

Dokumentation des Interviews mit Sid le Rock, 170622-1455¹

1 (...)

2 J: How would you describe your musical roles? Are you a DJ, a live act, a performer, a producer, a composer, a musician, an artist?

3 S: I have multiple aliases, one by the name of „Sid Le Rock“, the other by „Pan/Tone“, „Gringo Grinder“. So, in categories, they fall under each name. It's a bit different in style. However, I could say they all consist of electronic music. So, as a career for myself, I'm first a producer, entertainer and remixer. And sometimes a DJ, but my real love affair with the music is when I create myself under my own conditions of how I like it, you know, mistakes or the triumphs that comes with it. That's what I enjoy.

4 J: Would you say that you are also a live act?

5 S: I would say a live act, yeah, live act performer. (...) I have started up as a live performer, like live P.A.s. Because I only believed in what I was doing even though influenced by others / you know, that you hear their music, but playing their music didn't feel right for me at the time. But now, I later changed my views, and maybe it is laziness, too because it's a lot easier to DJ, to be honest, like / you see me yesterday, it's a lot to think about and it's one of these / you have to really focus on everything, when it comes to a live performance.

6 J: Why did you decide to play live? Do you remember the time of this decision?

7 S: I think it kind of just happened by accident. It was just because a friend of mine that had lots of equipment and quite often we'd go to his house and we'd sit for hours, 'til like four o'clock in the morning at night working on music, trying to reproduce what we like. And then we just decided one day: „Why don't we just perform it and get an impression of what people think?“. So, we had connection to lot of promoters, organizers that did parties in our city. I think we sucked really bad. But we loved it. That was kind of the spark that it didn't matter if it was good or not, it was just that we enjoy doing it. And then later on I broke away as a solo career and I just / that was my push, you know?

8 J: You've mentioned the challenging aspects of a live performance. Which equipment do you use to perform live and which criteria do play a role for your selection of equipment?

9 S: Well, it is a number of factors, actually. When it comes to travelling, I tend to bring less, because sometimes there are weight restrictions. And you just don't wanna wait for the, not the carry-on, but the check luggage to come around conveyer belt and then find out that it's not there. So, your whole show is messed up. The other part is the location. If you know the club itself and / because these

¹ Der Zahlen-Code bezieht sich auf das Datum, an dem das Interview geführt wurde. Hierbei wurde folgende Reihenfolge verwendet: Jahr, Monat, Tag sowie Uhrzeit (JahrMonatTag-Uhrzeit).

days not all the room is given on the counters because everyone has the new format, especially in modern times, everyone has a DJ controller, there is a *CDJ*, maybe sometimes there is a record player. So, in the end, as a live performer, your section is getting smaller and smaller, you know? I try to avoid any kind of stress related my issues when it comes to things like that. So, if I know the club has a lot of space or they say: „We can provide another table!“ and „Easygoing!“ , then yeah, then I'll bring as much as I can. In fact, if there is no place I'll just say: „Ok, let me just DJ because this is ridiculous.“

10 (...)

11 J: Which role does the audience play regarding the decision of which equipment you use? Do you want to make your actions more visible with special gear?

12 S: I guess my singing kinda says a lot. People like it, when I sing. I'm neutral to (?) because I enjoy it, but I although could say that I'm not that great at it. But honestly, I believe that people like it for the sympathetic factor. That there is someone trying to do / even though they are not announcing it as a great vocalist but that's the function of what it looks like or when it seems that it's live, you know. When you are engaging the audience, you are talking with them a bit and then / I don't sing so much now, like maybe once or twice in a set. I guess, sometimes I try to make things a little bit more visual with what I'm doing. Like many keyboards, and I just play that and they could see that I'm doing something off the whim, you know?

13 (...)

14 J: Which specific gear do you use regularly? Which gear did you use yesterday?

15 S: Well, mainly that was a *MiniKorg*, and then it was the *Akai MPD24*. I had a multi-FX-processor for my vocals, a computer running *Ableton*, basically.

16 J: To repeat it again: the laptop, the MIDI controller, the effect board for your vocals and /

17 S: yeah, and a *MiniKorg* for like a little piano bits here and there and /

18 J: That's the small keyboard /

19 S: Yeah. (...) It fits in most places, Last night I had very little space but I squeezed everything the best I could. Anything more [...] no chance.

20 J: You've mentioned the term „Live P.A.“ before. That's interesting because we simply call it live act.

21 (...)

22 S: Yeah!

23 J: I think it's an abbreviation?

24 S: Performance Artist. (...) That's my guess, anyway. Maybe we both should google it, but I guess P.A. stands for Performance Artist.

25 (...)

