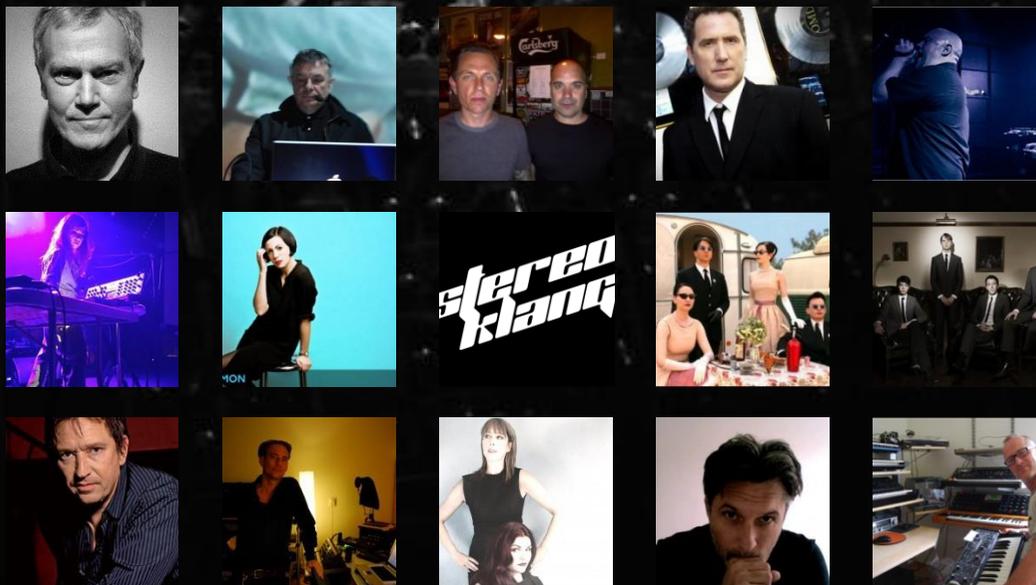


# ELECTRONIC POP & THE LOVE OF MACHINES

FEATURED STEREOKLANG INTERVIEWS WITH PIONEERING  
AND CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

WRITTEN AND EDITED BY OLA LARSÉN



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STEREOKLANG PRODUKTION, 2016

IN A NEAR FUTURE WHEN WE KNOW OF NO SEPARATION BETWEEN HUMANS AND MACHINES. WHEN HUMANS EXTEND THEIR  
MIND WITH NANOBOTS AND BECOMING SUPERHUMANS. WHAT KIND OF MUSIC WILL THEY MAKE?



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## CAPTAIN SPEAKING

Hearing tracks like “Das Model”, “Oxygene”, “Being boiled” and “My secret garden” kick-started a lifelong fascination for the sonic capabilities of synthesizers and how they also contributed to shape all of modern music going forward. Starting the Steelberry Clones blog and online magazine roughly a decade ago, and later seeing the blog grow in popularity, peaking at some 1500 daily readers, the opportunity came about to actually start interviewing some of these artists for real. Eddie Bengtsson of Swedish electro pop act PAGE was the first one out, soon followed by Covenant, John Foxx and others, and so the list grew longer and longer. As the Steelberry Clones blog and online magazine has now come to a closure, at least in its current shape and form, it is with quite an impressive list of electronic artists in its backlog. Of course there are still artists that we would have wanted to interview that never happened, as with Ryuichi Sakamoto (YMO), and Gary Numan, or as with Jean-Michel Jarre, which we got an interview with but the answers so bleak that they couldn't be used for an article.

Some are personal heroes and acknowledged electro pioneers, others are contemporary acts that has continued to build on the great legacy of synthesizer based music. Why some and not others? Easy answer; we gave ourselves the liberty to approach the ones we liked instead of being courted by the labels. We had the intention to ask some more profound and reflective questions – we wanted to learn more about the artists' music creative processes, what the electronic instruments they used meant to the creative process, their inspirational sources and hopefully contribute to the understanding of electronic music in general and of the artists in particular. We do not claim to really have accomplished this but at least we had a lot of fun in the process of trying to.

Millions of pages has already been written on the subject of electronic music, a term that has become so diluted today with 100s of different styles and genres and by the sheer fact that basically all contemporary music today is electronic, so for this reading we have left most of that out and kind of assumed this as given for the attended reader. However, some personal reflections on the evolution of synthesizer based music and electronica will be needed in order to tie the fourteen featured artists and bands together that are present here, as well as the ones not included because they exists only as Youtube interviews.

In the late 70s to early 80s it was quite easy to keep track of the different genres within synthesizer based music. We had the instrumental and ambient/symphonic guys like Vangelis and Jarre, the pop musicians like Depeche Mode, the early EBM troops headed up with DAF and Nitzer Ebb. Then there were the bands that during this time exchanged a lot of their traditional gear and went from rock bands to new wave, such as Japan. Today the electronic music scene is blurred and a mesh of influences, rhythms and means of expression, but in a sense one can say that the gross part of the more contemporary artists featured here, like Covenant, Emmon, Welle:Erdball and Mirrors, are walking in the footsteps of these pioneers.

Of course there were electronic music work even earlier than the ones mentioned above. Like the Wendy Carlos, Tomita, and the Kraut scene with Tangerine Dream. Then we have the British prog rock, fusion jazzers like Hancock, film music like Forbidden Planet by the couple Barron, the TV documentaries by the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, and not to forget the electro acoustic music from the academic scene and even the instrument builder pioneers before that like Theremin and Trautwein. However those would not really fit under the wider electronic pop music umbrella. Electronic music was in the air for you and me but it wasn't until the 70s that it made it into the charts.

Maybe Pop Corn by Hot Butter is one of the first electronic pop hits. At least it was the first vinyl in our record collection using only synthesizers.

