

# Techno

**Techno** is a form of **electronic dance music** (EDM) that emerged in **Detroit, Michigan, USA** during the mid to late 1980s. The first recorded use of the word *techno*, in reference to a **genre** of music, was in 1988. Many styles of techno now exist, but **Detroit techno** is seen as the foundation upon which a number of subgenres have been built.

The initial take on techno arose from the melding of **Eurocentric synthesizer**-based music with various **African American** styles such as **Chicago house, funk, electro,** and **electric jazz**. Added to this was the influence of **futuristic** and fictional themes that were relevant to life in American late **capitalist society**: most particularly the book *The Third Wave* by **Alvin Toffler**. Pioneering **producer Juan Atkins** cites Toffler's phrase "techno rebels" as inspiring him to use the word *techno* to describe the musical style he helped to create. This unique blend of influences aligns techno with the **aesthetic** referred to as **afrofuturism**. To producers such as **Derrick May**, the transference of spirit from the body to the machine is often a central preoccupation; essentially an expression of technological **spirituality**. In this manner: "*techno dance music defeats what Adorno saw as the alienating effect of mechanisation on the modern consciousness*".

Music journalists and fans of techno are generally selective in their use of the term; so a clear distinction can be made between sometimes related but often qualitatively different styles, such as **tech house** and **trance**. "Techno" is also commonly confused with generalized descriptors, such as **electronic music** and **dance music**.

## Origins

The initial blueprint for techno was developed during the mid 1980s in Detroit, **Michigan**, by **Juan Atkins, Kevin Saunderson, Derrick May** (the so-called Belleville Three), and **Eddie Fowlkes**, all of whom attended school together at Belleville High, near Detroit. By the close of the 1980s, the four had operated under various guises: Atkins as **Model 500**, Flintstones, and Magic Juan; Fowlkes simply as Eddie "Flashin" Fowlkes; Saunderson as Reese, Keynotes, and Kaos; with May using the aliases Mayday, R-Tyme, and **Rhythm Is Rhythm**. There were also a number of joint ventures, the most commercially successful of which was the Atkins and Saunderson (with **James Pennington** and Arthur Forest) collaboration on the first **Inner City** single, **Big Fun**.

## Detroit sound

In merging a European **synth-pop** aesthetic with the sensibilities of **soul, funk, disco,** and **electro**, the early producers pushed electronic dance music into uncharted terrain. The initial pioneers of the emerging genre melded the beat-centric styles of their **Motown** predecessors with the music technology of the time to create characteristically soulful grooves. The resulting Detroit sound exerted an influence on widely differing styles of electronic music, but also maintained an identity as a genre in its own right, one now commonly referred to as "**Detroit techno**." Derrick May famously described the sound of techno as something that is "*...like Detroit... a complete mistake, it's like **George Clinton** and **Kraftwerk** are stuck in an elevator with only a sequencer to keep them company.*"

## School days

Prior to achieving notoriety, Atkins, Saunderson, May, and Fowlkes shared common interests as budding musicians, "**mix**" tape traders, and aspiring DJs. They also found musical inspiration via the **Midnight Funk Association**, an eclectic five-hour late-night radio program hosted on various Detroit radio stations, including **WCHB, WGPR,** and WJLB-FM from 1977 through the mid-1980s by DJ Charles "**The Electrifying Mojo**" Johnson. Mojo's show featured **electronic music** by artists

such as **Giorgio Moroder**, **Kraftwerk**, and **Tangerine Dream**, alongside the funk sounds of **Parliament**, and danceable selections of **new wave music** from bands such as **Devo** and the **B-52s**. Atkins has noted that:

*“ He [Mojo] played all the Parliament and **Funkadelic** that anybody ever wanted to hear. Those two groups were really big in Detroit at the time. In fact, they were one of the main reasons why **disco** didn't really grab hold in Detroit in '79. Mojo used to play a lot of funk just to be different from all the other stations that had gone over to disco. When 'Knee Deep' came out, that just put the last nail in the coffin of disco music. ”*

Despite the short-lived disco boom in Detroit, it had the effect of inspiring many individuals to take up mixing, Juan Atkins among them. Subsequently, Atkins taught May how to mix records, and in 1981, “Magic Juan”, Derrick “Mayday”, in conjunction with three other DJ's, one of whom was Eddie “Flashin” Fowlkes, launched themselves as a party crew called Deep Space Soundworks(also referred to as Deep Space). In 1980 or 1981 they met with Mojo and proposed that they provide mixes for his show, which they did end up doing the following year.

