

Mark Reeder speaks about the history of electronic music & new 5.1 reMix collection

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Investigate in any length the history of electronic music in Europe and sooner or later you'll run into the name [Mark Reeder](#).

A legend amongst those of us raised on the musical experimentalism of early synth pioneers, and later the birth of dance music, Reeder began his journey on the Manchester post-punk scene (in The Frantic Elevators with Mick Hucknall) before setting sail, in 1978, for the avant-garde music/art underground of Berlin where he became a producer, engineer and Factory Records German representative. It was in Berlin that Reeder became embroiled in the new electronic music and would later be instrumental in the creation of the Berlin dance music scene, and by-proxy dance music worldwide. After setting up his own electronic music label, Masterminded For Success, in 1990 Reeder met, and would go on to mentor and guide to international celebrity, a young Paul Van Dyk.

Having worked with, and reMixed, almost everyone under the SynthPop sun, Mark is currently gearing up for the release of his latest collection. Titled [Five Point One](#), the album compiles eighteen of Mark's reMixes for a line up that reads like a who's-who of electronic music. From classic artists such as Depeche Mode, Pet Shop Boys, Anne Clarke and John Foxx, to some of the best new artists of recent years, Echoes, May68, and Marsheaux, all these reMixes have been lovingly, and painstakingly, remastered in 5.1 surround for a truly unique listening experience.

We caught up with Mark so he could fill us in on the album and his time in the world of the synthesizer:

Thanks for taking the time to do this Mark.

ER: So, tell us about your long background with music and how it all started.

MR: I suppose my love for music all started with 'Telstar' by the Tornados. I thought they were aliens 'cos they wore sunglasses and polo necks. I also listened to The Beatles, The Shadows and tons of twangy sixties bands, then I graduated to the thrilling music of Barry Gray and John Barry which started my passion for TV and film music. When I was about 7 I wanted an electric

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guitar which was on offer on the back of a Kellogg's Cornflakes packet if you sent in a million box tops and a postal order for 25 quid. It looked brilliant, with 6 pick-ups and loads of switches and buttons, but my mum wouldn't let me have one because she thought you plugged it in like an iron and I would get electrocuted.

So I got a violin.

As a kid I wanted to play the violin because I loved the sound of sweeping strings and I still do to this day. We had a teacher who would play us pieces by Grieg, Mahler and Gustav Holst.

So classical music played a big part in my early musical life.

I remember being in awe watching Jimi Hendrix playing his guitar with his teeth on the telly, he made it look so easy. An elder cousin introduced me to progressive Rock music like Led Zeppelin, King Crimson, Pink Floyd, Frank Zappa, Deep Purple, Black Sabbath or The Who and in my early teens I listened to lots of it, as there wasn't much else, but by 72 I had also discovered radically new sounding stuff like Roxy Music, Bowie, The Stooges and even Gary Glitter. As I spent most of my Saturdays in record shops, I eventually ended up working part time on Saturday afternoons in a small Virgin record shop and from there I had unlimited access to a whole range of music. I could feed my addiction for synthesizer music and expend my musical horizons by listening to even Jazz, Funk and Disco. I initially studied to be an advertising graphic designer but I ended up working there full time just as Punk Rock was starting to explode and being the only store in Manchester with the guts to stock such controversial music, I was in the thick of it. Our shop became the Mecca of Punk and it was in this tiny shop I became pals with people like Pete Shelly, Rob Gretton, Tony Wilson and many others. I enjoyed the vibrant early Punk Rock scene and even formed a band with Mick Hucknall (The Frantic Elevators) but as the excitement started to fade into New Wave Rock, I found my musical tastes were progressively becoming more and more driven towards Disco and electronic and this style of music was being made in Germany. I was attracted to darker sounding electronic music (which probably comes from listening to deep progressive rock as a kid) and Bowie's 'Heroes' album was hugely inspirational and naturally Kraftwerk. I decided the sound I was looking for was not to be found in Britain, but abroad. So, by 1978 I had enough and wanted to explore the European music scene and Germany in particular.

ER: And when did you first discover electronic music, how much of an impression did that make on you?

