

## Music | Bittles' Magazine: The music column from the end of the world

*Get Physical Music*, the highly respected dance music label, first came to most people's attention back in the mid noughties with the twin assault of *Mandarin Girl* by **Booka Shade** and the ubiquitous *Body Language* by **M.A.N.D.Y. vs. Booka Shade**. Both songs injected some much-needed warmth into the minimal template to give house music a new lease of life. By **JOHN BITTLES**

Founded in 2002 by **DJ T.** together with members of **Booka Shade** and **M.A.N.D.Y.**, the Berlin based label has since gone on to release some of the funkier and freshest sounding music around.

Since its formation the imprint has been instrumental in keeping the underground music scene at the top of its game. While their *Body Language* mix series is rightly revered as one of the best in the world, the label has also worked hard to put together a roster of artists the envy of anyone in the business. **DJ Pierre, Junior Boys, Damian Lazarus, Tim Green, Kris Wadsworth** and **Audiofly** are just some of the names to have released wax with the label. The last few years have also seen *Get Physical Music* work with a host of great new talent, pushing the melody rich soundscapes of **Eagles & Butterflies** and the lush house sophistication of **Daniel Dubb** to the fore.



My first encounter with the label's output was back in 2003 through the tech-funk vibes of **DJ. T.'s** excellent *Philly 12"*. With those lush disco strings sitting high in the mix, this is still the perfect track for losing yourself on the floor. My next experience involved **Booka Shade's** superb *Memento* album, the perfect dancefloor LP,

and a record which I still treasure today. Recently tracks like the 303 laden disco strut of **DJ Pierre's** *Acid Love* (seriously, if you haven't heard this yet do so now) and **Monkey Safari's** fabulous deep house groove *Mantra* have had me coming back for more.

Whatever way you look at it, these are exciting times for the label, with a new *Body Language* mix from **Pezzner**, a brand-new **DJ T.** LP (*Trans Orient Express*), the **Doormen On Vacation** DJ team-up of **Philipp Jung, Roland Leesker** and **John Acquaviva**, and a wonderful new *Acid Love* comp (*Acid Love Vol. II*). There is also a great run of twelves due this year, with new tracks by **Bruce Leroys, Squire** and **Arnold From Mumbai** which are all guaranteed to cause mayhem on the dancefloor.



With this in mind, it seemed to be the perfect time to catch up with *Get Physical Music* heads **Thomas Koch** (aka **DJ T.**), **Roland Leesker** and **Philipp Jung**, with a special guest appearance by *Plus 8 Records* founder **John Acquaviva**. In the following in-depth interview we discuss the label, the new DJ team-up **Doormen On Vacation**, Roland's excellent *Acid Love Vol. II* compilation, **DJ T.'s** groove filled *Trans Orient Express* album, Philipp picks his top 5 *Get Physical Music* releases, and lots more.

So, clear out some headspace, check the *Get Physical* [Bandcamp](#) page, and let us begin...

By way of introduction, can you tell us a bit about who you are and what you do?

**DJ T.:** My name is **Thomas Koch** aka **DJ T.**

**Philipp David Jung:** I am co-founder of *Get Physical*, ex member of **M.A.N.D.Y.**, co-owner of *Black Flamingo NYC & bon vivant*. Giggling here and there under the alias **Forever Jung** and started to record a solo album which is due early next year.

**Roland Leesker:** I am a music lover since 1972, additionally educated in International Finance and Law with some experience in the music entertainment industry. I love my family, martial arts and to be on a musical journey.

You started *Get Physical* back in 2002. How would you describe the label to someone who has never heard of you before?

**DJ T:** I think it is well deserved to say that one can't find many electronic music labels that have been releasing quality music in such consistency over the past 18 years. It is impossible to describe its musical profile with a few words, because it has been releasing a far broader range of styles than most of the other internationally known labels. Besides in its first 3-4 years in which it had been kind of a trendsetter itself, it has never been currying favour with current, temporary fashion trends, but simply releasing timeless, contemporary, most of the time danceable electronic music.