During the late 1970s/early 1980s high school clubs such as Brats, Charivari, Ciabattino, Comrades, Gables, Hardwear, Rafael, Rumours, Snobs, and Weekends created the incubator in which techno was grown. These young promoters developed and nurtured the local dance music scene by both catering to the tastes of the local audience of young people and by marketing parties with new DJs and their music. As these local clubs grew in popularity, groups of DJs began to band together to market their mixing skills and **sound systems** to the clubs in order to cater to the growing audiences of listeners. Locations like local church activity centers, vacant warehouses, offices, and **YMCA** auditoriums were the early locations where underage crowds gathered and the musical form was nurtured and defined.

### Juan Atkins

Of the four individuals responsible for establishing techno as a genre in its own right, it is Juan Atkins who is recognized as “The Originator”.Atkins' role was likewise acknowledged in 1995 by the American music technology publication **Keyboard Magazine**, which honored Atkins as one of *12 Who Count* in the history of keyboard music.

In the early 1980s, Atkins began recording with musical partner **Richard “3070” Davis** (and later with a third member, Jon-5) as **Cybotron**. This trio released a number of **electro**-inspired tunes, the best known of which is “Clear.” According to a recent bio on MySpace, Atkins *...coined the term techno to describe their music, taking as one inspiration the works of **Futurist** and author Alvin Toffler, from whom he borrowed the terms 'cybotron' and 'metroplex.'* Atkins has used the term to describe earlier bands that made heavy use of synthesizers, such as Kraftwerk, although many people would consider Kraftwerk's music and Juan's early music in Cybotron as *electro*. Atkins viewed Cybotron's successful single, “Techno City” (1984), as a unique, Germanic, synthesized funk composition but having belatedly heard **Afrika Bambaataa's “Planet Rock”** (1982), a work Atkins considered inspirational, yet strikingly similar to the music he envisioned, he resolved to continue experimenting, and encouraged Saunderson and May to do likewise.

Eventually, Atkins started producing his own music under the pseudonym **Model 500**, and in 1985 he established the record label **Metroplex**. In the same year, he released a seminal work entitled “No UFOs,” one of the first Detroit techno productions to receive wider attention and an important turning point for the music. Of this time, Atkins has said:

*“ When I started Metroplex around February or March of '85 and released “No UFOs,” I thought I was just going to make my money back on it, but I wound up selling between 10,000 and 15,000 copies. I had no idea that my record would happen in Chicago. Derrick's parents had moved there, and he was making regular trips between Detroit and Chicago. So when I came out with 'No UFOs,' he took copies out to Chicago and gave them to some DJs, and ”*

*it just happened.*

## Chicago

The music's producers, especially May and Saunderson, admit to having been fascinated by the Chicago club scene and influenced by house in particular. For example, May's 1987–88 hit "*Strings of Life*" (under the alias *Rhythm Is Rhythm*) is considered a classic in both the house and techno genres. Atkins also believes that the first **acid house** producers, seeking to distance house music from **disco**, emulated the techno sound. There is also suggestion that the Chicago house sound developed as a result of **Frankie Knuckles**' using a drum machine he bought from Derrick May. Juan Atkins claims that:

*" Derrick sold Chicago DJ Frankie Knuckles a TR909 drum machine. This was back when the Powerplant was open in Chicago, but before any of the Chicago DJs were making records. They were all into playing Italian imports; 'No UFOs' was the only U.S.-based independent record that they played. So Frankie Knuckles started using the 909 at his shows at the Powerplant. Boss had just brought out their little sampling footpedal, and somebody took one along there. Somebody was on the mic, and they sampled that and played it over the drumtrack pattern. Having got the drum machine and the sampler, they could make their own tunes to play at parties. One thing just led to another, and Chip E used the 909 to make his own record, and from then on, all these DJs in Chicago borrowed that 909 to come out with their own records. "*

