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Claude Young is "Living in the Now" - which is the title of his latest release and a reflection of the artists state of mind. After almost 2 decades of touring as a dj and living abroad, he's back in the U.S, releasing his music under his own steam and sharing his uncompromising views of the techno and music scene. We caught up with him recently and this is the result or our nearly hour long chat!

CGNY: Hi Claude! Let's start with your latest release! You've taken kind of a different path on this one – releasing the 2 track EP on your own website – claudeyoungonline.com.

CY: It's called "Living in the Now" and basically I'm releasing it through my website. I try to have a modern thinking about things and having been involved with music for a long time, and looking at record labels and for me I don't see the need to actually have a label. I think everything I'm doing from here on out is going to be independent.

CGNY: Makes sense, the technology is there and it's instant and downloadable and why go to any particular site over another if you can facilitate that process yourself?

CY: I also think is a great way to directly support the artist. I think that's really important nowadays. I know a lot of people in the business and they are very stifled because they are with

big companies or big agencies and they are not really free to speak their minds. I've had conversations with people and they feel particular ways but they don't want to say anything because they don't want to mess up their ride. I've never been a person who's really taken to that kind of thing. I'm a technology/techno freak basically. I could start a label but what is the point of doing that whole thing? I'm not really going to be releasing any records. So I just really wanted to have an outlet so that if I do a track, I can put it online and people can just buy it. Just try to keep it clean and simple. So I said "Okay I'm gonna start this site, I'll blog there about things that interest me and I'll make the releases available to the people and if people want to support they'll support" And that way I can keep going as well.

CGNY: You moved to Portland Oregon from Japan. Was there a musical reason for that or you had just done your time there?

CY: I've always loved Japan and it's just always been a kind of spiritual home especially if you are into technology, it's kind of the place to be. And I made a lot of good friends over there. My son is half Japanese. When I left here (the States) initially and moved to England then Scotland and I pretty much stayed there for like 15 years. I was going back and forth to Japan and I decided I should go there and give it a shot. It was really interesting, really cool and I try to go back there when I can. I have very close friends there like **Takashi Nagashima**, whom I did "Different World" with. We still do tracks together (we just spoke yesterday) He does a lot of multimedia stuff for companies and we're working on some music for some clients of his. It's a direction I'm also moving in creating music for other projects.

CGNY: There seems to be a bigger crossover between music and multimedia/art stuff these days.

CY: Yes. For instance [Warp](#) is one of my all-time favorite labels. I really look up to them and the way they do things with people like Aphex Twin, Squarepusher etc. I'd done the dj thing and club tracks. I've always been interested in producing and my output is varied. Right now I just don't want to be boxed into anything. I'm just writing these little ditties and putting them out into the world and seeing what happens. It's pretty exciting, its nail-biting but it's also exciting.

CGNY: I also saw you posted today that you're getting back into house music. Obviously you've always had a love for house music?

CY: Oh yes, I helped to write a track for [Inner City](#) back in the day. “Do Ya’ was a track that I wrote with [Kevin](#) and [Anthony Shakir](#) .

Kevin is someone that I look up to because he was really one of the first guys who gave me an opportunity to go into the studio and just work on stuff. He saw that maybe I had some potential and he was like “Hey I’m working on a few things why don’t you come in and see what you can add to it” It was the first time I got to work in a big studio, big board – I’ll never forget that, that was a really fantastic time for me!

CGNY: Kevin is a legend – was going through some of my old and found Big Fun...still so fresh! What do you think of Detroit these days as a center of techno excellence?

CY: I think there are some amazing things happening there. People like [Theo Parrish](#) – which isn’t really techno but people like Theo and

[Kyle Hall](#)

are really carrying over the tradition.

[Kenny Dixon](#)

too and

[Carl](#)

: he’s still doing his thing. He’s (Carl) a die-hard Detroiter. They are doing amazing music still. The spotlights maybe elsewhere right now but I think in time people will go back and go “oh wow I didn’t know about this stuff” Even with my own material, that’s how I’m kind of looking at things right now. People may not discover it now but in 4 or 5 years they go “Oh that was really interesting. How did I miss that?”