All in all it has been a great privilege to do these interviews and some noteworthy things popped up here and there. Andy McCluskey let us know that machines were no means to an end, and quite happy to throw out all the synths in favor of an all computer based music production set up, or as Karl Bartos stated, as a rational why he seldom introduces new sonic variations - "there are so many sounds, I can't listen to all of them". It was also interesting to learn of John Foxx' endeavor into granular synthesis; "I've lately begun to use granular synthesis – it's really interesting, quite violent on occasion. It may even be the true non-imitative voice of digital technology –and I've been waiting for that for some time." Furthermore, when Steve Jansen came to Sweden and made an interview with us, one of the main reactions from our readers was the fact that they had never seen a picture of Steve with a guitar before. Steve also made some interesting remarks about the music scene back in the 80s: "pleasing the record label almost became a means to an end". Daniel B of Front 242 made similar remarks on the music industry of today, but Daniel also showed how they have turned modern; "The Animoog (synth app on iOS) is used for solos and noise – a superior touch thing and something that has revolutionized how we perform with music." It was also fun to learn that Assemblage 23 saw themselves as the "blue collar workers" of synth music and having DEVO as one of their main sources of inspiration. Finally, we also need to mention synth fashionista Tara Busch's nice remark on Gary Numan's song Cars when she heard for the first time on the radio; "I felt as abducted by aliens, never heard anything like it and I have always been revisiting it".

Finally we would like to thank all the artists who have taken their time to talk to us. Although digital booklet is nothing more than ones and zeros it at least feels that it will be a somewhat better and lasting means of preserving these interviews for anyone who would like to read them in the future.

Sincerely, Ola Larsén

Editor of the Steelberry Clones – Electronic music production online magazine and blog

STEREOKLANG PRODUKTION, © 2016

# *Nitzer Ebb*



## STEREOKLANG TALKS TO LEGENDARY EBM ACT NITZER EBB ON MUSIC, GEAR AND TODAY'S SYNTH SCENE

Nitzer Ebb needs no further introduction, but fact remains that Bon Harris and Douglas McCarthy with albums like, "That Total Age" and "Belief", in the late 1980s set the scene for EBM going forward, with their devotion to pounding bass rhythms. Having toured with Depeche Mode few doubt their impact on electronic music and after a break in the 1990s the band finally reunited and went on tour again in 2006. Last year the critically acclaimed album Industrial Complex came out and as of right now they are on a long European tour together with Die Krupps. As a special treat for fans both bands play jointly on stage and an exclusive mini album called Rhythm of the Machines can be obtained on site. Stereoklang met up with the band backstage and had a long chat about gear, the synth/EBM scene of today, the shift of label and how they still maintain an enthusiastic crowd everywhere they go.



**How has your new material been received and how did the collaboration with Die Krupps come about?**

Well it is not technically all that much new material, but it has been laid out to fit our tour and the collaboration we have with Die Krupps. But we are of course pleased with the response we have received so far and our fans seems to like it. The idea of collaboration with die Krupps

happened in November last year when we met each other in San Antonio, Texas. However we do have a long joint history together, so when Ralph contacted us in the studio with the idea of doing something jointly we were all for it.



**You are celebrating 30 years as a band next year, how do you work to continue excite existing and new fans?**

The most important thing is honesty and be 100% true to what you do. We work hard to produce shows that match the expectations of our fans, but we are also very demanding on ourselves to deliver quality over quantity. You need to show on stage that – You mean it! *The EBM scene is quite strong in North America, but here in Europe it is more of a niche scene, why is that?* We have seen that as well and it is probably

because of the time lag before, things that has already been reduced to niche scenes here in Europe, is getting popular in NA.

**How up to date are you on today's synth/EBM scene?**

Of course we come into contact with a lot of bands when we are on tour, as indicated we have been active in electronic music for 30 years. But in general it is not something that we devote so much time to these days. Personally, I (Don Harris) am more into classical music these days, like Stravinsky and Bartoch to name a few. And in a sense electronic music is today's equivalent to classical music. Electronic music is so primitive, all in the spirit of the sonic experience. Recently we have listened a lot to Stockhausen as well and we love the experimentation side of things, when Stockhausen was producing his music he did it with electronic instruments that not always were that stable – fascinating in a sense. *Are you experimenting yourselves?* Well for most parts that is why you tend to have side projects, in principal you need to give the audience what they want, but of course we are trying to fit in as much experimentation as we can.

**You changed from the classic label Mute to Major recently – how did this come about?**

It was a cause of time, we signed up with Mute to deliver five albums (which we did) and from that point we wanted to be more on our own. The role of the label has changed quite a lot over the years and to be frank most of the work of the label today is all about PR. The times when labels were pumping in money to the artists to produce new material and sponsor events are over. Bands are pretty much their own labels today. The role of the album has also been drastically reduced – it is more of merchandise today along with t-shirts, limited edition vinyls and DVDs. Touring is what keeps us alive. The album is a “need to have” to show progression and that there is something new to look forward to, when we go on stage. “The Rhythm of Machines” EP does the same.

### **Nitzer Ebb in the studio – work, gear and idea generation process**

Nitzer Ebb has a very collaborative approach to making music. Most of our songs actually emanates from improvisations, just as if we were a rock band. We don't want one person sitting behind the PC, we want to be more like a band. Normally we start simple with an electric drum kit, some synths and vocals, and then we will see what happens.