**Philipp:** We started it as a collective of techno lovers, nerds and friends to be able to express our art, feelings and craziness. It changed throughout the years, but the core is still there.

**Roland:** We all know and love each other since the beginning and I joined the label in the year 2010 in order to *Get Physical*.



Foto: Marie Staggat

What was it that made you decide to set up your own imprint all those years ago?

**Philipp:** Everyone turned down our demos, so we thought we have to do something about it and show the world what we've got. We were very convinced it will work out, not on this level, but we were very confident it'll have some success.

If you had to pick five tracks to sum up the ethos of Get Physical which would you choose and why?

**Philipp:**

*Tonite* - **M.A.N.D.Y.**, as it was the first record **Pete Tong** picked from us for his famous radio show.

*Starlit* - **DJ T.** introduced a very new sound of disco at that time. It's very powerful and retro but still very much based in the here and now.

*Mandarin Girl* - **Booka Shade**: just because it did some great damage in the clubs!

**Djuma Soundsystem** - *Les Djinns (Trentemøller Remix)*: one of the most beautiful 'final songs' in techno history.

**Birds of Mind** - *Just Let Go*: we released that one last year and it's just simply one of our favourite songs. We love the vibe; it can be played at any time of the night.

Get Physical has been releasing a series of country themed compilations which look at the underground music scene in countries/continents such as Africa, India and Brazil. Where did the idea for this come from?

**Roland:** It all started with a record from **DJ Clock feat. Beatenberg** *Pluto (Remember You)*. I was crazy for that tune and tried to sign it for a re-release as nobody knew it in Europe and I was convinced it had bigger potential. Unfortunately, it was signed to *Universal Music* and they decided to sit on it and do nothing... Although we were not able to sign this one, I started getting introduced to the local music making scene from South Africa and it was the beginning of a great relationship with **Ryan Murgatroyd** and his crew. They connected us to the local scene of music producers, and we decided to showcase their outstanding talent with the tools we had at hand. The first *Africa Gets Physical* compilation album got a very positive response on a global level, hence we decided to expand this idea to help develop further scenes and markets, such as Latin America and India.

On each of the comps there are some killer tracks from artists I've never heard of before. How do you go about gathering all the music for the compilations?

**Roland:** The secret of the extraordinary quality of all of these releases is that we always work with an A&R source from within the local scene. Someone that lives and loves the music and knows everyone and is respected very well locally. Also, it is essential for us to work on a friendship level, and I am sure that this contributes to the excellent quality of music, artwork and emotions as well.

What's next for the series?

**Roland:** China, Cuba, Croatia, Detroit and Mexico will *Get Physical* in the next months for sure.

Besides this we will deepen our relationship with musicians from South Africa with *Africa Gets Physical Volume III*, produced and compiled by the highly talented musician **Blanka Mazimela**.

We are also going to go on with *India Gets Physical*, compiled and co-produced by the mysterious **Todh Teri**. Also, it makes us very proud and happy to see what happens in Latin America. What started a few years ago with *Brazil Gets Physical* evolved into its own brand: *COCADA Music*, which has grown into a really nicely working platform for electronic music from Latin America with live showcases, super interesting music releases and remixes by artists such as **Ricardo Villalobos** and **Jimster** and great artwork by local artisans.

This concept is a joint venture with **Leo Janeiro** from Rio de Janeiro and our plan is to evolve it into an independent music publishing and event brand for Latin American artists within the next years, creating local jobs and international connections and awareness for the culture of music and art from Latin America.

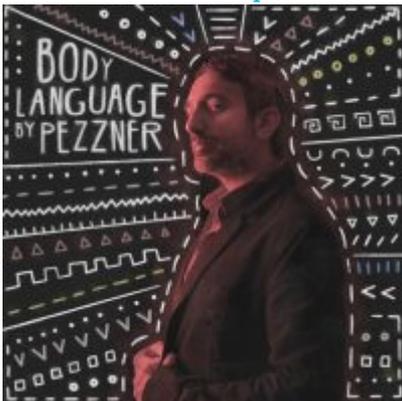
Late January saw the release of *Body Language Vol. 22*, compiled and mixed by **Pezzner**, who supplies a string of exclusives and originals. What can you tell us about the mix?

