

# Alataj interviews Ellen Allien



By *Maria Angélica Parmigiani*

Making an introduction to an interview like this seems to be something really challenging, as well as thinking about the questions, but it couldn't be different, since we're talking about **Ellen Allien**. If we could list artists of the worldwide scene who are outside the curve and at the same time pioneers in their activities, surely the name of this woman would be at the top of the list.

This “not-so-terrestrial” character was always ahead of her time and if almost 30 years ago the world was an inhospitable place for a woman to be a DJ and producer, this Techno pioneer didn't even blink. Typical German in the good “heady” style of being, an adjective used to refer to those people who are tough, she is just like that, read her answers. Direct and straight, obstinate and disruptive, she is multi-task and multi-skills with an endless thirst for music and art.

Her devotion to Techno all along has made her a Berlin-style symbol for the world. Her music portfolio is admirable, but what surprises the most is her inexhaustible source of creativity to create. Proof of this, it is her last album [AurAA](#), released shortly after [Alientronic](#), in 2019. Yes, it is Berlin Techno, but don't underestimate Ellen Allien, as we already said here: she knows how to take the old, the new and the different to deliver something that always surprises in some way.



In addition to the sonic legacy that reverberates across the world between generations, she founded her own record label, **BPitch**, with a sharp curation and a creative bias that matches music with visuals in different approaches, becoming a reference in the world market. She still found the time and energy to get involved with another label, fashion and other music projects, not to mention her countless gigs around the globe, before this pandemic break.

Without a doubt, it is another fruit that Berlin brought to the world through the political, social and cultural metamorphosis that broke out when that wall came to the ground. She may not really be out of this world, but she couldn't have sprung up in a more compatible place. But

honestly, without further ado here, it's time to make room for this long-awaited interview. Enjoy it!



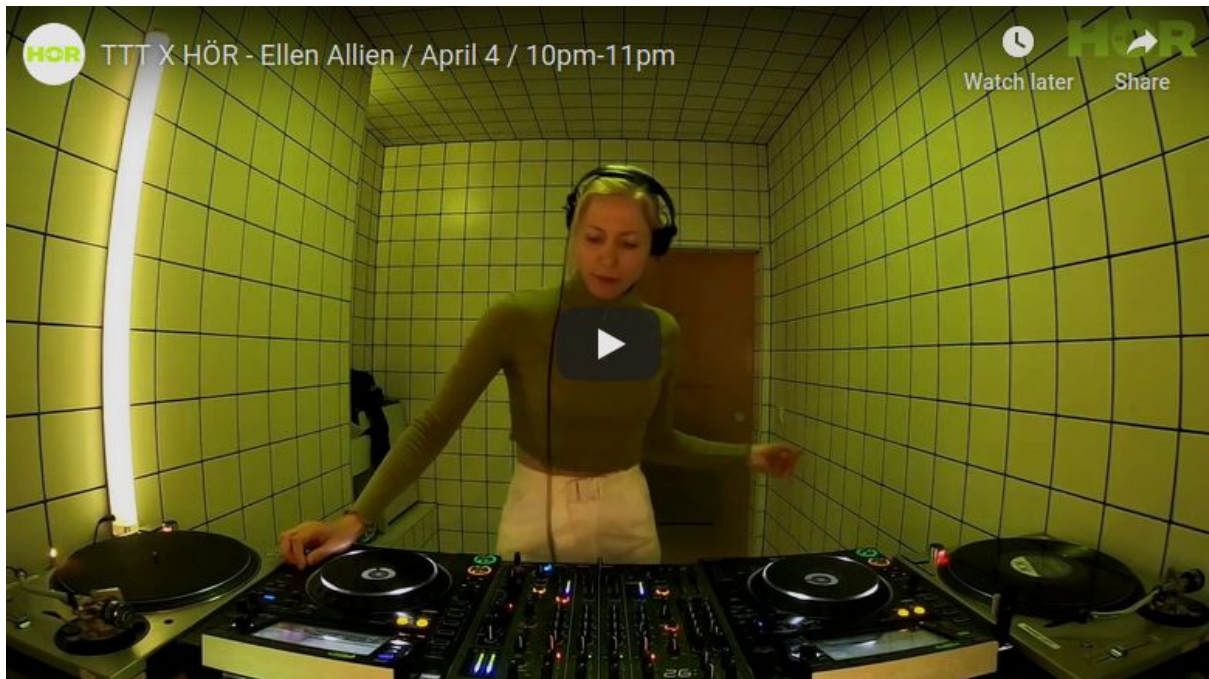
**Alataj:** Ellen, what an honor! How are you? Thank you for the opportunity. You have a consolidated and dynamic career with several developments: art, music, fashion, the phonographic market, behavior... you are unstoppable. This energy is clearly part of your essence. We have to ask about your past: how did it all start? Your life in Berlin, parties, what connected you to electronic music...

