

# ASIA AND THE COMMONS

## MOSHANG (A.K.A. JEAN MARAIS) & ASIAN VARIATIONS

The CC-licensed Asian Variations album is a collection of 14 remixes produced by MoShang in his Chinese Chill style of downtempo electronica, melding deeply laid-back beats with Chinese traditional instruments.

MoShang:  
<http://moshang.net>  
Asian Variations:  
<http://asianvariations.com>

Licence: Creative Commons Music  
Sharing Licence (i.e., Creative  
Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-  
NoDerivativeWorks 2.0 Generic Licence)

Media: Sound  
Location: Taiwan



### OVERVIEW

MoShang is the Chinese moniker of Jean Marais, who relocated from South Africa to Taichung, Taiwan, in 2003. MoShang calls himself a sound jeweller. He collects rough audio diamonds from the streets of Taiwan (be they overheard conversations, street-ads blared from the ubiquitous blue-trucks, street processions or funeral chants) and fuses them with traditional Chinese instruments and laid-back beats to create a unique blend of downtempo electronica he likes to call Chinese Chill. His first album as MoShang, *Made in Taiwan*, was released on his Onse Plate (Afrikaans for 'Our Records') imprint in 2004. His second, *Chill Dynasty*, followed in 2006.

### LICENCE USAGE

His third album, *Asian Variations*, is a collection of remixes and is released in 2007. The entire album is made available under a Creative Commons Music Sharing Licence. Some of these remixes were solicited by the original artists, two were done for remix competitions, and in some cases MoShang approached artists directly requesting permission to remix their works. The artists represented on the album are literally from all over the globe: the USA (Fort Minor, Toao, Lovespirals, Brad Reason), Taiwan (Kou Chou Ching, Chang Jui-chuan, Viba, André van Rensburg, MoShang), South Africa (Gordon's Suitcase), Japan (Akihiko Matsumoto & Chage), Italy (Tafubar),

and Slovenia (PureH). For the most part the collaboration was via the web. With the exception of Fort Minor and J-pop star, Chage, none of the artists are signed to major labels.

## MOTIVATIONS

Tyng-Ruey Chuang from Creative Commons Taiwan conducted by e-mail the following interview with MoShang on January 2, 2008, in which he expressed his views.

CC TAIWAN: Could you describe how you work? In particular, how do you find materials and collaborators, and how do you approach them? How is *Asian Variations* produced?

MOSHANG: My current production style is based mostly on experimenting. Rather than composing in the traditional sense of the word, I'll build up a track in sections, working almost exclusively with music production software on the PC, intuitively and by ear. The musical elements I use come from a variety of sources; field recordings I make with a portable sound recorder in my environment, commercial and open-source loop and sample libraries and elements I create in the studio. When I'm looking for a particular element to use that I can't record myself, I'll search the web for it. Similarly, I've met most of my recent collaborators on the web through music upload sites like SoundClick ([www.soundclick.com](http://www.soundclick.com)), social networking sites (predominantly MySpace) and the Second Life online world.

Over the last three years or so, most of my collaborations have been in the form of remixes. In many cases these remixes would be requested by artists who had been exposed to my music through the online means mentioned above. At the beginning of 2007, I discovered that by doing these occasional remixes in between working on my own music, I had gathered just about enough material for a full-length remix album. I decided to just keep going and by September 2007 I had fourteen remixes which I released together as the *Asian Variations* album.

CC TAIWAN: Could you comment on the current music environment (business, creativity, tools, collaboration, etc.) from the point-of-view of independent creators/producers?

MOSHANG: The tools for creating music have never been better, cheaper or more freely available than now. As a result there has been a huge increase in the amount of artists/producers creating music independently.

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*“In the case of the Asian Variations album, [we] stood to gain much more from the exposure than we did from making it available commercially. Choosing a CC Music Sharing Licence gave the listening public a clear mandate to download and share the album, ... allowed us to retain the right to possibly license the music for commercial use at a later stage. Furthermore, since I’d made use of CC licensed material in the past, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to give something back to the CC community”*

– MoShang

Through the Internet, these producers have received new ways to meet and collaborate, but also the tools to make their music public, whether as free downloads or as commercial products.

The biggest challenge facing [artists] remains finding and cultivating their audience and finding creative ways to draw attention to their music — with so much music out there, it’s all too easy to get lost in the crowd. It’s no secret that artists are often terrible at marketing their own music, and have little or no business acumen. With the major labels in decline, the time is ripe for a new business model to emerge that will hopefully be more inclusive of independent artists whilst being more equitable to the artists and music-buying public alike.

CC TAIWAN: What is your view of public licensing (such as CC licensing) of music/sound? Is public licensing essential to your work? Could you comment on copyrights issues, for example on its effect on your work?

MOSHANG: In the current musical landscape it is almost expected of artists to have some presence on the web. When I first started uploading music to the web about ten years ago, I did so with very little knowledge about what impact doing so had on my copyright and was hesitant to make anything more than a small sampling available for this reason. I first became aware of CC licensing when SoundClick.com started offering it as an option for music uploaded to their site; it immediately struck me as a better way to go about making my music available.

In the case of the *Asian Variations* album, I thought that most of the artists on the album, myself included, stood to gain much more from the exposure than we did from making it available commercially. Choosing

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a CC Music Sharing Licence gave the listening public a clear mandate to download and share the album, made it available to the podcasting community which is increasingly important in bringing music to a niche audience, and also allowed us to retain the right to possibly license the music for commercial use at a later stage. Furthermore, since I'd made use of CC licensed material in the past, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to give something back to the CC community.

CC TAIWAN: Could you say a few words about your new works that are coming up?

MOSHANG: I'm currently working on a collaborative live performance in Second Life with Australian musician, Paul Cohen, living in Tokyo, Japan. In these performances we combine music that we play together from our separate locations with generative particle art that Paul created. I'll also soon begin mixing and mastering an album for the Italian producer, Tafubar, featured on the *Asian Variations* album. I'm hoping to start recording local traditional instrumentalists for a new album of my own soon after that.

Image: Photo used with permission of MoShang