## *The New Dance Sound of Detroit*

The success of Chicago house and acid house in a number of UK clubs paved the way for the Detroit sound. A club following for house music grew steadily from 1985 with scenes in London, Manchester, Nottingham, and later Sheffield and Leeds, sustaining interest. The DJ's thought to be responsible for house's UK success include **Mike Pickering**, **Mark Moore**, Colin Faver, and **Graeme Park**. By 1988 house music had exploded and **acid house** was increasingly popular. In the same year the **Balearic** party vibe associated with Ibiza based DJ Alfredo Fiorito was transported to London, when **Danny Rampling** and **Paul Oakenfold** opened the clubs Shoom and Spectrum, respectively. Both night spots quickly became synonymous with acid house and it was during this period that the use of **MDMA**, as a party drug, started to gain prominence. Other important UK clubs at this time included Back to Basics in Leeds, Sheffield's Leadmill and Music Factory, and in Manchester **The Hacienda**, where Mike Pickering and Graeme Park's Friday night spot, called Nude, was an important proving ground for American EDM, including the first techno from Detroit.

In the UK there was also a long established warehouse party **subculture** based around the **sound system** scene. By 1988 the music played at warehouse parties was predominantly house music. By the summer of that year acid house party fever escalated in London and Manchester and it was fast becoming a cultural phenomenon. At this point MDMA fueled club goers, faced with 2 A.M. closing hours, were seeking refuge in a warehouse party scene that ran all night. To escape the attention of the press, and the authorities, this after-hours activity quickly went underground. Within a year, up to 10,000 people at a time were attending the first commercially organized mass parties, called raves, and a media storm ensued.

This explosion of interest in EDM during the late 1980s provided a context for the development of techno as an identifiable **genre**. Following the release in 1988 of an album compiled by Neil Rushton (an **A&R** scout for *10 Records*) and Derrick May, titled *Techno! The New Dance Sound of Detroit*, the UK music press began to characterize techno as Detroit's high-tech interpretation of **Chicago house**. The release was an important milestone and marked the introduction of the word *techno*, in reference to a specific genre of music. In 1993, Rushton was quoted as saying he, Atkins, May, and Saunderson came up with the name together, but that the Belleville Three voted down calling the music some kind of regional brand of house; they

instead favored a term they were already using, *techno*.

Derrick May views this as one of his busiest times and recalls that it as a period where he

“ *was working with **Carl Craig**, helping Kevin, helping Juan, trying to put Neil Rushton in the right position to meet everybody, trying to get **Blake Baxter** endorsed so that everyone liked him, trying to convince Shake (Anthony Shakir) that he should be more assertive...and keep making music as well as do the Mayday mix (for the show Street Beat on Detroit's WJLB radio station) and run Transmat records...For years no one cared about what Juan and I were doing in Detroit, and then I found myself dealing with people that were jealous, out of the clear blue sky.* ”

Despite **Virgin Records** disappointment with the poor sales of Rushton's compilation, the record was successful in establishing an identity for techno and was instrumental in establishing a platform in Europe for the music and its producers. Ultimately, the release served to distinguish the Detroit sound from Chicago house and other forms of EDM that were emerging during the rave era of the late 1980s and early 90s.

### Music Institute

In mid 1988, developments in the Detroit scene lead to the opening of nightclub called the Music Institute (MI), located at 1315 Broadway in downtown Detroit. The venue was secured by George Baker and Alton Miller with Darryl Wynn and Derrick May participating as Friday night DJs, and Baker and Chez Damier playing to a mostly gay crowd on Saturday nights. The club closed on **November 24, 1989**, with Derrick May playing “Strings of Life” along with a recording of clock tower bells. May explains that:

“ *It all happened at the right time by mistake, and it didn't last because it wasn't supposed to last. Our careers took off right around the time we [the MI] had to close, and maybe it was the best thing. I think we were peaking - we were so full of energy and we didn't know who we were or [how to] realize our potential. We had no inhibitions, no standards, we just did it. That's why it came off so fresh and innovative, and that's why...we got the best of the best.* ”

Though short-lived, MI was known internationally for its all-night sets, its sparse white rooms, and its juice bar stocked with “**smart drinks**” (the Institute never served liquor). The MI, notes Dan Sicko, along with Detroit's early techno pioneers, *helped give life to one of the city's important musical subcultures – one that was slowly growing into an international scene.*

### Developments

As the original sound evolved it also diverged to such an extent that a wide spectrum of stylistically distinct music was being referred to as techno. This ranged from overtly pop oriented acts such as **Moby** to the distinctly anti-commercial sentiments of the appropriately named **Underground Resistance**. Derrick May's experimentation on works such as *Beyond the Dance* (1989) and *The Beginning* (1990) were credited with taking techno *in dozens of new directions at once and having the kind of expansive impact John Coltrane had on Jazz*. By the late 1980s and early '90s, the original techno sound had garnered a large underground following in the **United Kingdom**, **Germany**, and **Belgium**. The growth of techno's popularity in Europe between 1988 and 1992 was largely due to the emergence of the party scene known as **rave** and a thriving club culture.