**Ellen:** Hi! Nice to meet you! I am in Berlin now, living my Berlin dream. Music has always been my passion. When the wall came down in Berlin, the club scene was the meeting point where East and West came together. Techno was the soundtrack of the new Berlin and still is. This is also where I developed a strong connection to electronic music. I started my first music label in 1994 and 'bpitch' in 1999 which is still one of the most relevant techno labels. In 2018 I founded another new label called 'UFO inc' for raw techno sounds. Over the years, we have organized parties in different clubs and warehouses ourselves. Two years ago, we have found a new home with the Berlin club 'Griessmuehle' where we do our 'We Are Not Alone' parties - a 36 hours party non-stop. It's an amazing underground techno club. Unfortunately, they had to close at the beginning of the year but have now found a new home. Hopefully we can all dance together again very soon.

**You are addicted to music, as you have said in many interviews. We know that the name Kraftwerk is on your list and living in Berlin we end up thinking about Techno culture and how it shaped you. Who else inspired you on this journey? Any mentors or experiences to remember? What do you think the culture of electronic music in Berlin has to say to the rest of the world?**

Music is my way to let go and dream. I love dancing to feel my body stronger, especially on techno music but I love concerts too. Kraftwerk and the 'neue deutsche welle' shaped me, e.g. bands like 'Fehlfarben', 'Ideal' and 'Daf'. In techno Jeff Mills, Derrick May and Richie

Hawtin. They played in the same club I played - Tresor Berlin. There, I saw them mixing. Also 'future sound of london', 'warp records' and 'space teddy records' had an influence on me. at 'tresor' and 'planet' berlin, I danced for the first time to techno music. At first, it felt not so smooth because it was just so fast to move my body to the beat. After a while, I just closed my eyes and danced many hours. I went to techno clubs because I felt better as a woman. No stupid guys trying to hit on me up in a rude way or touching me. At techno clubs, I met the right people I wanted to hang out with. It's still like this! Berlin's club scene is where everyone comes together. This is where friendships, relationships, ideas and business are born. It doesn't matter how old you are, what skin colour you have or sexual orientation.



**We have many readers involved with electronic music here and when we have the opportunity to interview an artist with a career as renowned as yours we need to fall into cliches like: what advice would you give to the artists from the new generation?**

Find your own sound and live your dreams. We need dreams and if you are an artist find the way how you can create and explore your fantasies. Activate them as deep as you can. It takes time to learn technical stuff but after a while, it's just a pleasure to create either with software or hardware.

**Still about "new generation": what do you miss from the past in the universe of electronic music, be it technical stuff, music, genres or behaviors? After all, you lived through the meteoric Love Parade and that was really unique, since the market was completely different, as well as the technology. What is the most fascinating thing about current times?**

For me it's a big life journey between music and I. I love to look back or living in the future or in the here and now. For producing, I am using old synth and new modular systems or new plugins and effects. I love that it's possible to play techno all over the world. There are many good and outstanding promoters on a very high level with amazing productions. Music has the power to take me far away. Covid-19 stopped everything, so I started my balcony session on Instagram live from my home and other live streamings just to keep the music

alive and to share vibes with the people. Music can be played everywhere. Today I confirmed a dj set at a demonstration in Berlin to save the party and event industry.