CGNY: Lots of talk about the new [Tresor](#) club in Detroit club that’s potentially opening? What do you think about that?

CY: I think it’s amazing. I saw Dimitri not last year but the year before. Takasi and I went to Berlin and we stayed for 2 months. We hung out there and did some shows. We wrote a lot of music and we played at Tresor a couple of times. Dimitri is another person I’ve known for a very long time and he has very deep roots with the artists in the city and a loyalty to the city. And I think it’s great that he wants to come here (Detroit) and give something back. Dimitri (Hegeman) gave a lot of artists their major exposure. People like Jeff. The first record (Tresor) I think was UR X101. He has a personal ideology that we as artists share with him. And I think that’s why he’s decided to give this a go. I think it will be good for the city if they allow it to happen. I think it will be a great way to reaffirm the relationship that we’ve always had with Berlin and Berlin artists. A lot of my best friends from back in the day are there. When I was back I got to hang out with Mad Max and people from The Office. It will be good for the city and

good for the relationship.

CGNY: You played Movement in 2011. And we're coming up on [Movement 2015](#) ! Thoughts on the festival!? One of the best in the States certainly for techno!

CY: I think those guys (**Paxahau**) do a fantastic job. Again they are an old school group who've been around in the scene so we know they care about they are doing. That's really the most important thing. It's not just someone trying to come in and take advantage of the hard work that a lot of people put in. We know those guys; we've partied with those guys; we've hung out with those guys. And they are dedicated to the city. **Mich**

ael Fotias

is one of the best sound guys in the country. He really knows his stuff. I remember playing on his systems when I first started. He's still there and he's the guy that makes sure the Movement sound systems are taken care of and are top notch. You have people like Kevin Reynolds there. So many amazing people who I've kind of come up with. It's good to see that it's there stable and healthy and that's it going well.

CGNY: How did you get into djing? Is it a given that if you're from Detroit at some stage you will play techno?

CY: No, it just depends. We've always had a house scene. A lot of people didn't know the house scene in Detroit was really big. We had techno producers but the majority of the clubs were house. There was Cheaps with Jon Collins. Heaven was the biggest gay club in Detroit. Even in the 90's you'd go there because it had an amazing sound system. [Ken Collier](#) was an amazing dj. He was really like our Frankie Knuckles. You would run into Basic Channel or Banks would show up because Ken was so great. Rolling back around to Theo and Kenny, I used to buy records from Kenny Dixon when he worked at Buy Rite music. It was literally 15 minutes' walk from my house. To get to that store I used to have to walk by Mike Banks mothers' house which was the original UR studio. I actually interned with them for a short time. Kenny Dixon worked behind the counter. Sherod Ingram who was Urban Tribe. Jeffery Woodard. Those guys sold me for my first records, my first imported records. That's where I discovered techno and house music. They had stock of the local records: Kevin's records and Derrick's records. That's where you went to buy Detroit techno. I've run into so many people at that shop. I met Speedy J there for the first time, Richie would come through. It was a really interesting place to shop. It's still there too. They've changed the name but it's the same owner.

So my father was one of the people who started WJLB Radio which was the station where [Jeff](#) eventually started doing his Wizard thing. My dad was one of the founding members of that station and he was pretty big in his day. He was nationally a pretty well recognized on air personality. He broke a lot of music that wasn't typically black music. We had gold records for everything; just you know help for reaching a million sales etc. We used to eat with the Jacksons when they would come to town. My mother also worked a big music distribution company (Angot Records) so I grew up either at the radio station or at the distribution house. I grew up around records. We had a massive collection of every genre. My first Kraftwerk records that I used to play out were from my dad's collection. I would go to the basement and just rifle through the collection. I was kind of a loner kid. I had one of the first computers and dial up modem and I was into basic programming. I wasn't really interested in social things, I was more interested in listening to and discovering music and computers and those two are still my true passions; computers and music.

