a woman in the industry. It's just society as a whole... Which female DJ is hotter, which one actually has skills... I heard they were hooking up with this promoter/DJ/ producer... The problem is that there are SO many girls these days with SO many skills. But so many of them have such bad reps behind the scene before even stepping on the scene... Being extra flirty, or provocative to get attention and gigs. I was actually just having a heart to heart with another dear DJ friend of mine about what to expect being a woman in the scene. One of the things I said to her, is that she always has to be aware of her surroundings especially when attending any single nightlife event. Be it a day party in the summer time, a warehouse or a swanky club, anywhere, my best advice is to ALWAYS remain professional. Getting wasted, hanging on guys and girls, wearing promiscuous clothes, saying the wrong thing, YOU ARE ALWAYS ON. Someone is ALWAYS watching. You're always going to have judgement, no matter what. And sometimes, it really fucking sucks. I can honestly say I try not to let it bother me but sometimes it really freaking gets to me. But I guess it just comes with the territory.

I'll never be as good as that promoter's "boy". And to be honest, I feel like I play better and harder than "your boy" but those types of promoters will never give me or any female that kind of credit. I used to give a shit, but now, I just do my own thing. I have realized that I could play into that bullshit or I could sit back, focus on myself, my projects, my own opinion and the opportunities still come. That's my advice to aspiring females, fuck the opinions, keep your integrity, sharpen your skills like a samurai sword and cut the scene with extreme intention. Stand for something!

And to answer your second question, I have been told many many times, "You're a woman, you need to play softer, sexier, more of your image". Been there, tried it and it fucking sucked. I

think that if you love this music, and you are playing from your heart, hard or soft just be real. It's the most attractive feature of an artist/ musician. Just be real, true to yourself, it's so much more fun that way.

"That's my advice to aspiring females, fuck the opinions, keep your integrity, sharpen your skills like a samurai sword and cut the scene with extreme intention. Stand for something!"

CGNY: Do you also produce? (I don't know if I know this!)

DL: Haha! Well yes, I do produce, but I do not call myself a producer. Yes, I actually work in Ableton. I have learned a lot by working collaboratively with several producers, and I have a couple releases out on Beatport, as well as a Nas bootleg on my SoundCloud page. Despite this, because the caliber of the tracks I play in my DJ sets are at such a high level, I don't consider my own productions technically there yet to play alongside these amazing artists. While I continue to refine my techniques, listeners can definitely look forward to hearing more of my own material in my DJ sets but I can't lie- It's really really hard time wise. Working a full time job, managing my own music career, on top of our new collaboration with APHOTIC, it's hard to even find time for my family and friends, let alone any personal time. So I try to as much as I can, but again, time is SO hard.

CGNY: It seems many folks in this business have a 'day' job because working full time as a dj can be fiscally challenging! Thoughts on that? And how do you balance that with your career in music?

DL: I am SO happy you asked this question, especially since I have been on both sides of the spectrum. Let me tell you, it's soooooooooo hard to be a full time DJ. Unless you're on a massive agency, landing production projects for companies like Native Instruments, film

scoring, or playing as a resident at a venue that is a bit more commercial, it's going to be a long, and HARD uphill battle. Nobody really talks about it, and there are a ton of people who have strong opinions about it yet know absolutely nothing of what it is to make it work. And there is a SHIT ton of people ready to rip you off or take serious advantage of you with zero remorse. It's an unclear territory and to tread in these waters, you are definitely going to want to be protected and educated on the business side of things for sure.

You need a tremendous amount of self-discipline, a massive savings account/ funding (for when you hit a slow patch) and a really really reliable and loyal network. Be it consistent gigs at multiple venues, a solid booking manager, high paying gigs, relentless releases/press. It's NOT easy. AT ALL. I have been stranded at airports with-out flights because promoters forgot to book them and told me they were sending confirmation later in the day, I've waited multiple months for payments (Yes... after first receiving the first half of a deposit) promoters who haven't honored the contract they booked me with...

I went back to full time work so I could have more creative control of the gigs I was booking for myself as well as a more reliable financial income. It just eliminated any sort of stress of making rent, having anxiety and actually loving and not resenting what I was doing. I still couldn't help but to be absolutely defeated and felt like a complete and utter failure in doing so. And getting over that took some serious time.

Being back at work, it's SO hard to manage my time. I have to be careful with every single day. Wasting time when I am not at work often leads to missed opportunities. It's super hard to manage working 8-9+ hours a day, then heading for a meeting to discuss plans with Aphotic for 3+ hours, let alone travel to both, managing other communication on solo gigs, planning travel gigs, it can really add up and become overwhelming. Relationships, both family and a partner always come second. It's the nature of the beast. But also I have to say too, even when I was doing it full time, I was still up until 4am emailing, skypeing, texting and calling pretty much every single day. But that's just me, I am a bit of a workaholic...

CGNY: Have you seen positive/negative changes in NYC dance culture? What do you think of the rise of "EDM" and do you think that will bring more folks into the techno scene here which let's be honest is more niche?

DL: Hahaha Manhattan has become Las Vegas with a curfew! I kid I kid J No I think the EDM culture has definitely added an exponential influx for our new audiences. I think for now, as it

grows and they start opening their own doors, I think Manhattan will thrive in that music scene. They will eventually evolve in their taste and land where they land. To be honest, I think it's awesome that all these festivals have popped up. I have been saying for the last 5-6 years that the USA is about to explode with the hunger for dance music and the immense amount of festivals popping up proves it. Granted it's not our cup of tea, we all started somewhere and we all found our own way. I think Brooklyn is really standing strong and I give so much Kudos to [Verboten](#)

for their originality and flawlessly designed venue. I say that because I feel that there is no pomp and circumstance there, just music. More props and credit to the NYC techno scene is; it's fucking THRIVING here. The warehouse pop ups are absolutely BOMB. New teams like **Aphotic**

are popping up everywhere and better quality events have evolved. Before, you used to be limited to some shitty set up with not working speakers and one bathroom for 300 people. Things are definitely evolving and the world is noticing. I think there is so much positivity ahead and in NYC, especially Brooklyn, there will always be a way to find exactly what you want- Niche or not!

CGNY: An alien lands from another planet and has no clue what techno is! What track/album do you hand over as a learning tool?

DL: ANYTHING by Andrei Morant, Peter Van Hoesen or Hans Bouffmhyre but I feel like the second I pressed play these aliens would feel right at home hahaha

Dani plays [Aphotic](#) this Saturday - more details [here](#)

and 12/13 with Matt Sassari at a Secret Brooklyn Warehouse for Distort NYC

<https://soundcloud.com/dani-lehman/serious-soul-pres-dani-lehman-live-hyde-park-cafe-clubbers-guide-new-york-exclusive-mix/s-Zrejn>

<http://dj.beatport.com/danilehman>

<https://www.facebook.com/djdanilehman>

<https://soundcloud.com/dani-lehman>