### Exodus

In America, apart from regional scenes in Detroit, **New York**, and Chicago, interest was limited. Producers from Detroit, frustrated by the lack of opportunity in their home country, looked to Europe for their future livelihood. This first wave of Detroit expatriates was soon joined by a number of up-and-coming artists, the so called “second-wave”, including **Carl Craig**, Jay Denham, **Kenny Larkin**, and **Stacey Pullen**, with **UR**'s **Jeff Mills**, **Mike Banks**, and **Robert Hood** pushing their own unique sound. A number of New York producers were also making an impression at this time, notably **Frankie Bones**, Lenny Dee, and **Joey Beltram**. In the same period, close to Detroit (**Windsor, Ontario**), **Richie Hawtin**, with business partner **John Acquaviva**, launched the influential imprint **Plus 8** Records.

Developments in American-produced techno between 1990 and 1992 fueled the expansion and eventual divergence of techno in Europe, particularly in Germany. In **Berlin**, following the closure of a free party venue called UFO, the club **Tresor** opened in 1991. The venue was for a time the standard bearer for techno and played host to many of the leading Detroit producers, some of whom relocated to Berlin. By 1993, as interest in techno in the UK club scene started to wane, Berlin was considered the unofficial *techno capital* of Europe.

Although eclipsed by Germany, **Belgium** was another focus of second-wave techno in this time period. The **Ghent**-based label **R&S Records** embraced harder-edged techno by “teenage prodigies” like Beltram and **C.J. Bolland**, releasing “tough, metallic tracks...with harsh, discordant synth lines that sounded like distressed Hoovers,” according to one music journalist.

## Berlin

Germany's engagement with American EDM during the 1980s paralleled that in the UK. By 1987 a German party scene based around the Chicago sound was well established. The following year (1988) saw acid house making as significant an impact on popular consciousness in Germany as it had in England. In 1989 German DJs **Westbam** and Dr. Motte established *UFO*, an illegal party venue, and co-founded the **Love Parade**. After the **Berlin Wall** fell on 9th November 1989, free underground techno parties mushroomed in **East Berlin**, and a rave scene comparable to that in the UK was established. East German DJ **Paul van Dyk** has remarked that techno was a major force in reestablishing social connections between East and West Germany during the unification period.

In 1991 a number of party venues closed, including *UFO*, and the Berlin Techno scene centered itself around three locations close to the foundations of the Berlin Wall: *Planet* (later renamed **E-Werk** by Paul van Dyk), *Der Bunker*, and the relatively long-lived *Tresor*. It was in *Tresor* at this time that a trend in paramilitary clothing was established (amongst the techno fraternity) by a DJ named Tanith; possibly as an expression of a commitment to the underground aesthetic of the music, or perhaps influenced by **UR**'s paramilitary posturing. In the same period German DJs began intensifying the speed and abrasiveness of the sound, as an acid infused techno began transmuting into **hardcore**. DJ Tanith commented at the time that: *Berlin was always hardcore, hardcore hippie, hardcore punk, and now we have a very hardcore house sound. At the moment the tracks I play are an average one hundred and thirty-five beats per minute and every few months we add fifteen more.* This emerging sound is thought to have been influenced by Dutch **gabber** and Belgian hardcore; styles that were in their own perverse way paying homage to **Underground Resistance** and Richie Hawtin's **Plus 8 Records**. Other influences on the development of this style were European **Electronic Body Music** groups of the mid 1980s such as **DAF**, **Front 242**, and **Nitzer Ebb**. In Germany, fans referred to this sound as ‘Tekkno’ (or ‘Bretter’).

