Playing and composing electronic music, yes, but on what?

You need equipment to compose, to play, and to broadcast.

With electronic music, the electronics are just as important to the style of music as the composition itself. Electronic music is the genre that has increased the interaction between music and technology to an enormous extent. The race for progress and more advanced equipment is never-ending. The only limits are often financial ones.

Composing

Composing often starts on a basic computer, laptop or desktop - Mac or PC. It's all about practicality and how much you can afford. As your finances improve and you develop your own style, you will certainly want to improve your hardware set-up.

A computer is now a basic requirement for any set up. There are three types of approach:

1. Some people do everything on the computer, using virtual effects and synthesizers.
2. Others prefer to use a control panel connected to their computer, with interfaces such as Native Instrument and Ableton
3. More traditional musicians prefers to use stand-alone equipment and synthesizers.

These three approaches can also be combined in different proportions.

Electronic music, however, originally started with synthesizers and bass lines. Legendary drum machines and synthesizers absolutely determined the sound of certain electronic styles.

The TR 808 and TR 909 drum machines created in the 1980s by Japanese manufacturer Roland are considered essential constituents of techno and house sounds. The Manchester group 808 State was named after the TR 808.

Also from Roland, the SH101 synthesizer is one of the most famous bass synths in electronic music, along with the Odyssey Arp and the Pro One from Sequential Circuits.

On top of this, there's a whole range of other effects machines and pedals for distortion, reverb, echo, etc. It's a consuming passion for those who succumb to it.

Playing

All the vintage gems are rare and expensive nowadays. But it is possible to simulate them using software. Most musicians use the Live software from Ableton, which has revolutionised electronic music. Designed in the 1990s and released in 2001, it revolutionised the world of electronic music. A combination of a workstation and

sampler, it allows you to create live samples, play them and add lots of different effects. It has made it possible to create electronic music spontaneously and given rise to the concept of live electronic music, which has been added to the traditional DJ set.

The DJ set nevertheless still forms the basis of electronic music - the king of mixing and remixing. The technology has evolved, and vinyl turntables are now set up next to new controllers in the form of CD players, USB sticks, Ableton software or Traktor software, produced by a competitor of Ableton - Native Instruments. Ownership of one of these pieces of software and a laptop is the essential equipment for mixing all over the world, without question. Nowadays, clubs are often equipped with CD-USB decks and mixing desks as standard, often from leading Japanese manufacturer Pioneer (its CDJ 1000 or 2000 CD players and its DJM 800 or 900 mixers are very common in clubs) or sometimes American company, Rane.

Experience of playing in clubs will enable you to master your equipment and adapt it to these standard configurations.

Buy or rent?

The main criterion for answering this question is budget. If you don't have the money to buy it, you can rent it from "backliners", ie backline providers, anywhere in France. Some equipment may be included in your rider, which you or your agent can negotiate with the club or festival where you are performing. This is quite common and it's much easier than transporting everything yourself.

Travelling

Even though equipment has become smaller and more standardised, when it comes down to basics you only need a USB flash drive to play music through a club's sound system. However, to personalise your sound, you may still want your own set-up, with instruments and controllers.

If you're lucky enough to be asked to play all over the country or around the world, however, you will have to take it all with you. Don't forget when you're buying your equipment - bags and flight cases are bulky and heavy. Instruments are fragile too, so it's risky to check them in as luggage when you fly. It's better to take them on as cabin luggage.

Anyone who still plays vinyl will know the difficulties and risks involved with transportation, even through vinyl constitutes the appeal of the genre.

Finding equipment

MORE INFORMATION:

Brands

- Ableton
- Korg
- Native Instrument
- Pioneer
- Roland

Retail outlets

- Sonovente
- Woodbrass