In the studio and also on stage we use a MalletKat (xylophone) as a main controller, having 3 octaves. Other frequently used stuff are the Nord Modular, a Cwejman S1 MK2, a MFB synth as well as Ableton Live for the writing process. Drum wise we use a Roland electronic drum set, paired with SPDS for triggering. Sometimes we are even going very

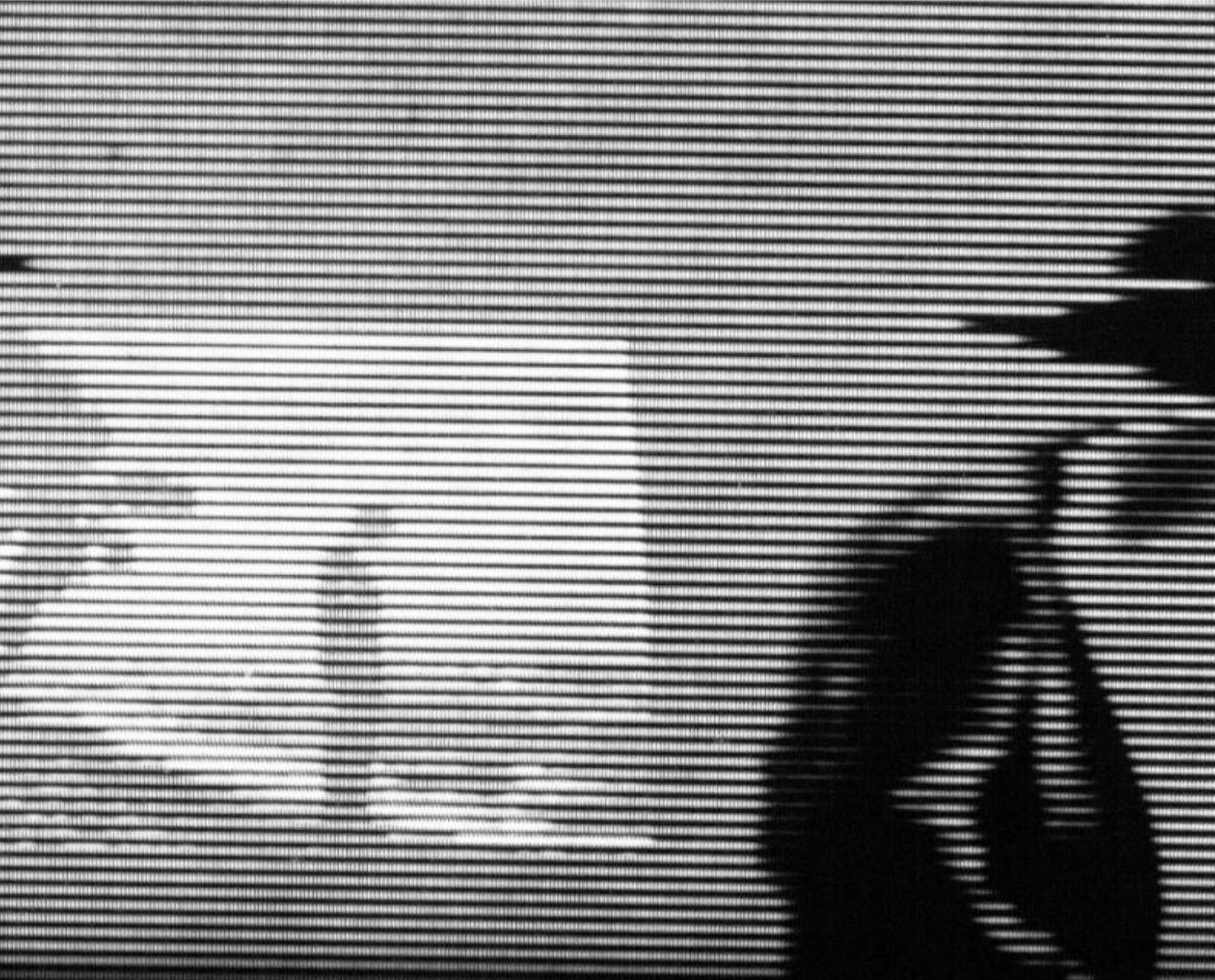
acoustic primarily working on a Yamaha Grand Piano, which gives a super organic feeling, it is a way of simplifying the emotions we want to convey. *Have you ever thought of releasing something completely acoustic?* We would love to, but would our fans like it – it is however something that we definitely want to do. *What about the lyrics?* Normally the lyrics are added at the end of the process, the song comes first. We want to convey as much emotions as possible through the lyrics and vocals. In the early days most of our songs was all about “Us against the world” nowadays they are more “Why did you leave me you ‘beep’”

### **You are big fans of Propellerhead Reason as well**

Yes, and it is probably the most democratic musical tool out there, very educational. In the early days synth music was the rich man's sport, now with DAWs like Reason everyone's got the same chance. In a sense Reason is the modular software system around and we use quite a lot, perhaps as much as 50% in our music. *You have even released a free Reason RNS-file to show how you work in Reason, when will we see a Nitzer Ebb Refill?* Laughing, well it would sound ridiculous because it would probably only contain a lot of sounds that no one could really figure out how to use. But it would be fun though; half of the joy is the actual music creation – the creative side of things.

### **Hardware on stage?**

We normally use a hybrid acoustic set. The cost of shipping the real synths is not doable anymore. The SPDS and the MalletKat, paired with electronic percussions is the basic set up these days. Then we have Ableton together with a Roland sampler. Any favorite synths you care to mention? Well I guess it would have to be the Roland System 100M. *We have also heard about your love for the Oberheim Xpander.* Oh, that is true and for our two first albums the Xpander was really the backbone of our sound. Unfortunately it has died on us, so today we are actually using almost as good software versions of it instead



***John Foxx***

## STEREOKLANG IN AN EXCLUSIVE TALK WITH SYNTH PIONEER JOHN FOXX



Anyone with the slightest interest in electronic music has come across the works of John Foxx. John more or less on his own reshaped the electronic landscape with albums like *Metamatic* and *The Garden*. Starting off in the 1970's forming the band Tiger Lily, that later morphed into the legendary act Ultravox. However, John left the band in 1979 to pursue a solo career and over the years, since then, John has been extremely productive – to say the least. John did withdraw from the music scene for a while to pursue other areas, but reappeared in the 90's via Nation12 and then later on actively started to pursue his music career often in collaboration with others like Louis Gordon, Harold Budd and most recently with Bengie (ben Edwards). Currently we are all set for a real treat with the new album called *Interplay*, featuring John Foxx & the Maths. Without further a due, and introductions, we dive deep into the mind of Mr. John Foxx

**The *Metamatic* album has lots of pop format songs with raw and distorted synths, a sound that still feels fresh. But no-one picked up on that combination until much later, e.g. EBM and Futurepop movement in the 90s and even more so by the Skweee movement of the 00s. Not even yourself continued in that direction with those raw synth sounds until your more recent work. – Why didn't you pursue that direction? Was it going against the time too much?**

There were many other things to pursue. For instance, reclaiming some of my own ground from 'Systems of Romance' on 'The Garden' album. I also wanted to make 'Cathedral Oceans' and other kinds of quiet music.