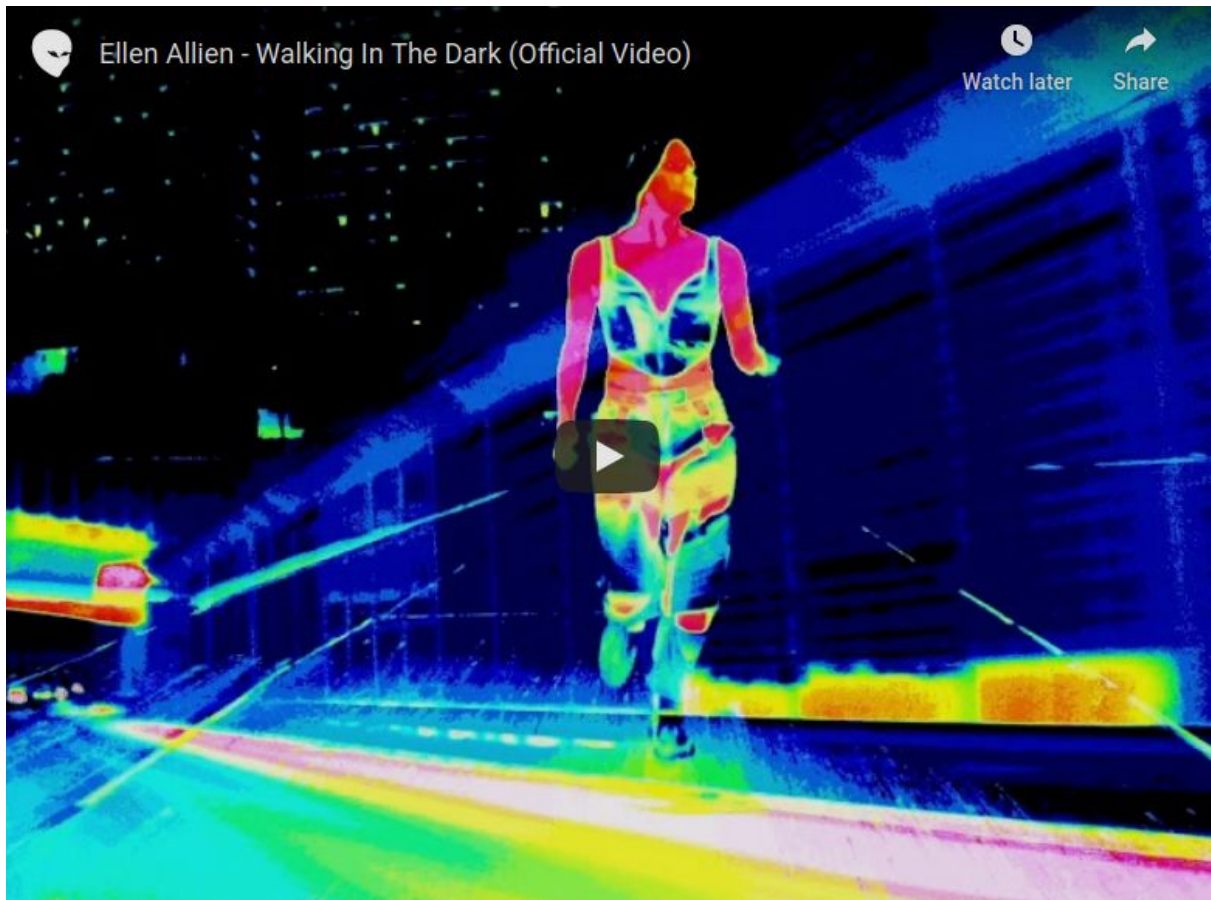


**We women know that our energy to conquer must always be more intense. We are still very underestimated in the market. You started at a time when the industry was much more masculine than today, especially for Techno, being one of the pioneers in the scene. How was that trajectory for you as a woman?**

The most important thing for me was to connect with people — doing music and playing the music I love. My focus is always the music. Our team at 'bpitch' was always mixed between women, men and gays. For me, it's important to work with different energies. It's the same in the Berlin nightlife. I grew up with gays, lesbians, straight people searching for something different. Trying to build up their own island in Berlin and trying to create things. I don't focus on people who can't deal with women...

**Watching your music videos and following your work with fashion we noticed that you always try to mix these two worlds. You even put this approach in your label's projects, BPitch Control, which takes special care of artistic curation. What are the differentials that you seek to put in your label? How do you try to bring music to the fashion world?**

I'm looking for talented artists that share the same lifestyle. My focus is not on fashion — it's more a real life style that we share. We are in Berlin with its huge club culture. After the corona lockdown some events are slowly opening here again, seated or open airs. The infection numbers are climbing a bit up at the moment. I don't know when they will close again. We are trying to find the right designs that speak and spread our vision and thoughts. In video art we are searching for the right picture language which brings cultures together and shows a freedom we are looking for.



**So many years of career and a lot of time on international gigs, we can't help but wonder how you can reconcile everything. After all, it has been hours of flights, connections, hotels, people... How do you seek balancing and keeping your mind and body healthy without being overwhelmed?**

My addiction and passion moves me. I don't mind the travels. Playing and traveling are my hobbies and the way I wanna create my life. Building up an energy with the music in different locations is just so much pleasure. To hear a mono bassline in a new room and playing with the sounds and lights. It's just joy to watch the people on the dance floor and build a connection with them. The music is my drug. Music is my life.