## A Techno Alliance

In 1993 the German techno label **Tresor Records** released the compilation album *Tresor II: Berlin & Detroit - A Techno Alliance*, testament to the influence of the Detroit sound upon the German techno scene and a celebration of a “mutual admiration pact” between the two cities. As the mid 90s approached Berlin was becoming a haven for Detroit producers; **Jeff Mills** and Blake Baxter even resided there for a time. In the same period, with the assistance of *Tresor*, **Underground Resistance** released their X-101/X-102/X-103 album series, Juan Atkins collaborated with 3MB's **Thomas Fehlmann** and **Moritz Von Oswald** and *Tresor* affiliated label **Basic Channel** had taken to having their releases **mastered** by Detroit's National Sound Corporation; the main **mastering** house for the entire Detroit dance music scene. In some sense popular electronic music had come full circle; **Düsseldorf**'s Kraftwerk having been a primary influence on the electronic dance music

of the 1980s. The dance sounds of Chicago also had a German connection as it was in **Munich** that **Giorgio Moroder** and Pete Bellote had first produced the 1970s Eurodisco synth pop sound.

### Minimal techno

As EDM continued to transmute a number of Detroit producers began to question the trajectory techno was taking. One response came in the form of so-called **minimal techno** (a term producer **Daniel Bell** found difficult to accept, finding the term *minimalism*, in the artistic sense of the word, too “arty”). It is thought that **Robert Hood**, a Detroit based producer and one time member of UR, is largely responsible for ushering the emergence of the minimal strain of techno. Hood describes the situation in the early 1990s as one where techno had become too “**ravey**”, with increasing tempos leading to the emergence of **gabber**. Such trends saw the demise of the **soul** infused techno that typified the original Detroit sound leading Hood and others to redefine the music as *a basic stripped down, raw sound. Just drums, basslines and funky grooves and only what's essential. Only what is essential to make people move.* Hood explains that

“ *I think Dan [Bell] and I both realized that something was missing - an element...in what we both know as techno. It sounded great from a production point of standpoint, but there was a ‘jack’ element in the [old] structure. People would complain that there’s no funk, no feeling in techno anymore, and the easy escape is to put a vocalist and some piano on top to fill the emotional gap. I thought it was time for a return to the original underground.* ”

### Jazz influences

Some techno has also been influenced by or directly infused with elements of jazz. This led to increased sophistication in the use of both rhythm and harmony in a number of techno productions. **Manchester** (UK) based techno act **808 State** helped fuel this development with tracks such as *Pacific State* from the **mini-album Quadrastate**, and *Cobra Bora*, taken from the 1989 release **Ninety**. In Detroit, a producer heavily influenced by said jazz sensibilities at this time was Detroit’s Mike Banks, a demonstration of which can be found on the influential **Underground Resistance** release *Nation 2 Nation* (1991). By 1993, Detroit acts such as **Model 500** and **UR** had made explicit references to the genre, with the tracks “Jazz Is The Teacher” (1993) and “Hi-Tech Jazz” (1993), the latter being part of a larger body of work and group called **Galaxy 2 Galaxy**, a self-described jazz project based on Kraftwerk’s “man machine” doctrine. This lead was followed by a number of techno producers in the UK who were evidently influenced of both jazz and **UR**, **Dave Angels’ Seas of Tranquility EP** (1994) being a case in point.

### Intelligent techno

In 1991 UK music journalist Matthew Collin wrote that “*Europe may have the scene and the energy, but it’s America which supplies the ideological direction...if Belgian techno gives us riffs, German techno the noise, British techno the breakbeats, then Detroit supplies the sheer cerebral depth*“. By 1992 a general rejection of rave culture, by a number of European producers and labels who were attempting to redress what they saw as the corruption and commercialization of the original techno ideal, was evident. Following this the ideal of an *intelligent* or Detroit derived *pure techno* aesthetic began to take hold. Detroit techno had maintained its integrity throughout the rave era and was inspiring a new generation of so called *intelligent techno* producers.

As the mid-1990s approached, the term had gained common usage in an attempt to differentiate the increasingly sophisticated takes on EDM from other strands of techno that had emerged, including variants such as **breakbeat hardcore**, **Schranz**, **Dutch Gabber**, and overtly commercial strains that were simply referred to as “**cheese**.” Simon Reynolds observes that this progression “...involved a full-scale retreat from the most radically posthuman and hedonistically functional aspects of rave music toward more traditional ideas about creativity, namely the auteur theory of the solitary genius who humanizes

technology...". **Warp Records** was among the first to capitalize upon this development with the release of the compilation album **Artificial Intelligence**. Of this time, Warp founder and managing director Steve Beckett has said that