Then there was the preoccupation with Psychedelia, and its link to German electronic music. This wasn't at all recognized in England at the time. At one point, I was also afraid that perhaps *Metamatic* was too raw and minimal and cold. This seems odd, because it seems quite warm now – but it certainly didn't compared to other records being made at the time. A few years later, when I had the perspective to be able to appraise things from a safe distance, I realized there might be something special about *Metamatic* after all.

**You've once said that new instruments like the electric guitar, synthesizers and drum machines changes the shape of the music. That you write to accommodate to the machines – Do you perceive that the DAW/laptop studio made the same impact?**

Oh yes, every technological introduction changes the music – there are musicians who would not exist in other environments – The form of many new musicians' work is enabled by intelligent use of new technologies – Autechre for instance, require a portable digital ecology in order to exist in their present form. Theirs is an intelligent, visceral response to new digital environments.



XXX require flexible digital recording technology to review and refine their music. It is clearly not based on any purely acoustic hierarchy of sound. Just as Frank Sinatra changed both singing and recording by using a microphone and an amplifier – enabling him to sing quietly in front of a big band, so DAWs and laptops have created methods of working and kinds of music that were not possible before.

**In past interviews you talked about enthusiasm and excitement is fundamental for making music e.g. “only to touch a keyboard made excited”. – What makes you excited today and is the return to vintage synthesizers part of that?**

I still get ideas as soon as the CR78 Drum machine gets switched on, and certain synths will do that too – The Vocoder Plus always generates a song idea and so does the Juno 60. The Arp is mainly used for completing the songs and generating extreme sounds.

I've lately begun to use granular synthesis – it's really interesting, Quite violent on occasion. It may even be the true non-imitative voice of digital technology –and I've been waiting for that for some time. New technology is always expected to imitate a previous form, until someone demonstrates its unique properties. Formica was made to imitate wood, for instance, just as synthesizers were made to imitate orchestras – until we all decided they should make sounds not possible before.

**What is your take on today's electronic music scene? How has it evolved, what artists are pushing the envelope and are there any artists/bands that stand out in the crowd?**

There is a fascinating electronic minimalist scene in New York – Xeno and Oaklander and Weird Records, for instance, and Lowfish in Canada. In England there is Ghost Box and Warp and Burial. I deeply enjoy what Ladytron do, and there are many other new labels and artists across Scandinavia and Europe. Tara Busch is capable of doing wonderfully alarming things, and Serafina Steer has made a beautifully eccentric album with Bengé. I've also been interested recently in how guitars are being used as sound sources, often electronically cut-up, treated and reassembled almost into abstraction

– Lonelady, Seafeel and The Soft Moon are all doing this, in various new ways. We certainly have more interesting music around now than ever before.

**Much of the new wave/synth concept and especially the lyrics seem to have it roots in Ballard and other writers' visions. They were some kind of prophets. Most of the new and innovative music of the 90's and 00's (IDM for e.g.) is more abstract and instrumental and the prophets are the pills. – Did artists put more meaning into their work the 60's and 70's?**

Well – chemically induced visions have been around ever since music has been made.

As for writers – Ballard and Burroughs have now been joined by new generations of writers, such as Paul Auster, Peter Ackroyd, Iain Sinclair, Kazuo Ishiguro and the rediscovery of seminal authors, such as John Cheever. Things have become more complicated and many writers are now attempting to map what is happening. But the abstract, non-literal side of music is equally interesting. Certain forms of dance and electronic music seem to be busy conducting a conversation in new abstract terms. This is very exciting. These new sonic hieroglyphs have created an international urban code. Every new recording is a reply to a previous statement, with participants all over the globe.

**You've once said that Stockhausen's theories are more attractive than his music but the theories makes you review what you are doing and put them in another light. – What theories and ideas inspire your work, currently?**

I'm always interested in what happens when you remove a major factor from a form – my whole stance on electronic music for instance was to see what happened if you took America out of popular music – it was quite a challenge – but very rewarding. In the end, that was Metamatic. I've long been interested in French music around 1900 – the Parisian rejection of Wagnerian excess, and the will to create something minimal and elegant – here we have the music of Satie in particular.

Satie particularly wanted to remove anything dramatic or grandiose. In doing this he devised a new form, using solo piano. I love this music – it is so beautiful and elusive and seems deceptively simple, but it is actually very difficult to be so simple. I've also been exploring the origins of modern media, such as Television, Radio, Telephone etc. and made some very interesting discoveries –

For instance, a surprising common factor in their invention is that it was partly motivated by a desire to explore the possibility of communication with spirit voices. Spiritualism was a very popular concept when Logie Baird, Marconi and Graham Bell were working – here is a link to a BBC site which details some of this <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4185356.stm>

Scientific methodology was the way they assumed was suitable to investigate such phenomenon. In doing this, they each made significant discoveries, which eventually led to the development of modern media. (We still use the term 'medium' to describe a modern technological communications process, for instance, when this was previously used as a term for someone who claimed to communicate with spirits). All this has coincided with another thread of theory – I've long felt that we don't really understand media – what it is, what it can do, how it is affecting us. One small instance of this – we are surrounded by ghosts of the dead, yet we don't think this is at all odd – we can watch the image of Marilyn Monroe anytime we want to. She is made of light and electricity, she talks dances, sings,



smiles, yet she has been dead for forty years, she is dust – yet she lives on. We all see her from time to time. What else is that image but a ghost? I am simply attempting to find a way of describing what is happening, so it can be seen better, so I can begin to understand such media processes, and their effects on us, more clearly. All this merged with the interest in Satie, during the making of a set of recordings of simple piano music, recorded in my front room. At first, I wanted all the sounds of the mechanism of the piano and the sounds from outside the windows to

be audible. During playback, it was fascinating to hear sounds I hadn't noticed at the time –breathing, movement, even voices through the wall, from the neighbor's house.