26 J: What does it mean to you to perform live?

27 S: Um, on restriction ... I mean, if I could just throw out thoughts: I would say that it's kinda caught in your own thought tunnel. Everything is functioned by you, everything is controlled by you and having control sometimes when your life doesn't have control? You know like you can't really control everything? But with live, some of that aspect is kind of retainable, with a positive way, you know? I mean, of course, there are mistakes. When the operator is a human, for instance, then there is always human error. And that's actually what I enjoy more about when I'm performing live. Even if the audience didn't pick up with it, I know it. Maybe it affects me, but if they catch it, then it's actually kinda nice being caught, you know? Because they're just kinda like: „Ah, okay he is playing live and he is doing something and it can't be perfect, of course!“ So, I like that there is a little bit more freedom. People are a little bit more amped with a live performance than a DJ, you know? A DJ – „ok, we have seen it many many times before“. Not saying that I'm dismissing it that as an art form, I just saying that live is so much cooler, you 're right.

28 J: Do you think the audience realizes what's going on?

29 S: Not often.

30 J: Or that they understand what's happening?

31 S: No. I would /

32 J: Or understand the technical process /

33 S: No. I'd say, maybe the ones that are even up close sometimes don't even know / I would hope to think that they know but most of the time you get / people coming up asking if you play this song. And it's really clear that you are here playing the piano, you know? But you have to understand that it's club. People are under the influence of whatever drug and they really couldn't care less. They just wanna dance and have fun. And I'm not the person that's gonna educate them. I'm just the one that's trying to give them a bit of enjoyment and get paid at the end of the night.

34 J: Electronic dance music is often seen as a functional music with the main purpose of dancing. But there are a lot of other functions, I think.

35 S: Yeah, for people going to the gym, too, or go jogging. So, it's good to get your blood pumping. I think, I'm a little bit more versatile or I try to be, with the various names that I have. It's really just based on how I feel, when I'm producing the music itself. And I know, that some stuff that I wouldn't be able to play or I feel like I shouldn't be playing at a club. [...] I think that's my own demon to fight because I think people are a lot more open-minded than a lot of DJs giving credit for. [...] that's the problem with DJs, they just go straight into the boom boom right away, you know? I like the beginning of the night most than the prime time. Like the warm-up, is my favourite DJ because you get a chance to really explore and do things that you normally can't do prime time. But unfortunately for live acts, they try to always put you in the middle of the primetime area. So, you have to keep the motivation up. You wanna people are peaking on, like I said, on whatever drug they are on or they really want a fun night. So, if you throw like intellectual property at them all the sudden, then some will like it, some will appreciate it very much and then there is the other part, or the other half, that says „Faster! Harder!“, whatever, you know?

36 J: So, it is important for a live performer to play his or her own tracks?

37 S: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I mean, that's hundred percent what I do. [...] Everything that comes from my mind and heart, I guess, it's basically played back to audiences, wherever I play.

38 J: Furthermore, you play only your own tracks and no tracks from other people.

39 S: No, then I would be a DJ. I mean, as a live act you're basically just doing what you have been making, you know? You just translating that from the studio to the dance floor. But that's what I mean, sometimes I like to take a break from myself, 'cause I've been in the studio way too long, listening my stuff in loop, you know, and then going through the pre-production, post-production. And then you 're playing it for quite a lot of times and then you're just like: „I can't deal with myself anymore!“. So, that's when the happy medium of being a DJ kinda falls into place where you can just take a little vacation from who you are. 'Cause even when I DJ I don't even play any of my songs that are finished. I play other people's songs because I do this for my live-show, so why should I play my own tracks?

40 J: How do you categorize your musical style? I know it's difficult /

41 S: I think it's just a safe medium to say that it's electronic music, because it carries a lot of „What does that mean exactly?“. Well, for me it just means that I'm open-minded to whatever forms that I like, you know? Whether it's techno, or even a little bit of trance or even kinda a little bit more of an indie, style of music that you are trying to focus your direction with.

42 J: (...) Ok, let's think about the human actions versus machine actions. What are you doing in the performance, what are the machines doing?

43 S: Well, I kinda wish machines could be a little bit more linked of what we are doing. Then it will be a fail-safe measure, you know? There will be less headaches and less hair pulling. But sometimes the machines just kinda have their own direction, whether you want it like that way or not. But, I mean, what I'm doing is kinda like you are the guy leading the orchestra. You have your own miniband inside and then you are cueing this and you're „Ok, now the horns!“ and „Oh, now the bass!“. [...] That what's you are doing, you know? But it's all quantified and it's all beatmatched.