" ...the dance scene was changing and we were hearing B-sides that weren't dance but were interesting and fitted into experimental, progressive rock, so we decided to make the compilation Artificial Intelligence, which became a milestone... it felt like we were leading the market rather than it leading us, the music was aimed at home listening rather than clubs and dance floors: people coming home, off their nuts, and having the most interesting part of the night listening to totally tripped out music. The sound fed the scene. "

Warp had originally marketed *Artificial Intelligence* using the description *electronic listening music* but this was quickly replaced by **intelligent techno**. In the same period (1992–93) other names were also bandied about such as armchair techno, **ambient techno**, and **electronica**, but all were used to describe an emerging form of *post-rave* dance music for the *sedentary and stay at home*. Following the commercial success of the compilation in the United States, **Intelligent Dance Music** eventually became the phrase most commonly used to describe much of the experimental EDM emerging during the mid to late 1990s.

Although it is primarily Warp that has been credited with ushering the commercial growth of IDM and electronica, in the early 1990s there were many notable labels associated with the initial *intelligence* trend that received little, if any, wider attention. Amongst others they include: **Black Dog Productions** (1989), **Carl Craig's Planet E** (1991), **Kirk Degiorgio's Applied Rhythmic Technology** (1991), **Eevo Lute Muzique** (1991), **General Production Recordings** (1991), **New Electronica** (1993), **Mille Plateaux** (1993), **100% Pure** (1993), and **Ferox Records** (1993).

### Free techno

In the early 1990s a post-rave, **DIY, free party** scene had established itself in the UK. It was largely based around an alliance between **warehouse party** goers from various urban **squat** scenes and politically inspired **new age travellers**. The new agers offered a readymade network of countryside festivals that were hastily adopted by squatters and ravers alike. Prominent among the **sound systems** operating at this time were Tonka in **Brighton**, **DiY** in **Nottingham**, **Bedlam**, Circus Warp, LSDiesel and London's **Spiral Tribe**. The high point of this free party period came in May 1992 when with less than 24 hours notice and little publicity more than 35,000 gathered at the **Castlemorton Common Festival** for 5 days of partying.

This one event was largely responsible for the introduction in 1994 of the **Criminal Justice and Public Order Act**; effectively leaving the British **free party** scene for dead. Following this many of the traveller artists moved away from Britain to Europe, the US, **Goa** in **India**, **Koh Phangan** in **Thailand** and **Australia's** East Coast. In the rest of Europe, due in some part to the inspiration of traveling sound systems from the UK, rave enjoyed a prolonged existence as it continued to expand across the **continent**.

Spiral Tribe, Bedlam and other English sound systems took their cooperative techno ideas to Europe, particularly **Eastern Europe** where it was cheaper to live, and audiences were quick to appropriate the free party ideology. It was European **Teknival** free parties, such as the annual **Czechtek** event in the Czech Republic that gave rise to several French, German and Dutch sound systems. Many of these groups found audiences easily and were often centered around squats in cities such as **Amsterdam** and **Berlin**.

### Divergence

By 1994 there were a number of techno producers in the UK and Europe building on the Detroit sound, but a growing range of EDM styles were by then vying for attention. Some drew upon the Detroit techno aesthetic, while others fused components of preceding dance music forms. This led to the appearance (in the UK initially) of inventive new music, some of which bore

little, if any, relation to the original techno sound; **jungle (drum and bass)** being a primary example, its origins having more to do with **hip-hop**, soul, and **reggae**, than with the EDM from Detroit and Chicago.

With an increasing diversification (and commercialization) of dance music, the collectivist sentiment prominent in the early **rave** scene diminished, each new faction having its own particular attitude and vision of how dance music (or in certain cases, non-dance music) should evolve. Some examples not already mentioned are **trance**, **industrial techno**, **breakbeat hardcore**, **acid techno**, and **happy hardcore**. Less well-known styles related to techno or its subgenres include the primarily Sheffield (UK) based **bleep techno**, a regional variant that had some success between 1989 and 1991, and a scene that was responsible for putting Warp Records on the map (largely as a result of its fifth release, **LFO's** self-titled 12 ). By the end of the 1990s a number of post-techno EDM styles had emerged including **wonky techno**, **ghettotech** (a style that combines some of the aesthetics of techno with **hip-hop** and **house music**), **nortec**, **glitch**, **digital hardcore**, and so-called *no-beat techno*.