It was all strongly reminiscent of a *séance*, especially since these were often conducted in front rooms or parlours. (In Britain, this is the term for a room kept as the 'best room' for receiving visitors, also where the piano would be kept). So I began combining these piano pieces with other recordings made in various environments, including a machine left recording at night in empty rooms. Some of the sounds and the stereo movements captured in this way are really startling.

I also recorded white noise from an untuned crystal radio and slowed small sections of it, to obtain apparent words and phrases. It's a method of examining the grain of sound – to find things buried inside it. I guess the unconscious, plus our instinctive desire to connect and make patterns, both come strongly into play here. Both of these seem well worth encouraging, since they equally apply to the way we comprehend music. The recordings will be released later this year, and will be titled 'Electricity and Ghosts'. Since beginning these investigations, I discovered another artist working in a parallel way – Susan Hiller, who currently has an exhibition at Tate Britain, in London. <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/susanhiller/default.shtm>. Her work simply acknowledges the importance of the inexplicable – its presence and purpose in human life, from an artistic and anthropological perspective – meaning a humanist, empathic, participatory one. It is also a welcome reply to some recent, rather oppressive and authoritarian statements by self-publicizing scientists, who are bullying popular opinion at present. As she says in one interview – "'Artists' research disturbs the kind of research that scientists do". Her work certainly seems to offer a far broader perspective than the scientists' does.

**You have used your artist alias John Foxx throughout your career and even described him as “more strong and intelligent” than you are. – Who is composing the music and then working in the studio? John or Dennis?**

Well, we work together sometimes, you know. Foxx is certainly much more intelligent than me. He is a naively perfected entity. A sort of manifested idea. The positive side of this is being constantly forced to work hard in the attempt to reach and maintain his standards. This often requires complicated recording procedures and a lot of editing and re-shooting. Gives me something to aspire to, but it can be exhausting.

In the end it will be either him or me. So one day I might abandon him by the side of a motorway. He'd probably start a new band, purely out of revenge.

**Can you describe your creative process; where do you start, demos, moving on to studio work**

I only occasionally make demos. Mostly the work is assembled in the studio. I began as a painter – an artist, and I guess still use the same techniques and principles to make music – a process in some ways like painting or sculpture – or gardening. Once you discover certain principles, you find you can apply them to almost any kind of work, in any medium.

**How much have you embraced the world of software DAWs and free VST synths?**

Oh, I'll use anything that sounds useful and is easy to operate – good design means simple operation – Bad design means anything complicated to use – that gets instantly rejected. Complex is not the same thing as complicated

**On the new album you are using lots of vintage equipment. Are they all analog or did you use digital equipment also. – Did the use of vintage synthesizers change the working process in the studio?**

We only used analogue synths on that album – nothing digital. Ben is very strict about that. He patrols the border constantly. Very vigilant. We were interested in how even a slight shift in technology alters things profoundly – for instance if you can't use MIDI or digital editing to place sounds, you have to play them manually, or sequence them. Each of these methods will give you entirely different results, so the feel and meaning of the song will alter too. After a while, you realize you are dealing with an entire lost or alternative ecology.

**Working in Benges studio with lots of analog synths – any new found favorites?**

Oh yes – that big 1960's Moog system of Benges's – Hand built and unique. It sounds massive. Also, a cheap little keyboard, which I'm not going to mention, because I want to buy one myself. It gave me ideas every time I used it. Beautiful.

**You must be one of the most persistent user of CR-78 – are you using the real thing or samples? Could you explain the love affair with this machine?**

Oh, I think we've come to understand each other very well over the years. The CR78 is a marvelous, accidental confection – a non-dancing Japanese programmer's mathematical reconstruction of western dance patterns, intended for use as a cabaret accompaniment device.



Serious recording engineers despised it. But they were wrong.

I immediately realized that this machine offered an entirely new approach to percussion. Its rhythms are so bizarre that it is impossible to get anything conventional out of it. If you make it central in a recording, you immediately have a unique sonic layout and pattern – a new kind of matrix, in which you can easily position other equally delicious sounds, like a piece of abstract sculpture. That is how it demanded that you

create something not heard before. Any instrument that can make such demands is infinitely valuable.

**You seem to have a long love affair for choir voices. Many rock/pop singers started out in the church choir. – Were you a choir boy?**

Oh yes. I learnt a great deal from that – about how the human voice can react with architecture. For instance, it seems the entire form of chant was enabled by echoes coming back from the walls of caves and cathedrals. You can sing in harmony with your own returning echoes. Later, I realized that is what encouraged the particular scales and harmonic structures that evolved in those forms. A true architectural music.

When digital reverberation devices came along, you could have a cathedral in a briefcase, and I wanted to explore this, using the form I had learnt as a child. I felt it makes a nice continuity, using new digital architecture to enable another evolution of our most ancient form of music. Those explorations became Cathedral Oceans and My Lost City.

**Ultravox has decided to re-unite for a new album, do you have any relations with the old team these days?**

I'm currently working with Robin Simon, who is the most original guitarist I have ever heard. Systems of Romance would have been an entirely different record without him. Robin has influenced generations of guitarists, but his deep contribution to modern music may take another twenty years to become visible, but it is really fundamental. No-one sounded like Robin before he arrived– now everyone does. It's so much a part of things that people imagine it has always been that way.

He was the first to abandon all blues and rock clichés, at the same time, he designed a sound that integrated completely with synthesizers, by incorporating layered echoes, distortion and a range of radical moving stereo and spatial effects into a single organic sound, then he selectively multi-tracked further layers of this into texturally monolithic recordings that contained very little reference to anything created previously.



