

An interview with Jeff Mills... by Fiona Walsh

<http://www.fionawalsh.com>

✂ JEFF MILLS ✂

Jeff Mills (born 18 June 1963 in Detroit, Michigan U.S.A.) is an influential Techno DJ and producer from Detroit. Jeff was kind enough to answer a few questions from our NYC reporter, Fiona Walsh. Check it out!

<http://www.sleeperwakes.com/>
<http://www.myspace.com/jeffmillsofficialspace>
<http://www.axisrecords.com>



Fiona: Hi Jeff – thanks for taking the time to chat with us at CGI. You played an amazing set last week at Sullivan Room! Having played there during the summer had you specific ideas for music in mind ahead of time based on your previous performance there?

Jeff: Hello. Yes, the music I made and brought on this most recent visit was reflective on what happened the previous visit during the summer. I had assumed that many of the same people would attend and that they would listen even closer to the music. The music was of a different angle. More subdued, transmitted-like pulses were the foundations of most tracks. In the summer, the foundation leaned more towards a hypnotic - spiralled sequence of events. In

trying out these different formulas, I'm searching to find a logical medium.

Fiona: I noted your supreme focus during your almost 5 hours behind the decks (with 3 encores!). How much does the crowd's energy influence your playing if at all?

Jeff: It does affect the programming in ways, but in my mind, I have a overall objective. This goal is typically set even before I enter the club/venue. It is generally a certain 'uneasy' feeling in the air that is caused by the people's reaction to what I'm playing. A point when the people's attention isn't on me or what I'm doing, but on what the music is about to do or say. It's a special feeling that I occasionally witness as the make up of the audience has to be of a particular degree. Very mixed audience between age, sex, race, etc.

Fiona: How do you approach making a new piece of music? I know you sometimes make specific music for a party or event. Can you talk a little about that process?

Jeff: Mentally, I think about how I would like the music to be perceived by the listener. I always figure that the listener is hearing it alone and at night (which is typically the scenario when I'm creating it). I think of someone, that after experiencing all events of the day, the night becomes refuge and the time for reflection before they end their 24 hours. Technically, I compose the lead string sequence first. This is the voice of the track and all other sounds help and support it.

Fiona: What was the first tune you heard (if there was one) that was your "Aha!" moment; the tune that maybe spurred you into the techno music scene? (For me it was "Housenation, House Master Boyz" – an oldie but a goodie!).

Jeff: I think it was "Illusions" by R-Tyme on Transmat Records. To me, this not only summed up what was happening in Detroit in the mid-eighties, but it pointed towards a creative direction and vision that I think Techno Music has not reached yet. Right now, I think we may be having

another opportunity to get there. I believe it has to do with whether audiences can detect when a DJ is sincere about what they're doing or not. Whether the DJ is really using the music to say something relevant or just pacifying the people with music that's just a quick fix.

Fiona: The Sleeper Wakes project kicked off about 4 years ago. The level of commitment in doing a four year long project is amazing (most of us have such short attention spans!) Do you think dance music and techno has changed a lot in that 4 year time period?

Jeff: Well, Dance Music is simply a reflection of the people. It very much shows ones ideology and take on life. We (people) have changed. Not just only with the residue of pop culture trends and new technology, but a deeper sense of where we are in relation to nature and the spinning of the Universe. My feeling is that we're quickly rushing towards something (or, something rushing towards us). A communal sense to stop, slow/dumb down, deviate away, decrease, ignore "it" feels prevalent. A natural ability of prevention. I think this sense could easily be misdefined as a innovate slow down or retreat, but perhaps its somehow related to the motion and nature of things.

Fiona: What were your goals for the project – did they change during that time or evolve as a result of your working on the project?

Jeff: I believe the goal of the Sleeper Wakes has mostly been achieved so far. When people in Tokyo began to hear about my extended absense, learned why I did it and about the return at Womb on New Years Day 2010, it should have triggered a certain amount of curiosity that will be important to bring on the night of the event. Hopefully, everything will fall into place for them by the end of night. The past 4 years have been with steady attention to how music scene has changed, what was being presented and overlooked or ignored.

Fiona: Why did you choose Womb as the venue for Sleeper?

Jeff: Connected to the previous CDs and projects "Time Sensitive"(2003), "Contact Special"(2004) and "One Man Spaceship"(2005), the Sleeper Wakes is the latest chapter. All these projects and supported events have been solely executed at Womb in Tokyo. To complete the sequence, I must return back to Womb to conclude this chapter before moving on to the next one.

Fiona: Do you plan to release a CD to coincide with the event?

Jeff: Yes. The schedule release date is: Dec. 9 (Japan) and Jan. 15 (Europe/US).

Fiona: You recently played at The Tripod in Dublin – how was that gig for you? Was that the first time you've performed there?

Jeff: It was very good. I've been going there for quite sometime. I think Irish and Scottish audiences are still the most energetic. There is always a high sense of excitement when they hear/feel something interesting. I look forward to going back sometime soon.

Fiona: Did you find the Irish crowd more or less receptive to your music?

Jeff: With this deeper style of dance music, I was a bit reluctant to play it there, but I eventually found a way to ease it in with more conventional Techno music and we got deeper and deeper as the night went on. I think we could have easily been there for many more hours.

Fiona: I've always thought that techno was sci-fi music.

Jeff: Me too!

Fiona: Was that a reason for working on rescoring "Metropolis"?

Jeff: I did it because I wanted to relay to other Techno Producers that this might be a way of extending our options for creating Techno Music. Metropolis was a obvious choice because I figured it would get noticed, not only by the Techno Community, but perhaps the film industry as well. I wanted to start *the* discussion.

Fiona: Do you like to dance yourself? Who would we be surprised to find you had on your ipod?!

Jeff: I used to dance when I was younger, but not so much now. Surprisingly, I don't listen to music in ipods. Its either silence/the sounds around me or music on a larger sound system.

Fiona: Say the Mayan prophecies are coming to pass and we're all going out with a bang in 2012, what would be the last tune you would play? (Your own music and others?)

Jeff: From my productions, I would play "Gamma Player". The meaning of this is about a Cosmic Adventurer. Someone who takes risks and travels the Universe in search of the

meaning of his/her life. From others, it would have to be "Clair de Lune" by Claude Debussy for reasons that are personal.