MR: My earliest memories of electronic music were undoubtedly very impressive. They came from listening to music like 'Telstar' and the original 1963 Doctor Who theme which is a masterpiece and the electronic sounds of Barry Gray which he used in Doctor Who and the Daleks, Supercar, Fireball XL5, Stingray, Thunderbirds, Captain Scarlet and UFO. I think though my awareness for electronic music really hit me though when I was about 10. I went with my elder cousin to look at a stereogramme (a horrific 3 meter long sideboard cabinet thing with a pathetic cream coloured record player in the middle, loudspeakers at each end and in-between compartments to put magazines, bottles of alcohol and wine glasses, which always rattled about when you turned up the volume).

You have to understand that at that time, a stereo was something very new. A hi-tech development to the 60s mono home. Vinyl records were even released in both mono and stereo versions.

To demonstrate this fashionably new way to listen to music - in stereo - the seller played us an album called Switched on Bach by (the then Walter, now) Wendy Carlos. This album is the entire Brandenburg Concerto and every instrument is played on a Moog synthesizer. I couldn't believe it, it sounded like nothing else on earth. It blew me away. I glued myself to the speakers in awe. I was utterly amazed. Not only by the fact it was in stereo, which was amazing enough to a small child who had only heard music in mono up until that moment, but the sounds were so familiar yet superfuturistic. it was science fiction and I was hooked.



♪ May68 - The Prisoner (Mark Reeder's Runaway reMix)

ER.: What first attracted you to Berlin in 1978? What was it's appeal over Manchester.



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I suppose it was music. Tangerine Dream came from Berlin, Klaus Schulze also lived there and Bowie had made two amazing electronic sounding albums there. He must have been inspired. I thought this must be the place to go... and it was.

Berlin was also attractive to me back then because no one could really tell me anything about it.

Everything I read or heard about it was always quite negative. People would say you don't want to go there, it's a divided city surrounded by Russians, or it's miserable and depressing. It all sounded good to me. I have to admit, the history of the city was also quite attractive too, the second world war ended there and the cold war began there. It was the city where two ideologies clashed head on. I wanted to discover more about it. Berlin had an irresistible image that was unique.

When I got here, I could sense instantly that it had much more to offer.

Most of the buildings appeared to be falling apart and bullet riddled. Paint flaked off them and everything appeared black and grimy.

Yet it was also very green. The streets were lined with trees and there were beautiful parks and although decrepit, it had lovely architecture. I also discovered people were not any more miserable or depressed as anywhere else.

West Berlin had a vibrant night life and its own weird little music scene. It was very exciting.

However, I think my first trip to East Berlin a few days after my arrival probably cemented it for me. Here was another part of the city that was a mere stone's throw away, but because it was cut in two by a bloody big wall, it was a completely different place. It was an unknown, parallel world. It was like visiting a set from Star Trek. Going there was like being transported back into the early 50s or something. The place appeared to be on constant red alert.

Conscripted soldiers seemed to be everywhere. To me it looked like they were on their way to manoeuvres, but at a second glance they had normal nylon shopping bags and were just going shopping like anyone else.

The border crossing into the east was a fascinating yet very serious affair too, you couldn't crack a joke or be silly otherwise the threat of a free train journey in a cattle car to a Siberian Gulag was the price to pay. The tension kept you quiet.

Once over the border it was like being in the great escape. You knew this state had secret police and each table decoration was absurdly tested for a non-existent microphone. There were few cars, virtually no advertising, restaurants had aluminium cutlery, cracked cups and ersatz coffee, monopoly money and uniforms were everywhere, and the entire city was enveloped in the smell of two stroke engines, coal fires and cabbage. I asked myself what else? This can't be it? Did they have an underground music scene? Surely. I had to find out. In my quest, the STASI came to consider me as a subversive element out to corrupt the youth of East Germany.

The West Berlin music scene was very different to the Manchester scene I left. I had just experienced the exciting rise and fall of punk and the beginnings of new wave but in Berlin they had their own brand and own idea about this musical revolution. It was very unconventional and I found that a very refreshing approach, as it wasn't driven by the dream of having a commercial hit record like in the UK. Their music was more a political and artistic statement.

ER: What was the difference between the emerging electronic music scenes in Germany and England back then?

MR: Germany has always had a tradition of electronic music and since the early 70s, I had tried my best to get anything and everything that was played on a synth. Working in a record shop certainly helped me achieve that. Most synth music seemed to come from Germany, but it was usually a lot of doodly sequencers. Besides, in strike-riddled Britain no 'working class' kid could afford a synth, as everyone was unemployed and on the dole.

