

An interview with Tom Middleton... by Fiona Walsh

<http://www.fionawalsh.com>



Tom Middleton is a British recording artist, music producer, remixer and DJ. Our NYC diva, Fiona Walsh, caught up with him for a quick chat at the Electric Zoo festival in New York City...

<http://www.myspace.com/tommiddleton>

<http://www.electriczooofestival.com>



Fiona: I'm here with DJ and producer Tom Middleton. He just played the opening set on the second day of Electric Zoo, New York's first electronic music festival. Tom, thank you for taking the time to talk to Clubbersguideireland.

Tom: What a privilege and an honor, hey guys, how're you doing – what's the craic?!

Fiona: Only English and Irish people would get that! Everyone else would think we were doing something illegal!

Tom: Well that's the thing over here if you start saying 'craic' people will lock you up for being a dealer!

Fiona: So how was it kicking off the second day at Electric Zoo Tom?

Tom: Well what a beautiful venue and perfect weather for it and yeah, what a privilege. I was given the opening slot on the mainstage today and really that was like a carte blanche to dig through my eclectic selection of beautiful music and program a really pleasant, easy listening selection for Sunday afternoon. I woke up this morning at 530am jetlagged, sun bouncing off the Empire State building and I just thought this is going to be a great day today. I can feel it. So I started digging through, I'm always programming music literally right up to the last minute before I go onstage and I'm kind of going yeah, let's find alternate tunes and I found this track called "Sunday in New York" (sings!) by Bobby Darren.

Fiona: Oh that's who it was. I thought it was Tony Bennett!

Tom: The perfect tune to play. Probably never get a chance to play that track ever again. But there was a captive audience, I could do it, get it in the mix and the blend so that people could hear this absolute classic piece of music. Too much fun.

Fiona: I caught your opening set today and it was very dreamy electronica and then you mixed in Simon and Garfunkel, little bit of jazz, little bit of soul. Is that your style, a mix of everything? I know you're playing later in the peak time set – will it be very different?

Tom: Basically, my kind of music style is eclectic. I like a bit of everything, I like to chuck in all different kinds of styles and be spontaneous, be in the moment. I get a load of tracks together

and create these vast playlists in iTunes. And then normally there are a few tracks that I'm going to highlight, make a note of it, gotta play that one or this one. So today the first set was all about beautiful music, just to set the scene. Later on we're going to go more club with some really interesting dance music. You could play some really obvious music. I like to mix up familiar with unfamiliar. I think that's the really important thing to give people a sense of safety but then throw in some curve balls and get a bit wonky and wobbly and twist it up a bit. I'm not entirely sure how the sets going to pan out. You have to test the crowd, see how their feeling. My vibe has always been about entertaining as well as providing some really next level underground beats and rhythms but you've got to be mindful of the fact that people pay money here to have a good time. They want to dance. If you don't play dance music, you're in trouble. Earlier on I was playing music people want to listen to. The next job is to get people moving.

Fiona: You played a couple of your own tracks. Return to Atlantis and Shinkansen off the new Lifetracks album. Lovely tune by the way.

Tom :Yeah, you were grooving to that one! That was the most up-tempo (of the morning set). This year has been quite crazy. I've had a compilation out called "One More Tune", just celebrating end of night anthems. It's been really fun. Basically every festival set this summer, I've just been playing end of night anthems. Too much fun!! So everyone is singing along, dancing along. It's like pure party vibe. So I'm going to throw in a few of them later on. Also I've got a couple of compilations called The Trip 1 and 2, and Crazy Covers, which is all cover versions and there's an album called 3D on Renaissance and that was the one that preceded One More Tune. A lot of the tracks I played today you can find some of them on The Trip compilations and the 3D. I tend to program these playlists of beautiful music and then some of them end up on compilations because I want to share this music. It's too precious to keep for yourself. Just give it to the crowd. Plenty of super deep, chill stuff out there to get hold of.

Fiona: How long have you been djing and producing?

Tom: (Points to Smiley face icon he's holding, laughs) Since 88/89, that's when I started getting into clubbing and buying records. I was really excited by the whole Detroit techno movement. Derek May, Carl Craig, Juan Atkins. And also exponents from the New York scene playing

garage music. We call it house music now. Todd Terry, Strictly Rhythm label. You know there's a lot of music from over here. We bought it; we wanted a part of this amazing sound that was going on here. And of course that lead onto the whole European techno thing. And over 20 years I've grown through every phase of electronic dance music. Still here, still selecting, still loving it, still playing it, still making it!

Fiona: Are you coming to Ireland any time soon?

Tom: Oh I would love to. I was there last for Oxegen Festival. I've been in Cork. I've played Limerick. I play every year in Derry at the Celtronic Festival. That's awesome. And if you've never been to the Celtronic Festival, it's possibly the most amazing festival in the world. For 5 days during the week in little old Derry, Gareth Stewart, brings over a stellar line up of underground dance music talent. If you were to distill the nuggets of what's going on here today in terms of genre and style, and maybe just select 5 or 6 of the big players, he brings them over to Derry – how great is that!

Fiona: Fab stuff – will have to check that out! So in terms of the Electric Zoo, are you excited to have a big music festival for 2 days in New York. It's new for us here. Those of us living in NY. We've heard about the great European festivals in Ireland, England and other parts of Europe. But this is the first for New York. Would you be happy to see it come back next year?

Tom: I really hope it works out for them. For Mike and Laura, the organizers, because this is really special. I think NY has been crying out for this for a long, long time. And obviously it's all happening. The production is phenomenal, the hospitality is exceptional. I can only say great things about this because so far it's all been perfect, all boxes ticked!

Some festivals you get to, it starts with the security when you get in. They're moody and grumpy. Everyone is polite and friendly here and it really makes a difference.

Tom Middleton

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Fiona; Thanks so much for talking to us Tom. Enjoy the rest of the Electric Zoo.

Tom: Thank you. Do swing by myspace.com/tommiddleton . Don't be shy, I'm always happy to interact!