### Commercial exposure

Whilst techno and its derivatives only occasionally produce commercially successful mainstream acts—**Underworld** and **Orbital** being two better known examples—the genre has significantly affected many other areas of music. In an effort to appear relevant, many established artists, for example **Madonna** and **U2**, have dabbled with dance music, yet such endeavors have rarely evidenced a genuine understanding or appreciation of techno's origins. The mainstream music industry has been responsible for the growth of a huge **remix** industry. This is largely a drive to gain exposure for artists that are not identified with club styles such as house, techno, and drum & bass. Many club acts and dance DJs have made very successful careers out of remixing alone, **Armand Van Helden** being a good example.

More recently, **contemporary R&B** has taken a significant foray into the dance genre, thanks largely to **club scene remixes** such as **Freemasons'** recent interpretations of **Beyoncé** and **Kelly Rowland**, and whilst some criticize this as indicative of the music industry's seeking greater exposure for its big-act roster, it can also be viewed as a natural part of the process of musical evolution. One R&B artist, **Missy Elliott**, inadvertently exposed the popular music audience to the Detroit techno sound when she featured material from Cybotron's *Clear* on her 2006 release "Lose Control"; this resulted in **Juan Atkins'** receiving a **Grammy Award** nomination for his writing credit. Elliott's 2001 album *Miss E... So Addictive* also clearly demonstrates the influence of club culture.

In recent years, the publication of relatively accurate histories by authors Simon Reynolds (*Generation Ecstasy* aka *Energy Flash*) and Dan Sicko (*Techno Rebels*), plus mainstream press coverage of the **Detroit Electronic Music Festival**, have helped to diffuse the genre's more dubious mythology. Even the Detroit-based company **Ford Motors** eventually became savvy to the mass appeal of techno, noting that "...this music was created partly by the pounding clangor of the Motor City's auto factories. It became natural for us to incorporate Detroit techno into our commercials after we discovered that young people are embracing techno." With a marketing campaign targeting under-35s, Ford would choose Model 500's "No UFO's" to underpin its November 2000 **MTV** television advertisement for the **Ford Focus**. In tempting to sum up the changes since the heyday of Detroit techno, Derrick May has since revised his famous quote in stating that "*Kraftwerk got off on the third floor and now George Clinton's got **Napalm Death** in there with him. The elevator's stalled between the pharmacy and the athletic wear store.*"

### Proto-techno

In exploring techno's origins writer **Kodwo Eshun** maintains that *Kraftwerk are to Techno what Muddy Waters is to the Rolling Stones: the authentic, the origin, the real*. Juan Atkins has acknowledged that he had an early enthusiasm for **Kraftwerk** and **Giorgio Moroder**, particularly Moroder's work with **Donna Summer** and the producer's own album *E=MC2*. Atkins also mentions that "...around 1980 I had a tape of nothing but Kraftwerk, **Telex**, **Devo**, Giorgio Moroder and



**Gary Numan**, and *I'd ride around in my car playing it.*" Atkins has also claimed he was unaware of Kraftwerk's music prior to his collaboration with Rick Davis, which was two years after he had first started experimenting with electronic instruments. Regarding his initial impression of Kraftwerk, Atkins notes that they were *clean and precise* relative to the *weird UFO sounds* featured in his seemingly *psychedelic* music.

Derrick May identified the influence of Kraftwerk and other European synthesizer music in commenting that *it was just classy and clean, and to us it was beautiful, like outer space. Living around Detroit, there was so little beauty... everything is an ugly mess in Detroit, and so we were attracted to this music. It, like, ignited our imagination!* May has commented that he considered his music a direct continuation of the European synthesizer tradition. Kevin Saunderson has also acknowledged the influence of Europe but he claims to have been more inspired by the idea of making music with electronic equipment: *I was more infatuated with the idea that I can do this all myself.*

The noted popularity of **Euro disco** and **Italo disco** music of various acts including Moroder, **Alexander Robotnick**, and **Claudio Simonetti** (referred to as *progressive* in Detroit) and **new romantic synth pop** performers such as **Visage**, **Human League**, and **Heaven 17** on the Detroit high school party scene from which techno emerged has prompted a number of commentators to try and redefine the origins of techno, by incorporating musical precursors to the Detroit sound as part of a wider historical survey of the genres development. This results in a chronologically distinct point of origination being removed. To support this view, they point to examples such as *Sharevari* (1981) by A Number of Names, danceable selections from **Kraftwerk** (1977–83), the earliest compositions by **Cybotron** (1981), **Donna Summer** and **Giorgio Moroder's** *I Feel Love* (1977), Moroder's *From Here to Eternity* (1977), and **Manuel Göttsching's** *proto-techno masterpiece E2-E4* (1981). Another example is a record entitled *Love in C minor*, released in 1976 by Parisian Euro disco producer **Jean-Marc Cerrone**; cited as the first so called *conceptual disco* production and the record from which house, techno, and other EDM styles flowed.