My first job out of high school was at a Christian radio station as a board op for a very short time. And then I got a job as an intern at 96.3 which was WHYT. There I worked my way up from being an intern. At the time they had mix shows late at night with Lisa Lisa Orlando. I have to say I love Lisa so much because she gave me my big break. She had some open slots on her mix show. She decided they would do a competition and let the callers decide who would get the slots for the Friday night mix show. It was myself, a guy named Jim McVicker who was a really good dj, haven't talked to Jim in a long time, DJ Dig who was Rick Sadlowski - he went on to work with Eminem. Actually in the early days Eminem would come in and we would play records for him and we would have freestyle battles and we would dj for them on open mike nights. And Mike the station manager and Lisa are the reason I'm doing it today. They believed in me and told me I should do a tape for this competition. Mind you I didn't have turntables at this time. I learned how to play with one old turntable and a cassette deck. I would go buy the records and then I would record them onto the tape. I plugged my mixer in – one deck and one tape and mixed between them and that's how I learned the skills. They had the big board in the studio with the reel to reel machines. I had learned how to edit with my dad because we had a reel to reel at home, just watching him and picking up things from him. And that's how they recorded the mega mix shows. You would go in, mix them, if you made a mistake you would stop the tape, splice it with a razor blade continue the mix and slice them together. Derrick May was my favorite. His mix shows were my favorite because he did a lot of edits and I tried to mimic that. I started doing Fridays and moved onto to Fridays and Saturdays. So I went from being an intern to only having to show up to work once a week

CGNY: And you do some amazing tricks too on the decks – is that where you learned those?

CY: Well I was really dedicated and Lisa recalls leaving the studio at 2am and I would stay over after all the mix shows were over and I would just practice. I was really into hip hop too and

DMC competitions and I had the tapes. [Jeff Mills](#) was a big inspiration for every dj in Detroit. Again it was like me being antisocial. I would spend the night in the studio and I would just play or listen to promos. Leave there at 7am in the morning.

I got the opportunity to go to Australia. I don't know how the guys found out about me but I was supposed to go for only one gig. I ended up staying for 3 months. I got a residency after the first show. And that is when my international career got started. I played Australia exclusively for a few years. Eventually got to go to Scotland and that was my first time in the UK.

CGNY: I wanted to ask you about being your own booker and having autonomy in the dj world as you've been quite vocal about it. Is it easier/better than working with an agent?

CY: Well there are perks to being with a company/agency. I reached a point kind of late 90s where I was with a really good agency and there was plenty of work to do. But I found I was playing at places where they didn't even really know me. They didn't even know what I played; they just heard the name and booked me. And this started to happen frequently and I got to a point where I just stopped maybe around 2004. I just quit because I felt I couldn't go through the motions, go to a nightclub and take their money. I felt a connection to the crowd and I wouldn't feel good about doing that. So I just got to a point where I just said I can't do this. I wasn't really into what everyone was listening to and it wasn't fun anymore. To be honest with you I do very limited dates. I've not so much interest in playing anymore. It's all so political and it's over very small sums of money. And there are egos. I feel like I just don't fit in with that so I've become very particular about who books me (if they can even find me). The agencies are so good at networking and I've never been a networker that way. It was never my thing.

CGNY: That can be hard. If you're not cut from that kind of cloth I guess?

CY: Yeah so many people are doing it (djing) now and it's so available now that I think that some promoters feel like 'We can get any dj'. Well it's not for me to say because I don't promote clubs. When I lived in Scotland I threw a few parties, some really cool parties where we had people like Jackmaster.

I'm very art oriented, I'm not a schmoozer. That kind of stuff is very off-putting to me. I try to be easy to work with but I didn't want to go out and go "Oh can you please book me for this party?"

I think if you are new and out there trying to make a name for yourself I guess that's how you do things. Sometimes there are so many choices that people just take what's available to them. I like to think that when I do something I always want to make sure that it's special. I'm 100% sure there are not many people that have the stuff that I play 'cos I have a lot of exclusive stuff. It's all about who you are, what story you have to tell. What I see now is there are these charts, this chart and that chart and it's almost like back to the radio days. It's interesting to me that in the techno world there is an audience and they want to hear certain songs and to me that's like just being a wedding dj. And to me that just feels wrong. To me if you're a dj the goal is to go there and blow up heads! Move people in a way and try to get them to follow you

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CGNY: Make them change their minds?!