**Roland:** It's a hell of a good DJ mix: **Pezzner** really is one of the best producers, DJs and a super nice human being all round!

With *Body Language* now on its 22<sup>nd</sup> edition what's the secret to keeping a long-running series sounding fresh?

**Philipp:** I think we are trying to work with artists with whom we really can develop something new. Where we can have a proper exchange and work intensively together, if that's wanted and needed. Throwing ideas back and forth and trying to obtain the best possible result at the point. Not so much always in the most commercially successful way, rather to try and motivate the artists to reach their goal. It for sure has been a beautiful journey throughout those past years. To hopefully many more to follow!

What else can we expect from Get Physical in 2020?



**Roland:** Our new label brand *Meta Physical*, a platform for indie electronica music, good pop for grown-ups with taste, will finally launch this summer with an album by **Sailor & I**. We will further increase the quality of our label management service in many different genres and support the music of artists and label brands such as **Flow & Zeo's Tropical Beats** from Brazil, *Cityfox* from New York or **Ryan Murgatroyd's Swoon** from South Africa.

Also, we started a *Get Physical Classics* vinyl series with **Samim's Heater** and **DJ T.'s DIS**. Next one will be an amazing package of *O Superman* by **Booka Shade vs. M.A.N.D.Y.** with two fresh remixes by **SIS** and **Manpower** as well as the original and the unbelievably strong *Robag's Pumper-Nikkel Remix!*

Last but not least, we will invite you all to join us for our 18th birthday anniversary party in Amsterdam for *ADE* Saturday night at a very special location.

Do you have any final words for our readers?

Stay curious and don't let people tell you what to listen to. Hear it for yourself :)

\*\*\*

For the next part electronic music visionary **John Acquaviva** joins Roland and Philipp to talk about their exiting new project **Doormen On Vacation**.

Rumour has it that Roland and Philipp are working together with the legendary **John Acquaviva as Doormen On Vacation**. What can you tell us about this project?

**John Acquaviva:** In many ways this is us who love clubbing music from the early days. We were talking about the great vibes and grooves hidden in there and found out that the three of us want to share our love of beautiful sexy music in this setting.

Excitingly, the press release suggests that the three of you “intend to head out on the road and share their love, passion and knowledge through a series of special, grown up, all night long sets”. What will this entail?

**Doormen On Vacation:** We will be taking over exclusive hotels when the owners are out of town, crashing bars in need of musical therapy and rocking up to your local club, musical weapons in hand, ready to join the dots between the happy and the sad, light and dark, good and evil and whatever else takes their fancy. We are ready to serve!

What type of tracks will feature in a **Doormen On Vacation** show?

**John Acquaviva:** Disco, funk, soul or anything lovely, funky and sexy. So far, this idea has caught fire amongst our friends, so we will continue to make more friends around this love of lovely tunes and grooves ;)

Is there any chance of the three of you working together on new material in the near future?

Oh.... Yes Dear!

What's the strangest record you have ever played in a DJ set and gotten away with?

**John Aquaviva:** I have stretched the boundaries of a dancefloor for sure. I think the most fun record I put on and surprised people was the theme to the *Charlie Brown* cartoon tv shows by **Vince Guaraldi**. I have played some crazy almost evil stuff, but better to note the fun stuff which is what **The Doormen On Vacation** are all about!

Hi Roland. Back in December you released *Acid Love Vol. II*, a great compilation of TB303 heavy tunes. For anyone out there who hasn't heard it yet, what can they expect?

**Roland:** A high quality selection of the very best producers of ACID music from the past and future.

The compilation includes contributions from the likes of **DJ Pierre, Phuture, Matthew Dear** and more. How did these bona fide legends become involved?