**Computers/laptops are not only complete music studios but also video production tools. – What’s your take on all those videos on Youtube accompanied by yours (and others) music?**

I really like them – they’ve created a new public arena for filmmakers, a new way to make and present ideas and make parallel stories and connections with music. I enjoy the democratic nature of this – another techno/humanistic conversation that is constantly gathering force and sophistication.

Spielberg and Lucas began as children by using super 8 film, so imagine what future filmmakers will make in thirty years. By then our present cinema will seem like old Lumiere brothers’ films appear to us now– charming, but naïve.

***Johan Kinde***  
***Lustans Lakejer***



## DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER — INTERVIEW WITH JOHAN KINDE, LUSTANS LAKEJER

Stereoklang got an exclusive interview with the legend in Swedish new wave, glam rock, and synth pop – Mr. Johan Kinde. The front man behind the cult band Lustans Lakejer (in English it would be something like “the lackeys of lust”). LL has been around since the early 1980’s and their music has always dealt with the passions in life, at least from a male perspective; women, champagne, love, dreams, passion, forbidden fruit, but at the same time with a glimpse in the eye and you can sometime sense that there is a backside to the life of a playboy. Johan and LL has made a long list of classical songs over the years and even had collaborations with some of the members in the UK cult band Japan (Mick Karn and Richard Barbieri). Stereoklang wanted to catch up with Johan now that LL has a new album out and they are ready to hit the road again.



### **How has the new record been received and are you happy yourself with the result?**

“Absolutely!!! The record has been receiving great reviews and has actually climbed to the highest position in the album charts relative to all previous LL albums. Now we are so eager to tour with the new album all across Sweden.”

The album for those of you have not heard it yet, is to us a record that takes LL back to its roots, with the synthesizers more in the front, a more electronic touch, but still flirting with sounds found on more recent works like Åkersberga for example.

“In a sense you can say that we really had this ambition from the start, to right more hip songs that are more immediate and perhaps shorter, kind of more fit to be synthesizer based. We wanted them to be more up-tempo songs with more bass sounds. We even had a version of the album that was even more “synthish” – kind of like LL meets Depeche Mode. The Swedish synth pop act SYSTEM even made a remix of the song “Eld och vatten”, it was almost as if Vince Clarke had been involved.” More over having Jenny Silver singing a duet with Johan almost gives it kind of a “Fade to grey” – kind of feeling.

“As I see it the synthesizers actually won the war over the rockers. Just listen to today’s music scene where synths are more important than ever – Lady Gaga just to name one, even though the traditional “synth music” became more of a niche scene. I think this partly because they just became carbon copies of bands like Depeche Mode – for that reason I found it more interesting when the electro wave came about.”

#### **So what synthesizers can we find on the new album?**

“It is a combination of hardware and software synths.” Johan let us know that he is not very much of a synthesizer guy at all, even though he sometimes gets the lust of acquiring some of them. On the new album, however, you will find the KORG Polysix on almost all of the songs (played live in the recording sessions), coupled with some vintage modular synths kindly supplied by P. Levin from System. The fact that Johan plays most of the instruments himself on the album (not being a true keyboard guy), synthesizers and guitars, gives the album a more natural feeling and not too perfect, a live feeling kind of.

#### **The lyrics has always been a central piece in the works of LL, so we asked Johan for the real story behind the lyrics**

The life of a romantic – is probably the best description you can give to the works of Johan and LL, but are they true stories or just dreams? “Most of it is actually self-experienced. Often people say that in the early days it was dreams, but now it is self-experienced, but the truth is more that in the early days I did experience the things I was writing in my lyrics, but PERHAPS I dressed it in words that made it sound better than it was. Books and movies has always inspired me. I always start with the melody and when I find a title that I enjoy I will make that the base of the remainder of the song. For example a biography by Gloria Vanderbilt had the beautiful title – It seemed important at the time.

#### **LL has worked together with the famous UK 1980’s act Japan and with the death of Mick Karn last year we wanted to ask a little about how this collaboration came about**

“It was Klas Lunding, started Stranded Rekords 1979, who put us in touch with Mick Karn and Richard Barbieri. Flying in from Los Angeles the ex-Japan member joined LL in the studio for three days playing the saxophone for example on the song “Läppar tiger, ögon talar” (trans. Lips are silent, eyes are speaking), a song that we will play on the tour as a tribute to Mick Karn.” We asked Johan if there still is any un-released material hidden somewhere from those early days with Japan, but unfortunately not. “Mick and Rich were very nice and we had so much fun working together.”



If you want to read more on the subject: <http://www.nightporter.co.uk/pages/lustans.htm>

**How do you enjoy today's music scene and how has it influenced your own writing?**

"There is so much good music being released and my influences come from many sources. I enjoy DJ-ing and then I kind of have a crush for something that is sometimes referred to as "new disco", kind of like synth disco, a bit slower, down tempo, pretty popular in the New York music scene right now. A label that enjoy is e.g. Italians do it better, with acts like Mirage and Last candy."



"When it comes to my own writing I think I have become a little more skillful. I always start writing the songs on my guitar and with today's studio environment I don't need to have anyone in the band on site to make a song, which is of course both a good and a bad thing. For example on the song "Förbjuden frukt" on the new album I have used the ReDrum in Reason, not intended to stay in there but it actually gave the song

something that I quite enjoyed. I believe one of my strengths is my ability to get the groove and the beat going." I have actually started to get a small studio set up; a new Mac powered with Logic is in place, so far mostly used for making early sketches, but I must say that I am getting more and more interested in purchasing more of the real stuff. Although I am afraid that if I start to get too involved in turning and twisting synthesizer knobs it will have a negative effect on the production process – the time to get the songs ready that is.

**Have you ever done some more experimental stuff outside your comfort zone?**

"I guess the most different things I have been up to is when I toured with a complete acoustic set up a couple of years ago. Although we played some LL songs on the tour we did them in a bozza nova type style. We might even do a full album like this sometime soon." We are also interested in releasing more of LL on DVD with live performances etc. – however unfortunately there is not much material left from the old days and to make live performances on video today is fairly expensive."