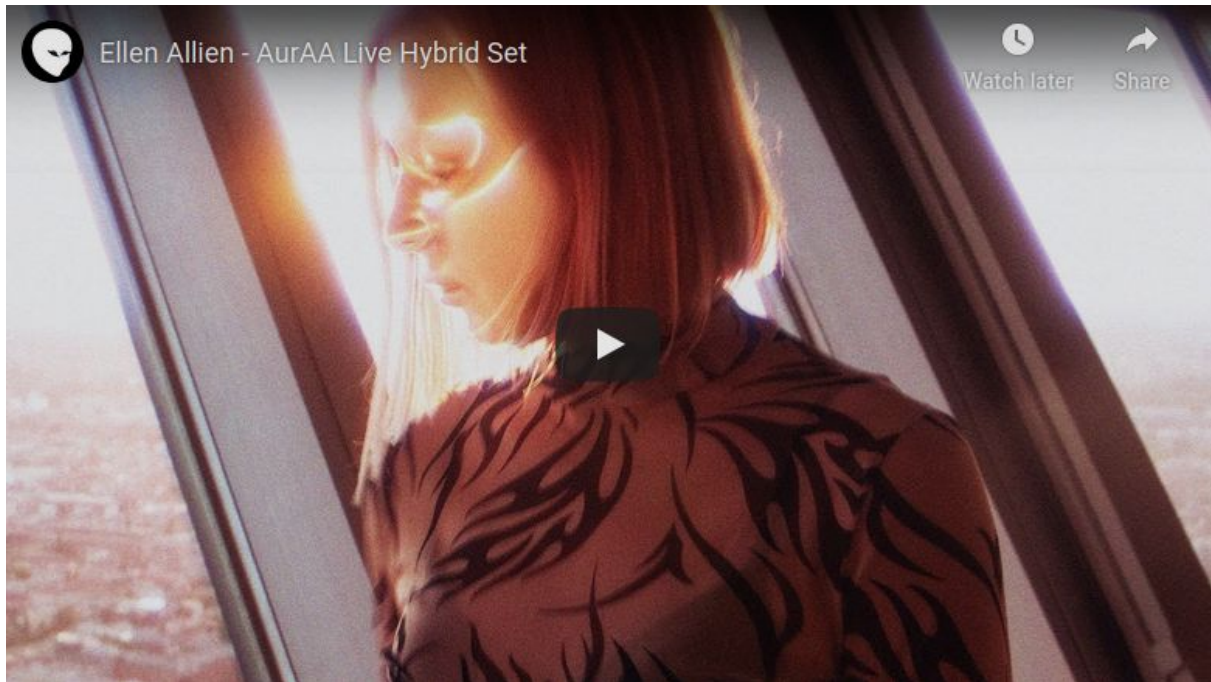
**Brazil has a strong appreciation for Techno, nowadays we have an expressive number of collectives in different parts of the map dedicating themselves entirely to the underground culture. You collect countless gigs on Brazilian soil and certainly have a lot of fans here. How do you see the Brazilian scene and what is our differentials when you look outside? Any artist or movement you admire?**

Yes, I've been playing in Brazil for many years. The club culture is strong and great fun! Big gay scene and many musicians. I like artists like Renato Cohen, Cashu, Amanda Mussi, Davis Genuino, Renato Ratier and Adnan Sharif.

**We are going through an almost unprecedented but very atypical global phase. Apparently there is an order to all of us reviewing our habits and thoughts. While we are in that limbo, music has been one of the anxiolytic sources to save people at home. It is a powerful source of connection, isn't it? How do you see your role in this**

**place? What are you trying to convey and how has your creative process been going through this?**

Hard core times indeed! It makes me very creative and keeps me searching for sharing vibes every day. I'm trying to find ways to share music that we can fly and do not feel alone with the pain. I just released my new album 'AurAA', and did a lot of live streamings and podcasts! I just performed my first hybrid live set on the Berlin TV Tower. You can find the video on my youtube or facebook. If also collected music from different artists worldwide which we will release soon under the name 'We Are Not Alone'.



**To finish, a personal question. What does music represent in your life?**

It's my life — music is my life! 🛸

**The music connects.**