



HIGHGRADE RECORDS

When we look back at the history of Highgrade, and look towards the future of the label, we have put special emphasis on one key statement: "We will continue to produce music on vinyl until the end of its existence." This almost provocative and affectionate commitment to vinyl is typical of a Berlin label who knows where it comes from, and aims to act with passion and commitment in every instance. Highgrade is one of the labels that has built the musical soul of Berlin, and the city would not be the same without it.

But back to the beginning. As if prompted by the "millennium bug", Tom Clark decides to start his own record label. The commercialization of Techno, with the mass marketing of the Love Parade and major label exploitation had reached a depressing new low. Tom describes these as the darkest days for House and Techno music. At the same time, many artists were searching for a new and better platform to release their music in Berlin. Tom Clark's "livingroom" label had always been more about passion than being a well structured and carefully organized business operation, and in many ways this served the label perfectly. Today, Tom sees part of the purpose of Highgrade to act as a driving force behind the reinvention of the Berlin Techno scene.

Tom Clark signed the first wave of Highgrade artists, Sebo K, James Flavour und Guido Schneider from the ranks of his friends and fellow DJs in the ever expanding Berlin club scene. Todd Bodine, Jens Bond, Dub Taylor and Daniel Dreier formed the second generation of artists to join the Highgrade family.

There have always been important to discover new artist, like Format:B and Heinrichs & Hirtenfellner. The first goal: The sound must first survive the bar, club and dancefloor test. The spectrum ranges from deep House and minimal fill techno. "We don't release music that armchair philosophers can chill out on the sofa with, our records have to work in the club", says R & R man Todd Bodine. With

Todd and label manager Mariana Luzardo, Tom Clark has found the perfect partners with which to push the label forward. Highgrade has also moved out of the living room and into a slick new office in Berlin's Friedrichshain. Needless to say the family atmosphere still remains.

The voluminous output from the label is testament to the highly talented group of artists in the Highgrade stable. Every month the label puts out one vinyl and one digital release, and every year Highgrade takes on at least two new artists. The best form of defence is attack. In times where other labels are reducing output and going digital only, Highgrade continues to release electronic dance music of the highest quality and dancefloor efficiency. This produces a wide range of releases that are not about genre definitions, but are chosen for their musical impact and individuality. In Germany and worldwide, label parties and club nights define the label sound and push the artists creative skills behind the turntables and in front of the crowd. Thus the label always stays fresh and surprising and acts as a major contributor to the sound of the city.

Especially in the ongoing development of the digital market, the label relies on its independent character. We focus on a commitment which offers Highgrade artists a complete package. "We want to show that classical label representation and artist management are still required", says Mariana. The in-house booking agency works in close collaboration with the artists, providing both gig support and guidance in their artistic development.

A black and white portrait of Tom Clark, a man with dark hair and a slight beard, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The name 'tom clark' is written in a large, white, lowercase, sans-serif font across the bottom of the image.

tom clark

Tom Clark is an integral part of the electronic music scene in Berlin, a city world renowned for its cutting edge musical output. His label Highgrade Records has helped define a fresh new sound for the city and his own productions and DJ sets have blown up dancefloors worldwide for well over a decade.

An insatiable passion for music was ignited at an early age, with Tom spending any of his spare cash on a wide range of music. For as long as he can remember he has been playing his record collection to friends. Using two tape recorders and a lone turntable he mixed up a fusion of hip hop, rock and disco at his school parties. Black music was to be a defining influence as were the jacking beats of Chicago house and the soulful strains of Detroit techno. A progression to clubs followed with Tom and a group of friends holding their own night every Tuesday. It was there where Tom was discovered as a DJ and was asked to spin at the many allnightparties being held in the city.

There his reputation grew with clubbers often missing the main event in order to be fresh for his sets. Residencies at the infamous clubs E-Werk and Tresor followed where Tom supported the world's elite of house and techno artists. At the moment he is playing regular at the Panoramabar/ Berghain, Watergate and Arena Club in Berlin.

His hectic DJ schedule has had him playing in almost every European country including several tours of Australia and South America, rocking venues as diverse as small intimate clubs to large open air festivals. His sets build gradually in intensity, encompassing a wide range of moods and sounds that showcase his innate sense of dancefloor dynamics. His music style varies between deep minimal tech/house, detroit techno, and back to house.

Production of electronic music was a natural progression and in 1997 he co-founded Gold Plate Music, a highly influential addition to the city's label scene. In 2000 Tom went his own way and initiated Highgrade Records. It was kicked off in response to the perception that the quality of house music had been in gradual decline with the ambitious charter of taking the music to