Synth music was classed as progressive kraut-rock and non-commercial, until Tangerine Dream had a massive selling album and naturally Kraftwerk changed everything with 'Autobahn' and 'Das Model'. Then the introduction of synths into Disco, gave it a whole new arena to play on, one that seemed so much more suitable. I couldn't believe how most people at that time could just simply dismiss it so readily. Couldn't they hear it? I suppose Disco had a bitter after taste, but to me Moroder seemed so innovative, and I was totally converted, especially after I fell love and Donna Summer's 'Bad Girls' album and 'E=MC2'. Yet although the synth was

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identifiable with Germany, Britain did have some brilliant and very innovative electronic artists too.

Eno was one of my earliest electronic inspirations at that time, but also lesser known ones like Todd Rundgren, Tim Blake of Gong, the Groundhogs' guitarist Tony McPhee or Pete Townsend also dabbled with synths. As the Punk and New Wave scene developed, daring new sounds and styles began to emerge.

Gary Numan and John Foxx's Ultravox were two of the earliest to pioneer the UK synth-sound scene and hot on their heels were bands like the Human League, who undoubtedly helped to create a proper SynthPop scene and avant garde art bands like Throbbing Gristle. This in turn fuelled bands in Germany like P1/E to make their own kind of SynthPop. It was very exciting and very inspiring. So much so I too desperately wanted to have a synth on my own Unbekannt records. So you can imagine how happy I was when Bernard Sumner gave me his old Trancendent 2000 that he had used on the early joy division recordings and eventually Klaus Schulze gave me one of his old Moogs.

ER: What excites you now musically, what genres and artists are you listening to right now?

MR: I usually let my mood dictate the music I listen to and that can be all kinds from techno to film music to rock to classical or pop from all eras. That said, I am listening to a lot of new music and I am really grateful for specialist websites like yours that present new electronic artists. I've discovered quite a few really excellent artists who would have otherwise fallen under the radar. Echoes were one new band that really impressed me, so much so I asked them if I could remix a track of theirs to include on my five point one album. That certainly wouldn't have happened without you.

Recently, I've been listening to Queen Of Hearts and Apparats album and lots of film music and I also thought the recent single '[Colour, Movement, Sex And Violence](#)' by Section25 was also great. It's very Manchester sounding... like we all love.



🎵 Echoes - Ice Cold (Mark Reeder's Cold As Ice reMix)

ER: So, what was the inspiration for putting this remix collection, Five Point One, together?

MR: The inspiration was most probably the fact that I am really into the idea of wrap around surround technology and I think the next step for music production is three dimensional. It really makes you have to think when you are making a 5.1 mix. Sure, it is a bit futuristic and takes some getting used to, but it is fun and very challenging.

I know some people are already too eager to fob off 5.1 as a flash-in-the-pan trend, but that was also said about stereo and synthesizer music too. It took stereo over 30 years to become the household norm in the late 60s and now it's time to embrace something new. This will happen once 5.1 sound systems become cheap and affordable and even more so once they are wireless.

The music industry and retail outlets have to have the balls to adapt and support it too, especially now that you have 5.1 chips in the next generation of smartphones and the like.

After all, most people hear music on their phone or IPOD and play CDs on their computer or DVD player and what's the point of having a bombastic wide flatscreen tv only to listen to the sound in traditional stereo?

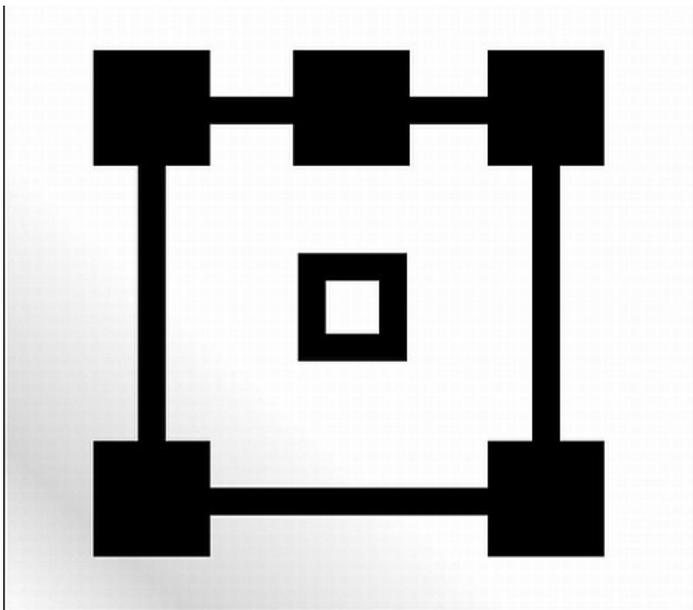
Re-remixing all the tracks in 5.1 was a real challenge to do and that was also very motivating.