**Finally we asked Johan about the Forever Young tour and when we will have the opportunity to see LL live across Sweden**

"The Forever Young tour was a tremendous experience for us and we really enjoyed it. We met with several of our old friends and colleagues from the old days, like Midge Ure, Alpha Ville, and Reperbahn

etc. But I think one of the most fun parts was that Howard Jones had really appreciated our performance and wanted to have his picture taken with us, Howard said "You must be huge in Sweden!". Personally I think Ultravox was the treat of the night."



***Mirrors***

***nd***

## STEREOKLANG INTERVIEW WITH UK SYNTHPOP ACT MIRRORS, WHO TOURED WITH OMD THIS FALL

We got an exclusive interview with the probably most hyped synthpop act in Europe right now – Mirrors. Mirrors has recently finished their European tour together with OMD and Stereoklang caught up with the front man in the band in their studio chatting about their music, gear, influences and their work on the new album.

### **You have been touring with OMD during the fall, how was it?**

It was of course a very special thing for us, we have always been big fans of OMD and it was even more fun to discover that they were also fans of us. The fact that we now come to play in front of an

audience made up entirely of people devoted to electronic music is a tremendous experience.



Mirrors lets me know that they also felt that the two bands really complemented each other on stage, rather than just that Mirrors were there to warm up the crowd. Mirrors adding perhaps a more saturated, heavy and modern sound to the equation.

### **You have received very positive reviews, what is the secret behind the success?**

Apart from being happy by this for me obvious fact they gave me this explanation: For Mirrors it is all about combining great and cold electronic sounds, with a heart. If your soul is not present there will not be any great songs, a cliché perhaps, but you need to follow your heart. A lot of bands are “just” making futuristic music, Mirrors wants it to be warm as well – just like Kraftwerk. Of course the songs need to be well structured. Almost everything we do emanates from a traditional piano exercise, then you can get carried away when you do remixes

**Your stage line up resembles another quartet based out of Germany, is that a coincidence?**

– Not really, although I need to say that the dress code is a coincidence. Kraftwerk is certainly a massive influence. However, in a sense Mirrors is more kind of a revolt to the massive indie-scene we have in the UK – and we are the anti-thesis of that.



**Can you tell me what synths you are using on stage, are you a pure hardware band or are there software synths hidden in your studio?**

To begin with James is writing most of the material and what is being used differs, but in general you will always find a Juno 60, Moog Phatty (although they are dreaming of a Moog Voyager) and a Prophet in the mix. The Juno is used for pads and chords, the Moog for basses, and then we have some samplers like the MPC in there as well.

We asked them if the Linn drum sounds were genuine or samples, and although they could have lied to us, they said that they were samples. In general Mirrors rely very little on backing tracks. – If we can't play it we loop it. We want to do everything live on stage. So if you spot an Apple on stage it will only be used for the visuals.

In the studio we also have access to some other goodies like the 808, SH101 and Siel Cruise, sometimes Mirrors have more than 10 hardware synths up and running at the same time.

From a software perspective worth mentioning is ARPs, Moog Modular, and Jupiter

**We would classify your songs as pure happy synth pop, do you agree or how would you describe your music? Inspirations; new wave, krautrock...**



– In the UK we are defined as doing “pop noir”.

Mirrors are happy we’ve spotted their influences from krautrock. Krautrock is a great inspiration since they enjoy the repetitive grooves, but they are also quite keen on modern techno like Carl Craig and Lindström, but then of course there are all the obvious ones from the synthpop era and the new wave bands of the 80’s

**At least for us you kind of popped up from nowhere during the fall, we guess this is not the case – can you tell us a bit of your background, the band and the name of the band?**

Our talk on inspirational sources of course brings us to the natural question of the bands origin, which apparently started in Brighton although no one in the band can really say exactly when, but it all started with Talking Heads. Talking Heads was basically the style of the band when it all started and James and Alley formed the band. Mirrors gives you some vibes (can’t figure out why I keep coming back to “The Hall of Mirrors”) and when I ask them about the band name, they do not deny any references, but the main thing was that they wanted a simple name, not over complicated and glass has something of a feeling they like.

**Touring plans for the spring, when will we see you in the south of Sweden?**

Mirrors will definitely come to Sweden this spring, and a big European tour are in the plans, after they finished their second album. The new album is due in the February/March time frame. – Most likely we will do the same destinations as we did with OMD plus adding some new ones of course.

**Some media view you as the first band to appear in a decade that can take on the sprint baton after all those successful synth bands in the 80’s, do you agree or how do you see the synth, electro, EBM scene of today?**

– We are in general quite positive to the electronic music scene as of today, although there sure is a lot of crap out there as well. No one mentioned, no one forgotten.

Mirrors are especially keen on many new solo artists that are doing great stuff and the growing dub step scene is quite interesting they tell us. Mirrors actually thinks that electronic music is still the ones leading the music scene of today, this is where the innovation is made. Electronic music is taking music into new directions and Mirrors wants to be part of this creating their own world. – Our world is something new, where we create something new without the use of modern influences.

**Can you briefly tell us a little about the production process – from idea to final product, who is doing what and what equipment do you use, etc.?**

Mirrors are happy to share their production process and it is quite clear that they are using the traditional route in music making, starting with playing the piano. My guess is that at least one or two in the band have schooled music backgrounds. After the piano and added vocals they move into the studio, where they make 5-6 iterations or versions of the song. Using different sound building blocks they craft up the final product. By saying this it is also quite clear that Mirrors seldom or never jams up any songs. James will write (most of) the songs, Joe will add the “dancy” rhythms, James focuses on the sonics and Alley the pulse.



