



PHOTO:
David Cova

RISSA GARCIA

A FAMILY AFFAIR

MATT ROUSE, HOST OF THE HOUSE CULTURE PODCAST, CAUGHT UP WITH NEW YORK BASED RISSA GARCIA TO DISCUSS HER CAREER, INFLUENCES AND HOPES FOR THE FUTURE OF THE HOUSE MUSIC SCENE IN MANHATTAN.

Whereabouts in the world are you right now?

New York New York. I was born and raised in Staten Island and then I moved to Manhattan when I was 24 and I've been here ever since.

How did you discover music growing up?

I grew up in a party house! I was recently looking at old photos and there's a picture of a backyard party with a DJ setting up in the background. So my parents can never complain about what I do because it's obviously been there since the beginning. That's why I love a party that has that family vibe. When I discovered Danny Tenaglia back at his residency at Vinyl, it shows why residencies are so important because it builds that family atmosphere, when you have the same group of people that come every time. You would have one DJ and you saw that same DJ every week and it didn't

matter. It just felt like home, like you're in your grandma's basement and it's a family affair.

A residency lets the DJ trust their own instincts a lot more because they have an audience that can get familiar with what they are trying to achieve.

They have a connection with the audience. They know how they're going to react to it and, for me, it's a little bit more comfortable to play something new or be a little bit more daring because you know you have an audience that's more accepting of it.

You mentioned Vinyl and Danny Tenaglia, tell us about the influence that event had on you.

I went to Vinyl one night and that's when it became about the music. Everything just completely engulfed me. When I was going regularly, I started to realise that the same people were going every week, everybody's on the same wavelength and you hug every-

body as soon as you walk in. I got to a point where they just saw my face and they just let me walk in the door, that's how it was. Even on the last night, Danny closed it with a set that was twenty-seven hours straight! I was there from the very beginning to the very end. Mind you, I do not do drugs, I just had coffee. At the end of it I was fine and then I saw the security guard Nadia crying and I started crying, realising that we'll probably never experience something like that again, it was like our little Paradise Garage. That little community of people, we learned so much from the music to the atmosphere, it's like everything a club should be was in that place. The spirit, the energy, the people, all of the dots connected and it's so rare to have that - and I do miss it!

Was it this that inspired you to be a DJ in your own right?

Around 2003, I started meeting people that were DJs, I started collecting vinyl, and they would teach me about the ins and outs of the records. Then I practiced more, and I worked up the nerve to do my first gig in this little lounge in 2004. From then on it's been constantly growing, taking that next step.

How would you describe your sound?

I still love that dark kinda sexy progressive style that Danny was playing, but they don't really make that kinda music anymore. For me, my personal forte is chunky, groovy, housey and garagey.

What was it like when you eventually got to play alongside your hero Danny Tenaglia?

Nerve wracking! It was actually one of his biggest nights, his famous Halloween party called Boo Yourself at club Output in Brooklyn in 2014. It was a completely packed house, the walls were sweating it was so hot in there, it was wall to wall people. I played from ten until two and of course I brought some records and as he walks in the vinyl skips! But the crowd cheered because I guess they don't hear that stuff anymore. I kept it together and I tried not to acknowledge the fact that he's behind me and it turned out really great. I'm glad he was happy with it the next day.

You've also set up and run your own night Dancing Room Only. Tell us about that.

We call it Dancing Room Only because we don't want you there with your phones out, staring at the DJ. You just come and dance, that's all I want. Have a good time, connect with each other, don't connect with your phone, don't look at me or whoever's playing, just turn around. We had a good thing going on at House of X in Manhattan, but unfortunately in July they called me and said that they were gonna have to close. It broke my heart a little bit because it was one of those places where the sound was great, the location was great, they had wooden floors, which is also another thing that's missing from clubs today. So unfortunately, we're between venues right now, because it has to have all of the dots - the right location, the wood floors, a good sound system and the room itself has to have a feeling, an energy to it.

It's 2023, what's exciting you about house music in New York right now?

I hear there are some new venues opening in Manhattan, so that's exciting. Around here there are a lot of empty storefronts and it's a little desolate at the moment, so I'm hoping somebody answers my call and opens up some new spaces.

What have you got coming up outside of New York?

Travelling is fun, but it's not all it's cracked up to be, it's tiring and then you're playing for a room full of strangers most times, whereas I like seeing those familiar faces, I like that family environment. Travelling does have its rewards, but there's no place like my New York for me.