Besides, I've always wanted to have an album featuring Depeche Mode, The Pet Shop Boys and New Order (in my case Bad Lieutenant) and so I decided to make one out of my reMixes for those bands.

Of course not everyone has this technology yet and so I have included two CDs of traditional 2.0 stereo mixes, to make up the triple disc album package value for money.

I also can't deny the fact that an added inspiration was the 5.1 Depeche Mode and Nick Cave albums as well as Pink Floyd, King Crimson and FGTH. So I also wanted to make an album in 5.1 too, but my album features a balanced mixture of well known and unknown artists and not just one artist.





ER: Is there anything you would have liked on the album that not made it, or anything you would have liked to do with it but were not able?

MR: Yes there was. I really wanted to put my 5.1 version of 'A Forest' on this album too, but due to the strict contractual obligations that Blank & Jones have with Robert Smith they sadly couldn't give it to me. So that reMix remains available only on 'ReOrdered' and I also wanted to reMix a track called 'If You Love Me Tonight' by Maya and I even asked them if I could do it, because I really liked the track and would have loved to have included it, but they never got back to me.



♪ Depeche Mode - Sweetest Perfection (Mark Reeder's Sweetest Conception reMix)

ER: What's in Mark Reeder's studio? Are there any favourite, or go-to, bits of gear?

MR: Micha (Adam) and I have quite a few analogue synths and equipment, but my favourite synth is my Roland Juno 106 which I bought in the mid '80's when I played with Shark Vegas. I also have a 1970s Fender Telecaster which gives me that twangy 60s sound.

ER: How was it remastering your remixes in 5.1? Did it present any technical hurdles?

MR: Absolutely! Micha and I didn't just remaster the tracks, we completely reproduced and reMixed them from scratch to achieve a true 5.1 surround mix. That means, we took all our original soundfiles and repositioned the instruments and atmosphere so that they would be balanced within the entire track.

Basically, we went back and recreated each reMix so it sounded similar to my original, but in surround.

Sounds easy, but it isn't. When you mix in stereo, you can layer and hide and edit parts to fit, but in surround you can hear everything, as the sound comes from everywhere. The main key was in getting the balance right, yet in the end it all boils down to how you have set up your sound system to suit your individual taste.

ER: If money was no object, what synth, or bit of studio gear, would you get?

MR: I have never thought of it as I have never been in that position. I would like a real Jupiter 8, I've always wanted one of those and a Fender Stratocaster from 1968.



♪ Parralox - Sharper Than A Knife (Mark Reeder's Cutting Edge reMix)

ER: What's next for Mark Reeder after Five Point One is done?

MR: Apart from making a few new remixes, I am planning on remastering and releasing Die Unbekannten 'Don't Tell Me Stories' album on CD, as that has only been available on ltd edition vinyl and I also plan to release the remaster of Die Vision's 'Torture' album, which was an album I produced in East Berlin and was to become the last album ever made in communist East Germany for their state owned record label AMIGA (which incidentally became known as Zong after the fall of the Berlin wall).

I also plan to ... err

ER: Are you more of a cereal or fried breakfast kinda' guy? Would this change after a night in the studio?

MR: I am definitely a cereal man. I prefer a healthy breakfast. I usually eat crunchy Musli with yoghurt and in the winter months I also eat porridge and on rare occasions even bread and cheese. When I feel like it, I will eat a cooked breakfast though, but it is never full English and always without meat.

The main thing for me in the morning is a big mug of very strong English tea (preferably from PG, Typhoo or Tetleys tea bags). That is essential.

No, I don't change my breakfast habits after a long night.



♪ John Foxx - Inderpass (Mark Reeder's Sinister Subway reMix Edit)

You can pre-order Mark Reeder's 'Five Piont One' [here](#) or [here](#).

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