CY: I used to get people saying after gigs 'Wow I never liked this music until I heard you play it and now I really like this stuff' That's the goal. It's not to run in there and play the hits. Go do Top 40 then. I look at those guys as wedding djs. To me if you do that, you don't have any musical identity. If those sites went off line – what would you select, how would you move people. And I think a lot of guys can't.

CGNY: Do you listen to promos still – do people send you stuff?

CY: Oh yeah. I get stuff. I listen all the time. My friends even get on my case about this. I get so much stuff in the mail and you know I listen to every one of them. Out of all of those tracks there's going to be one track that everybody passes over and if you work it right, in the right place, that's the one that's going to blow it up on any given night. So yeah I go through everything. Like a lot of seasoned people I can listen to a record and skip through it and know if it's going to work or not for me.

CGNY: Tell us some of your favorite places to play.

CY: I have to say Dublin was one of top spots. I have a really strong connection to that city. I used to play at The Kitchen a lot. I actually had my birthday there. The Edge was there. It was their club. They used to have a techno night and I played there on the regular. I was pretty tight with the security. Every club I played at I was always really tight with security guys!

CGNY: Always good to keep them on your side!

CY: They were good guys. I would buy them a bottle of something and take it and we got to be really good friends. At The Kitchen they had a tiny booth. There was a little back room and we'd all drink back there. One of my other favorites is The Orbit in Leeds. I used to like to go to Aberdeen a lot. Germany of course for Tresor.

CGNY: What's next coming up for you? Any gigs?

CY: It can be really tough to book your own stuff and well my girlfriend and I were talking and she said "You've really just wanted to write music for a while why don't you focus on that?" I've turned down a lot of stuff because it wasn't feasible; the fees were way too low. If I get decent offers I'll do them but really just focusing on getting the music out there – getting some independent sales. It's interesting because the common knowledge is there is no money in music and you can't make money from music and my little download is doing really well! I've pretty low overheads and if can sell 100 or 150 I can do pretty well.

CGNY: It seems many are doing the indie thing now with Bandcamp as well. It seems to be the forward thinking business model for at least digital formats.

CY: Yes! I know so many people who are doing releases that way; it's everywhere. With chart positions they get a little visibility but then they are not making anything. I've put out my little two track EP and its selling nicely!

CGNY: Well yes but obviously you have a reputation too.

CY: Yes but only if people find me! Nowadays we have so many things handed to us. So many sites, so many outlets and it's really only the heads that go looking for things. And those are the kind of people that I'm trying to attract.

When you are trying to make a certain kind of music to reach a poll position, it pushes you to create music in a particular way because if you don't it won't get heard. And that kind of destroys the art. I'm all about art. I don't really give a shit about the other stuff. It's tough. It's a lot tougher than people think it is. But to me that's art man, you gotta suffer for the art. Techno is like jazz. I just want to practice my craft. I'm really happy when people like you discover my music, that means the most to me!

CGNY: You do indeed! So we're almost an hour into this talk Claude. Like I predicted you would have a lot to say!! Maybe during the year you might come back to NY? One of the last gigs I saw you play actually both times was with my friend Alex (from Queens).

CY: I love [Alex](#) . I might come play for Alex this year. He's a great guy, I always spend a couple of days when I'm there –we watch movies!



Photo courtesy of Ryu Kasai - Japan

CGNY: What do I think makes a great DJ?

CY: Many things. I think there are different strengths to the different styles. I really like the basic selector type DJs. They don't have to be technically great, but they know what record to play and when. To me that's the epitome of control. Highest level of skill. Kind of like the Japanese martial art of Aikido. Ken Collier was a great mixer & he had perfect timing / track selection. You see this with a lot of the old-school New York / Detroit & Chicago DJs as well.

Being really into hip hop back in the day, I also like the battle style DJs. Mixing in and out of the best parts of records quickly. A kind of live remix / megamix style. Personally I've gone more towards the first style over the past few years. I started out with the trick mixing but I appreciate the selector style and employ that style more and more these days.

CGNY: Last question - You have to take one track or piece of music with you to another planet - what would it be?

CY: Easy one... Steve Reich's Music for 18 Musicians

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCkd46hcRag>

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