

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The Hidden Artists of 'EDM'

10:30 am ET
May 31, 2014

By AMANDA LILLY



DJ Destructo performs at 'EDC' New York (Tavits Photography)

Vegas hotspot **Drai**.

What enables him to this? As the CEO of **V Squared Labs** (VSL), Virkhaus is a leading director and "VJ" in the electronic music and visual art scene. "VJing," in its simplest terms, is performing with visuals. An artist will take video clips, animated graphics and other illustrations, and layer them together in a musical way. It's the manipulation of patterns in a way that makes sense with the pace of the music.

"You don't VJ in a vacuum; it's a reactive art form," explained Jonathan Bernbaum, a VJ with VSL who recently programmed **DJ Destructo's show at 'Electric Daisy Carnival' New York**. "The skill becomes about being ready for anything and being able to anticipate it."

For big events like EDC, Virkhaus and VSL often work closely with **Steve Lieberman**, who owns SJ Lighting and is the production and lighting designer for **Insomniac Events** and **Ultra Music Festival**. Lieberman and his team produce the designs, and then VSL comes in and customizes the visuals to that canvas.

Vello Virkhaus has worked with such artists from **Korn** to the **Red Hot Chili Peppers** to some of the biggest names in electronic music, like **Krewella**, **Dillon Francis** and **Skrillex**. He plays a key role in mapping out the production at major music festivals, such as **Coachella** and **Electric Daisy Carnival**, and recently helped design the visual setup for new

"Dillon is a great example of somebody who's more of an artist than just a DJ. He has this unique sensibility and style and humor, and what we did with the Gary was to really interpret his style into something that worked for him," said Virkhaus. "He had enough identity to do that."

However, while there is a growing awareness of such visual elements

among DJs and promoters, the audience has a lot of catching up to do. Promoters generally do not advertise VJs or production designers because they're supposed to be "off the record." "They want our art to be their brand," said Virkhaus.

Virkhaus said it's frustrating because he believes it would actually help expand the audience for electronic music if people knew more about the visual art going on. "Everybody wants to see the spectacle," he said.



Dillon Francis performs at the 2014 Valley Music and Arts Festival (Rukes.com)