It is apparent that certain electro-**disco** and European synth pop productions share with techno a dependence on machine-generated dance rhythms but comparisons are not without contention. Efforts to regress further into the past, in search of antecedents, entails a further regression, to the sequenced electronic music of **Raymond Scott**, whose "The Rhythm Modulator," "The Bass-Line Generator," and "IBM Probe" are considered early examples of techno-like music. In a review of Scott's **Manhattan Research Inc.** compilation album the **English** newspaper **The Independent** suggested that *Scott's importance lies mainly in his realization of the rhythmic possibilities of **electronic music**, which laid the foundation for all electro-pop from disco to techno.* Another example of early EDM-like music has recently come to light (2008). On a tape, reportedly made in the mid to late 1960s by the original composer of the **Dr. Who** theme, **Delia Derbyshire**, is evidence of music virtually indistinguishable from contemporary EDM. **Paul Hartnoll**, formerly of the dance group **Orbital** describes the example as *quite amazing* and notes that it sounds not unlike something that *could be coming out next week on **Warp Records**.* It is also noteworthy that the possible influence of electronic music found in American **sci-fi** movie soundtracks, such as the work of **Louis and Bebe Barron** for the film **Forbidden Planet**, appears to be unconsidered.

### Retro technology

Instruments utilized by the original techno producers based in Detroit, many of which are now highly sought after on the retro music technology market, include classic drum machines like the Roland **TR-808** and **TR-909**, devices such as the Roland **TB-303** bass line generator, and synthesizers such as the **Roland SH-101**, Kawai KC10, **Yamaha DX7**, and Yamaha DX100 (as heard on Derrick May's seminal 1987 techno release *Nude Photo*). Much of the early music sequencing was executed via **MIDI** using hardware sequencers such as the Korg SQD1 and Roland MC-50, and the limited amount of **sampling** that was featured in this early style was accomplished using an **Akai S900**.

The TR-808 and TR-909 drum machines have since achieved legendary status, a fact that is now reflected in the prices sought for used devices. During the 1980s the 808 became the staple beat machine in **Hip hop** production while the 909 found its home in **House music** and techno. It was *the pioneers of Detroit techno [who] were making the 909 the rhythmic basis of their sound, and setting the stage for the rise of Roland's vintage Rhythm Composer.* In November 1995 the UK music technology magazine **Sound on Sound** noted that:

“ *There can be few hi-tech instruments which still command a second-hand price only slightly lower than their original selling price 10 years after their launch. Roland's now near-legendary TR-909 is such an example — released in 1984 with a retail price of £999, they now fetch up to £900 on the second-hand market! The irony of the situation is that barely a year after its launch, the 909 was being 'chopped out' by hi-tech dealers for around £375, to make way for the then-new TR-707 and TR-727. Prices hit a new low around 1988, when you could often pick up a second-user 909 for under £200 — and occasionally even under £100. Musicians all over the country are now garrotting themselves with MIDI leads as they remember that 909 they sneered at for £100 — or worse, the one they sold for £50 (did you ever hear the one about the guy who gave away his TB-303 Bassline — now worth anything up to £900 from true loony collectors — because he couldn't sell it?* ”

By May 1996 Sound on Sound was reporting that the popularity of the 808 had started to decline, with the rarer TR-909 taking it's place as *the dance floor drum machine to use*. This is thought to have arisen for a number of reasons: the 909 gives more control over the drum sounds, has better programming and includes MIDI as standard. Sound on Sound reported that the 909 was selling for between £900 and £1100 and noted that the 808 was still collectible, but maximum prices had peaked at about £700 to £800. Such prices have held in the 12 years since the article was published, this can be evidenced by a quick search on [eBay](#).

Source: Wikipedia

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