**Roland:** I admired Pierre since my very early days. My first residency in Frankfurt was called *Wild Pitch Club!* One day my phone rang, and he called me. We became friends talking over music and the deeper meaning of life and death. I suggested to re-record some of his *Wild Pitch* classics in order to show their beauty to a new generation of house music loving kids. It went really well, so it was only a small step to dive into the acid too. From there on everything else just came naturally. It also helps a lot to have such a beautiful catalogue as *Get Physical Music* has the honour to take care of.

[While many compilations concentrating on one genre or sound can become a bit repetitive, this one gets the balance just right. How difficult was it to achieve this?](#)

My approach is like if I had only 20 records to play for all my chances to play. An essential selection that never lets us down. Balancing the old with the new. It took me about 12 months to finish each of the albums. Listening and re-arranging my *Acid Love Playlists* hundreds of times in different situations, mainly whilst travelling.

[The deep jackin' groove of your own Acid Strings Edit of Dis by DJ T. is one of the album's many highlights for me. Can you talk us through the creative process of this track?](#)

That's my approach to producing or remixing in general: the day I go to the studio I listen inside of me the moment I wake up and then I try to connect that feeling of that moment with a song or track that comes up in my memory. I do then try to translate this emotion into my work.

[What is the secret to making a great remix?](#)

Well, you need to be able to talk to the machines you want to use, and you need to know what you want to tell them. If you know these two things and also are able to listen to what the machines say, then it's a good conversation about an interesting story. Maybe it's comparable to the honourable work of a translator: you transport the meaning with emotion.

[What is it about the crazy sounds created by the Roland TB303 that have made it endure?](#)

If I would be able to put this in words, it would not be what it is.

[Hi Thomas. Your new album Trans Orient Express came out on the 13th of March. What was the idea behind the LP?](#)

It might sound weird to the ears of some, but I wouldn't have got the motivation to do another album without an inspiration that is not coming from the usual dancefloors, but from a new form of DJing I got into over the past five years. After visiting these events already as a dancer, I started playing for *Ecstatic Dance* ceremonies three years ago. I think I can say I would be quite lost without all these new influences I have been drawing from, because most parts of current club music are congealed to boring formulas. In the context of these

events I play world music influences from almost all cultural circles of the world, especially the middle and far eastern influences that were exciting to discover and integrate into my sets. At the same time there was a new wave of fresh sounding disco and indie dance music, and disco has always been a constant element in all my musical work, so I spontaneously decided at the beginning of last year to do a whole album with a fusion of these elements.



When you first started recording, did you have a specific idea of how the album would sound?

All I knew was that I wanted to mix disco and indie dance with oriental influences, but I didn't expect the outcome to be that diverse; every track sounds different.

If someone only had time to listen to one song from the record, which should it be and why?

Probably to *Remish*, the 2nd single that will be released in mid-April, because in that track very authentic sounding guitar lines are coming together with very organic disco, so in this sense the track represents the core of what I wanted to achieve.

One of my favourite tracks on the album is the mesmeric deep house groove of *Bedouin Ride*. Can you tell us about the creative process for this song?



Usually I am not the biggest fan of sampling such complex elements as the guitar playing on this track, for example we played the guitar lines in *Remish* completely by ourselves on the keyboard. I couldn't resist to do it in this case. It was a big challenge to integrate this sample in the most organic way possible.

*Dünya* features the evocative vocals of Istanbul based singer **Hande**. How did you meet, and what made you decide to work together?

We met at a beautiful festival at the Turkish coast not long ago, became friends and I remembered that she once told me that she likes to sing in private but has never tried to record or release something, so I wanted to give her a chance to try. I love the deep colour of her voice.

The press notes quote you as saying, "if someone would have told me that I would be back making a complete album in an ethnic disco style, I simply wouldn't have believed it". What was it that drew you back to the album format? And was it worth it in the end?

I have answered the first part before already. I think it's always worth doing music when it comes from the heart and such a rich inspiration as I was able to draw from here. I am very excited how it will be received because musically it is not comparable with anything that's out there in the market right now.

No doubt your appetite for *Get Physical Music* has been whetted by now. Get yourself over to their [Bandcamp page](#) for more information and treat yourself to some music now.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)