44 J: That's a nice metaphor, I think.

45 S: Well, [...] the other major component to a live show is the crowd itself. Because in the way they are dancing or in the way they are expressing their selves whether they are enjoying themselves a lot or not. Then you can pick it up a little bit more, by having a little bit more live-influenced additions to your live set, (...) maybe I can add more percussion to make them more / or add more euphoric, kinda like pads to /

46 J: You would say you interact with the people?

47 S: Yeah, I think just like DJs have that possibility, same goes for the live acts. As a live act you should not always be fixed with what you are doing. Like you should be able to change things a little bit because you are playing live, you know? There are things that are set in motion that you cannot change, but there are things that you can add on top that you can make a difference.

48 J: You have different criteria to decide which track you play, I think. How does the play listing work for you?

49 S: I guess I like to go for the apex and then build it down again. I usually try to start off a little bit dramatic as we are saying with what I like the most about / like my favourite part of the night is the opening DJ. As a live set I like to also do that with as if I was the opening DJ for myself. So, even if the DJ before me was playing a 140 bpm like nonstop techno that, you know, it's repetitive loops that just do anything more than that / I like it to just change the voice even if it's like „Oh!“, and just erase everything that was done before and start fresh again. And then build it to my next point, my apex and then carry them off the cliff (lacht), like buffalo! (lacht)

50 J: Yesterday you didn't play 140 bpm, I guess.

51 S: No.

52 J: Do you remember your bpm-range on average?

53 S: I think, for the apex it was about 121. 121 bpm and then I was switching back and forth. I figured I started at 118 and then maybe 122 and then I came down a bit.

54 (...)

55 J: Can you give a diagnosis of the current state of liveness in the electronic dance music? And what would you say about the future, as a prognosis?

56 S: I think, it's all based on how technology develops. And like right now we see that Roland is doing a lot of reproductions in miniature versions, like the mini 808, 909. The functionality of that, it's nicer and easier as we said with sometimes space is an issue for a lot of venues that we play at. Or like even carrying stuff with you. Now you got more room with cooler techniques. So, I think that direction is more limited / without limits is what I'm trying to say. It's just how you use the tools, you know? I think that is probably the most important thing. You can still go old school and it is how you use it, that, and it will still have a major impact. But, the way I see it right now, it's quite nice to finally have more room for your data when it comes to like saving. And then clever new ideas for performing live with like on the spot. So, like your creativeness it's just summarized by technology and where it's going.

57 J: Is it important to play live also because of financial issues?

58 S: Yeah, I mean, fact is, you are not making money on records, not anymore, not like it was if like when I started, doing this fourteen, fifteen years ago. Then I would see checks from whatever releases I was putting out. So, that in hand, was one side and then the other side was the performance, playing live and of course, live you would typically get a little bit more than what a DJ gets. Because, honestly, we are doing a lot more than what a DJ does. A DJ will pick up the records. And yeah, I know, they got the costs of buying the MP3s or the vinyls. But we are buying gear and we are setting it up we are doing rehearsal and we are doing sound check. So, come on! That's why we get paid more. So, economically [...] I didn't really choose live because of that. I prefer to play live. But the bonus was, you get more money for it and you get a little bit more appreciation, as long as you are cool with the technical guys at the club, you know? [...] the most important people in my life when I go to club, is making sure that I have a good relationship with the tech guy, 'cause he is on your side. He wants the night to go well too, so don't fuck with that guy! (lacht)

59 (...)

60 (...)

61 J: I have one question about the things you're doing while performing. Can you categorize the main parts of doings during the performance? Are you playing an instrument like playing keyboard or are you singing or controlling?

62 S: I think it's multi format. In category form I named everything that I do so it's basically taking care for each of those things. But the main part is controlling. You are controlling everything. You are controlling the environment, the speed, as in the tempo. And you are controlling the dance floor the best way you can. But I think all those parts really all work together. You can do without the vocals and it's still be fine. But I think when you are playing live, keeping yourself busy is probably the most important aspect of playing live. Like you don't wanna be the live guy standing there saying he is playing live and you are doing nothing. Then people be calling you bullshit and saying: „Well, you

didn't really play live then because everything was automated!" But we all have automations, of course. So, it's just re-layering on top of it. Because I know there is some things I would need four hands for. And I'm sure, everyone would say that, coming from a live act aspect.

63 J: Do you use live looping?

64 S: Yeah, what I do is, I use sixteen channels. So, I have it triggered by sixteen channels on my MIDI map. And that is a way that I construct a full song. So, each part has its own channel. [...] I have the use of sixteen channels for each song and then I build myself out and into the next song. You need to think of a clever way how / it has to be in the right key range or has to be in the right / that's all these things that you wanna say „Ok, I wanna have a nice flow. So, I can't just throw this style of music with that style of music and have it completely ruin in that whole moment.“ You wanna have a nice blend.

