

CROSSFADER ([//CROSSFADER.FM/](http://CROSSFADER.FM/))

ARCHIVE ([HTTP://WWW.DJZ.COM/ARCHIVE/](http://WWW.DJZ.COM/ARCHIVE/))

APPS ([HTTP://WWW.DJZ.COM/APPS/](http://WWW.DJZ.COM/APPS/))

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW: TOKIMONSTA IS HERE TO CHANGE THE GAME

Kim Reyes • NOV 13, 2013

Tweet 6



Female DJs continue to be a minority in the electronic music world, but with the rise of artists like Krewella (<http://www.djz.com/tag/krewella>) and NERVO (<http://www.djz.com/tag/nervo>), it appears that girl power is on the upswing. Enter Jennifer Lee, a producer who finds comfort in the shrouded beats scene of Los Angeles. More formally known as TOKiMONSTA (<http://www.djz.com/tag/tokimonsta>), Lee has managed to wedge herself into the upper echelon of experimental electronic music, as evident by her recent Nov 2 performance at the Red Bull Music Academy Discotheque Stage (www.redbullmusicacademy.com/events/hard-day-of-the-dead-2013) at Hard Day of the Dead (<http://www.harddayofthedead.com/>).

Dubbed the "first lady" of Brainfeeder (<http://www.brainfeedersite.com/>) by the record label's founder Flying Lotus (<http://www.djz.com/tag/flying-lotus>), Lee is no stranger to hanging tough in what appears to be an all-boys club. "People will say things like I'm not really producing my own music," she says. "They think I'm just the face and someone else is making the beats behind the scenes."

What started as hobby has since evolved to become everything for the producer, who began making beats after following a friend's suggestion. By drawing inspiration from artists like J-Dilla (<http://www.j-dilla.com/>), DJ Shadow (<http://djz.com/dj/dj-shadow>), and Aphex Twin (<http://www.djz.com/dj/aphex-twin>), Lee was able to start her journey into the realm of futuristic beat music.

She credits her hometown of Los Angeles as one of her biggest career influences. "It influenced me a lot, to the point where if I didn't live in this city, I probably wouldn't be making music."

Lee recalls that living in L.A. gave her many opportunities, and that these coincidences and chances got her into making music. "You're able to build really easily here and everyone's very helpful, so I don't know if this would have

happened in any other city."

Lee often found herself hanging around a place called Project Blowed (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Project-Blowed-recordings/321467931238716>), which was essentially the precursor hangout spot to the weekly series Low End Theory (<http://www.lowendtheoryclub.com/>). Created as a space for hip-hop heads, Project Blowed allowed budding producers to showcase their work. Several Brainfeeder artists first got their start at Project Blowed, and it was also the place where Lee met producer Ras G (https://soundcloud.com/ras_g).

Low End Theory did not start off as a major hotspot when it was founded in 2006 -- Lee notes that 30 attendees was a good night in the early days. But it's where she met Steven "FlyLo" Ellison, and the two quickly became friends. The story of how their friendship evolved into a musical partnership is sweet and simple: Ellison instant-messaged Lee one day and asked if she wanted to release on his label. "It was nothing really magical," she says, "but I'm so glad that happened."

Lee has grown close to the Brainfeeder crew over time, noting that they have "simple and silly fun with a lot of music involved," and enjoy watching movies and playing *Just Dance* for Xbox. Lee has since taken the opportunity to branch out by releasing her most recent album *Half Shadows* on Ultra Records (<http://ultramusic.com/>). Although she notes that the label transition was good -- but different -- she discovered that her new audience may have to adjust accordingly to accommodate her sound.



TOKiMONSTA

(<http://soundcloud.com/tokimonsta>)

TOKiMONSTA feat. Kool Keith - The Force (off Half Shadow ...
(<http://soundcloud.com/tokimonsta/tokimonsta-feat-kool-keith-the>)

0.00 | 3.18

"When you release something on Brainfeeder, you're releasing music to a following that is very well-acquainted with your sound, people who sound like you, and the music scene you come from," Lee explains. "When Ultra uploaded my songs, people would be like, 'I don't even understand this. Is this music? This is atrocious.' I've never seen people not get it so badly."

Although this astute observation of hers is not meant as an insult, Lee strives to expose electronic music fans to a sub-sound that is often cloaked by the loudness of wobbles and neon outfits. "Everyone has their opinion, which is fine by me, but these people are completely unfamiliar with your background," she says. "By releasing on Ultra, I'm able to bring this side of electronic to the people out there that are not well-acquainted with Brainfeeder-type sounds. For the more the hardcore EDM heads, it's worth it."

Along with the change of scene, Lee also mentions that she struggles with the way audiences perceive her, based on her gender and ethnicity. As a woman of Korean descent, Lee definitely stands out in an industry that is male-dominated and lacks a strong Asian presence. With the spotlight fixated on her, she wants to progress carefully, but hopes to serve as an inspiration. "By being a female in this industry, I'll hopefully help other females realize that it's doable," she says. "Now I see a lot more girls making beats and playing at Low End Theory, and they're very good -- not just 'okay because they're girls getting attention,' but because they're legitimately good."



TOKiMONSTA

(<http://soundcloud.com/tokimonsta>)

Go With It feat MNDR (off Half

Shadows LP)

(<http://soundcloud.com/tokimonsta/go-with-it-feat-mndr-off>)

0.00 | 4.24

Lee, who plans to return to Low End Theory at the end of December, has come a long way since starting her journey, with notable stage performances with artists like Skrillex (<http://www.djz.com/dj/skrillex>), Brooke Candy (<https://soundcloud.com/brooke-candy>), and Danny Brown (<https://twitter.com/XDannyXBrownX>). "Even though the audience is all very different, they all have your music in common, so it's good to understand them and what makes them tick."

Aside from hanging with her cat Misha (http://instagram.com/misha_the_cat) and changing up her hair color, Lee also finds enjoyment in the children's television series *Adventure Time*. "It's a really good cartoon because it's very whimsical, weird, and silly, but also serious and random," she says. "There's always a time where I'm like, 'what the fuck just happened?'. I really appreciate how nonlinear and non-sensible the show is." Lee exclaims that she would love to work with them if the opportunity ever arose like it did for Flying Lotus, who produced the end credit song (<https://soundcloud.com/flyinglotus/flying-lotus-about-that-time-a>) for his friend David O'Reilly's animated episode, "A Glitch is a Glitch".

While Lee dreams of collaborating with Bjork and Missy Elliot, she's been spending her recent days listening to Chicago house and working on her next EP, which she hopes to release in the spring. With a bright future ahead, Lee wants nothing more than to share her success story with fans.

"Try to be as unique as possible. You don't want someone to listen to your music and think someone else made it," she says. "It's important to have your own identity so that when people listen your songs, they'll know who made it because it's your style. These elements can make you the next game-changer."

◀ previous
BORETA - "HONEY HEART"
(<http://www.djz.com/news/boreta-honey-heart>)

next ▶
JAMIE JONES - "COOKIE MONSTER"
(<http://www.djz.com/news/jamie-jones-cookie-monster>)

STAY CONNECTED

ABOUT

About

(<http://www.djz.com/about/>)

Media

(<http://www.djz.com/media/>)

Trapify

(<http://www.djz.com/trapify/>)

LEGAL

Terms of Service

(<http://www.djz.com/terms-of-service/>)

Copyright Policy

(<http://www.djz.com/copyright-policy/>)

Privacy Policy

(<http://www.djz.com/privacy-policy/>)

