For close to 15 years, Tijana T has been an key part of Serbia’s music scene. Now a full time DJ, Tijana T is overtaking on the inside fast lane to global stardom. Her mastery of an acid-dominant techno style with elements of breakbeat, house, electro and synth-rock has turned ears all across the globe. This lethal dancefloor style has propelled her to become one of the busiest and most durable DJs on the tour circuit. Over 150 shows in over 60 countries in six continents since the start of 2017 tells its own story. Spinning coldwave at dawn in Antarctica? Surely just around the corner.

Unlike other breakthroughs in the game, Tijana T has put in the hard hours. As this burst of recent activity shows, she was completely ready to make the leap to break out of Belgrade when the time came. Now, she does it all. Whether opening or closing, on Ibizan terraces or in smokey basements, soundtracking the sunrise for a few hundred or headlining festival stages to tens of thousands, the details are immaterial. What happens when she plays is empathy with the audience, selecting music to expand their hunger, as well as satisfy their pleasure-centre core. This is why everyone from Berghain to The Bunker NYC, and Beats In Space to Boiler Room have called upon Tijana T lately. On top of that, global titans Dystopian, Afterlife and EXIT Festival have welcomed her into their family of A-tier residents.

Belgrade is where the artist born Tijana Todorovic first made her name, moving from heavy presence on local TV and radio to marathon slots across town, specifically the world-renowned Drugstore and Klub 20/44. Now the tables have turned: in the late 2010s, she is making Belgrade’s name. Tijana T has become a global ambassador for the city, tirelessly exporting its culture. As her reputation has travelled, so has she. Negative preconceptions about Serbia are falling, replaced by the squelch of a 303, a touch of class behind the booth, and more and more people admiring this fiercely determined talent.

For Todorovic, the branches of her story so far stem from the same root: to hunt down killer music of all stripes, then creatively package and export it to the wider public, with flair and honesty. A former student of philosophy, her move toward music as more than a passion coincided with extreme turbulence in Serbia throughout the 1990s. The idealism of ‘90s rave culture met the cold reality of regional collapse. Records and money were in short supply, and parties she would attend took place in the afternoon before NATO bombs fell. Todorovic learned to forge her own path, an ability she holds to this day – to thrive when the odds are heavily stacked the other way.

The specifics of Todorovic’s craft have evolved over the years. In the early 2000s she was a regular face and voice in Serbian media. State broadcaster Studio B, underground radio station B92, and the TV wing of the enormous EXIT Festival all counted her as a host & all-round musical brainbox. Her intrepid devotion fed into written journalism too, with columns and interviews continuing until the mid-2010s when DJing truly took off. Her name as Tijana T initially began to travel outside of Belgrade in the mid ‘00s, most notably through a collaboration with Abe Duque, with whom she toured extensively across Europe. Their pairing was considered the standout live act of Ibiza’s 2006 season. It was to be only the beginning for her journey as a performer, but was instructive for what was to follow.

As Serbian society and its media formalised – and became more formulaic – Tijana T was on the move. She transmitted her curatorial skill to the decks, starting at low-key parties, then quickly moving up into residency positions. Marathon sessions in the booths of Belgrade’s twin treasures, Klub 20/44 and Drugstore (alongside now-shuttered The Tube), truly began to light the fuse on the tinderbox. Word quickly got round; it has yet to stop.

Tijana T’s sound as a DJ has a variety of shades. A rogue streak began at a young age with family exposure to EBM, synths and left-field electronics. That carried through to being booted off state TV for pushing the limits of her eclectic curated VJ show a little too hard (although a public-sector dismissal over the band Add N To X is a pretty tremendous badge of honour). To this day, eclecticism is the word. Techno is predominant: sometimes sharp and spiky jack attacks flecked with breakbeat shrapnel, other times dubby and warm. Yet Tijana T’s range goes far beyond the techno sphere: you’ll hear electro, house, IDM, wave, rave, vocal cuts, and the shimmy of pop when the mood calls for it.

The most common weapon of all wielded on dancefloors is the TB-303. Her defining imprint is the froth and gurgle of acid, deployed not as a cudgel of brute force but something malleable. Tijana T has mastered it as a quality that can act as a foil, or lead from the front. You’ll find it writhing around underneath a clammy disco cut, wrapped around a tribal stomper, or memorably melted down into Björk and Radiohead classics, which occurred in 2017 as showstopper finales at Dekmantel Festival and on Boiler Room.

Alongside those two, she has been making appearances on a variety of platforms. Recent entries have cropped up in the fêted mix series of Resident Advisor, Beats In Space, XLR8R, Red Light Radio and even The Guardian, as well as a regular Rinse FM show as of 2018. These mixes have helped establish her name without the necessity of releases to merely keep in the conversation. Recent remixes for Spencer Parker and original material for Dystopian have bubbled up when the inspiration takes, but prefers to let her DJing do the majority of talking.

It’s clearly a winning strategy: 2017-18 saw shows in China, India, Korea, Japan, plus all across Central and South America. Far-flung locations sit alongside appearances at A-tier clubs such as Bassiani, Tresor, Fabric, ARMA17, Panoramabar, Kaiku, The Block, The Bunker, Concrete, and Space Ibiza, as well as festivals such as Sonus, Magnetic Fields, Piknic Electronic, Nuits Sonores, Sonar, DGTL and more. Though an individualist at heart, she is also proudly ensconced within several musical families, the aforementioned Afterlife, EXIT and Dystopian.

The next chapter now beckons, as her name rises steadily through the font sizes of posters and up toward the top. Adept and adaptable, there is seemingly no diverting the course of destiny for Belgrade’s contemporary shining light. But what drives Tijana T to put herself through such an eye-watering schedule? The desire to outfox assumptions, that’s one. To reshape her narrative, that’s another. And now, as the 2020s loom, to maintain this hard-earned status as a standout and seriously talented DJ. Maybe Antarctica isn’t so far after all.