65 J: Do you remix yourself?

66 S: Yeah, you could say that. Remixing is the act of just reinterpretation of a song, right? So, like often when someone gives you a remix work job, to remix their song, I like to use as much of their original parts that they had given me, like loops and stuff. Because if you start making it a way off the mark to maybe just to include a kick and a bassline then it's not really a remix, anymore. But for live, for what I do, I'm just remixing a song that I had already created. And sometimes I play it out the way because your memory, like muscle memory or whatever, you remember it the way you made it in the studio so you play it the same way with a bit of alteration.

67 J: Did you produce with *Ableton* in the studio?

68 S: Of course. Sometimes it is only hardware that I produce with. *Ableton* I'll use for the editing factor of it or putting it together. I was using *Logic* and it kinda looks too cartoonish for me. And then there was the whole point of „Oh, but it sounds better when you finally put it out!“ And I really don't think so. I think it's just because you really need to know your environment. In my studio, I don't have any sound proofing. While these guys are putting up sound proofing for two weeks, I'm already making the next record. So, I know my room well. So, I think, that's what relies in the end, how well you use your equipment.

69 J: When you prepare your versions to perform live with, which aspects are relevant?

70 S: Well, the thing that comes easy for me is that when I'm creating the song, like coming with the concept, I'm actually playing it out live to myself, like in the studio. Like I already got a crash course in how I'll play live before it's even made into a song. So, then I always try to find variations that I like best, with the breakdown, or with the continuance or how it ends. And then after I've completed all that it goes to record, you know? But when I play it out, it's like I remember the old days when I was setting it up for the first time.

71 J: I was reflecting more on the concrete aspects of the processes, for example, splitting the parts into *Ableton* clips or making a sample from your own tracks to have performable records in *Ableton* as scenes or something like that. Which things are important to you? I think you cannot use all your studio equipment in a live environment.

72 S: Yeah, I mean everything is separated into the channels that I think I need the most, or that are the most important to that song specifically. And that's what I mean with the sixteen channels that I have. I have the possibility to break it up even if it's a song that had 32 channels, when I made it.

73 J: Because there is this restriction in *Logic*?

74 S: Well, you can make it as many channels as you want.

75 J: But are you using 32 channels regularly?

76 S: Just as an instance. Some songs require more, some less, you know? But, as you are talking about how do I translate that it into live: well, then I just think, „Ok, I got sixteen channels to use for one scene. So, if I have too much percussion or too much of voice overlay then I put it all together“.

77 J: Like stems.

78 S: Exactly. [...] And then sometimes if it's something that I can play while I'm controlling, like off the keyboard, then I play the riff, that way and then whatever added effects. So, sometimes I just take out all the effects from the original song and then I just play the effects on top of it in live.

79 J: So, do you have to remember live what you planned to do in each song?

80 S: Yeah. So, you don't have the time to breathe.

81 J: Like „In this song I have to play the keyboard, in the next I have to play effects“?

82 S: Yeah. Sometimes you see people that write it down in a sheet like „Ok, this song, I got to do this, then I have to change to that“. You know, it's almost like a little cheat sheet for you remember sometimes /

83 J: Like a script?

84 S: Yeah, exactly.

85 J: Or a score or something like that.

86 S: For having a bad memory for a lot of things / music seems to have a weird way of working into my brain of where I can remember it better. I'm more of a verbal learner, you know, rather than a theoretic.

87 J: Thanks so far! Do you have other aspects about liveness in electronic dance music that I haven't mentioned? Any aspects that still should be addressed?

88 S: If I think of it, I think we covered a lot so far! (lacht) I mean I was surprised that we had so many questions just for live! (lacht)

89 J: Yeah, I think that the theory on liveness is very broad.

90 S: Yeah, of course, maybe we have, from all the people you interviewed up until now, there is some things that I'm sure that we have a common thought behind. And then there is sometimes that alters a little bit. That's what I like about it, it's individual performance, you are doing something based on what you like and what you wanna do, you know? So, of course, we asked each other tips too like „How do you do that?“ or „How can I solve this issue?“.

91 J: Do you maintain contact with your colleagues?

92 S: No, not anymore. I have been at it a way too long now. (lacht) No, but we do it sometimes. If it comes down too. But I think it's more hardware, like when we are discussing what can we do to solve this problem or make it fun. Because you do get bored of what you have and wanna change it up and wanna make it a little bit more interesting to yourself again. But when it comes out like how to play your songs, that's no one's business but my own.

93 J: Ok, thank you very much!
