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INTERVIEW

**Rone's production philosophy: "Ironically, looking inward is the best way to touch an audience"**

By Emma Robertson



Paris-born Erwan Castex has been making music as Rone since 2008, when his debut 12", *R-Force-One*, released on InFiné, garnered support from artists like Massive Attack, Lee Burridge, and Sasha, to name a few. Since then, he's cultivated a niche in French electronic music, increasingly becoming known for his intricate productions and abstract, melodic style. 2012's *Tohu Bohu* and its 2013 follow-up, *Tohu Bonus*, harness the musical influences of Berlin, which Rone calls his "adoptive city." We sat down with Castex to talk about making music for himself, his love-hate relationship with Paris, and the small details that make a difference.

**What initially drew you to electronic music? What makes electronic music more special than other genres?**

I progressed quite naturally to electronic music. I started playing the piano, a bit of drums and sax, then I bought a pair of decks... Then I discovered what was possible with a computer and a few [pieces of] software. That's when I really started making music. My studio got gradually bigger and was filling up with all kinds of machines: drum machines, synths... What really drew me to electronic music is, above all, its experimental aspect, the use of tools to generate original sounds. Before producing music, I remember often wondering, "What is that sound?" when listening to artists like Aphex Twin or Kraftwerk. It was neither a guitar, nor a piano—what was it? I also like the idea of being on my own, building rich and complex tracks, with a rhythm section, a bass, keys—a bit like a conductor.



**You've had a chance to play in a vast number of cities around the world—Tokyo, Paris, London, Montreal, Barcelona, Berlin. Which has been your favorite city so far?**

It's really difficult for me to pick my favorite city. Paris? It's where I was born and grew up... I know Paris by heart. I love it and hate it at the same time. Berlin is like my adoptive city. I lived there for three years and loved it. The city fuels creativity. I think my actual drive for creation is moving. I did my first album in Paris, my second one in Berlin. My fantasy would be to make every album in another city. I was blown away by Asia, Tokyo, and Singapore, and I also love New York.

**What differences do you notice in how each city responds to your music?**

When it comes to the response from the audience in concert, it's about the same everywhere. I mean, take a place like Tokyo, where people are quiet and shy in the daytime, there's always that moment during a concert where there's a kind of harmony, people mix, gather, and let off the pressure, forget everything. At the end of the day, Belgians, Japanese, Italians, or Americans—they all react positively and let themselves be carried by the music. Only small details make things different.

**Tell me a bit about *Tohu Bohu* and *Tohu Bonus*. What was the inspiration behind the albums? Can you share a special moment from the albums' production or creation?**

*Tohu Bohu* is my second album. The first was easy to make; this one took more time... There was a long period of maturation. First I took a long time wondering what to do. But the more I thought, the less I was making music. Then I decided to try and stop intellectualizing my work and go ahead following my instinct and spontaneity. The whole "creator's block" disappeared and the album came straight away. I let my machines talk; I recorded a lot on the go, coming back to the recordings later to fine-tune them. I try to avoid limits in my experiments, working for example with the rapper High Priest from Antipop Consortium on the track "Let's Go," or the cello player Gaspar Claus on "Icare."

*Tohu Bonus* is the deluxe version of the album, re-issued by Infiné, with a bonus CD containing six previously unreleased tracks. I tried to take some existing tracks elsewhere with a new version of "Let's Go" or a follow-up to "Beast," and I also collaborated with Battles' amazing drummer John Stanier on the track "Pool." The idea was to make music that would move me in the first place, without thinking of others. Ironically, I think looking inward, which might sound egomaniacal, is the best way to touch an audience.





## Let's Go (feat. High Priest)

Rone Wild Edit

High Priest Rone

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**Your rise to fame has been quite the whirlwind. You've been named Trax Magazine's artist of the year, been praised by so many outlets, including Resident Advisor. What has the experience been like for you?**

I'd be a liar if I told you I don't care. All the positive feedback on my work is really encouraging and nice. I just have to make sure I take some distance so that I don't put myself under pressure and keep on making music in a "natural way."

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