**Four quick ones**

a. Moog or Korg

>> Moog

b. Analog or Laptop

>> Without saying the obvious – a combination of both; analog synths and modern compressions

c. 80s or 2010s

>> 1970s

d. In the studio or on the stage

In the studio (personally), enjoys both of course, but it is stressful being on stage

*Emmon*



## INTERVIEW WITH SWEDISH ELECTRO POP QUEEN EMMON

Stereoklang got an interview with Emmon, her real name is Emma Nylén, who has been very active in the Swedish and Scandinavian electro synthpop scene since several years back. She has been dubbed the title “Electro pop queen of Sweden”. Now the rumors are hot on the net that there is a new album on its way and Stereoklang caught up with her to ask her if this is true and also took the opportunity to talk about music production, DJ-ing and of course synthesizers, hard and soft.



**There are frequent rumors that a new album is on its way, true or not?**

That is true, and if all goes as planned, the third album with Emmon will be released on Wonderland Records in Sweden in the spring of 2011. “I am just now completing the final mixes to disk.” First single “Distance” from the album will be released in March. “In parallel we will head off to Berlin to record a video for single number two, which will be released later this

spring.”



**Will we recognize the sound from previous albums, or will it differ a lot?**

“It will still probably sound very much Emmon but with some new influences. From the responses I received from people who have heard the new material, says the sound is a little darker and harder in the production. All songs emanates from what I think is exciting and inspiring. And since I’m most active in my music making during the darkest time of year so I think even that will to some extent color the music.”

**Your last album was very much a classic synth pop record with all the right basses and melodies.**

**What do you use in your music production process, the work in the studio and who is involved.**

“Trying to describe a creative process is extremely difficult. There is no exact formula for creating music, it usually happens just by itself. For me it’s about finding the focus of a mood or feeling that you want to portray and then try to convey this in a good manner.

Previously I have done everything myself during the entire process, from writing songs, record, produce, mix and fix album art.”

This time Emmon has chosen to involve Jimmy Monell (mixed the album for the indie-op act Paris some time back). “He is extremely skilled and have worked a long time as an experienced musician and producer. We work very well together and we have the same taste when it comes to music and influences. He complements me incredibly well in many areas and is very easy to interpret what kind



of feeling it is that I want to convey with my music and manage to enhance it further.”

**What are your inspirations and how is your relationship to today’s electronic music scene?**

“What inspire me the most are movies and pictures. As long as I can remember I have always related my creativity and music to images. A creation of a song probably works in much the same way as when directing the screenplay for a movie sequence. It’s all about feel and timing. Currently I am also very keen on horror movies, which probably

also is reflected in some of my recent works. A dream would be to have the opportunity to make music for a really good film.

I listen to and find inspiration from many different genres of music but of course my heart beats a little extra hard for electronic music. I often seek music that is somewhat dark, and experimental and like bands and artists such as Crystal Castles, Salem, Simian Mobile Disco, The XX, PJ Harvey, The Cure and The Parallax Corporation etc.

My vision for the new album has been to create a kind of epic horror film script of warped and mysterious music events while I at the same time wanted to come closer to the music, which once made me want to start creating electronic music.”

**You have done quite a lot of remixes during the past years. How do you go about making a remix and what are you looking for?**

“Above all, I choose to remix material that I like very much and that I think I can add something extra to, providing my own touch. Then I think its great fun to remix and I believe this is reflected in the results. Before, I thought it was extremely important that all the remixes will be products for the dance floor, but it is nowhere near as important anymore. The most important thing is that you dare to create something completely new and interesting from the material and that it is able to stand on its own. I therefore think it is more fun with remixes that differ considerably from the original song.”



**You are also part of the indie-pop band Paris – what is happening on that end?**

Emmon tells me that they are currently recording and completing an EP, which will be released during the year. “Meanwhile Matt Smith, bassist in the band, is also building a super studio in Stockholm, which we will probably spend a lot of time in the future.”

**How much of a hardware versus software girl are you – what will we find in your studio?**

“I produce my material at home in a small closet studio. Since this little studio cannot contain so much more than one computer, monitors, recording equipment for voice and some synths, for practical reasons I usefully use software to my productions. The two previous Emmon-albums are produced using Cubase on a PC and almost entirely based on software. For the production of the forthcoming third album, I felt that I wanted to try something new, replacing it with a Mac and Logic. I also chose to do more with analog synthesizers, and my favorites are the Juno-106 and Yamaha CS-5. In addition, I use some sounds from the Micro Korg and Yamaha CS1X, who has been with me since I started making music as Emmon in early 2001. Jimmy (Monell) also uses the Mac and Logic. He likes to use MS-20 Legacy, his old groove boxes RM1X and Yamaha RS7000 and mixes with several Wave plug-ins.”

**As the crowned electro pop queen in Sweden, do you have any other interesting projects in the pipe?**

“The focus is now to release the new album and all the work around it and then it goes without saying – get out there and perform as much as possible. Then there are always a lot of different creative projects to take on with making music, music video productions and DJ-ing. DJ-ing is, by the way, one of the most fun things there is and something I do very much. “

**Finally – any touring plans lined up?**

I hope to play a lot when the new album is released. Perhaps it will be some festival appearances this summer and hopefully a big tour in the fall. I love to play live. My goal is, that it always should be a true experience to see an Emmon gig.



*Covenant*

## EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE LIGHTBRINGERS — COVENANT IN THE STUDIO

Last week I had the opportunity to spend some time with Eskil and Joakim from Covenant in their new refurbished studio. Covenant is definitely Sweden's number one export in the electronic music scene, with numerous ground breaking synth/EBM albums behind them, i.e. Sequencer, Skyshaper, Northern Light to name a few. However, although I was curious on their new EP coming out in a couple of



weeks, titled Lightbringer, my main purpose were to explore their working methods and their gear.

My first impression when I entered the studio was overwhelming. The first thing that came to my mind is the old saying – “the one who has the most gear when you die, wins”. Look like the Covenant boys are aspiring for the finals. Korgs, Prophets, Moogs, Viruses, Emus, you name it, it's all there stacked neatly on racks across the studio. Check out the pictures below to delve in to some pure synth porn.



### THE NEW ALBUM AND THE STATE OF THE SYNTH SCENE

Even before Lightbringer is released we know it will be something different, since collaborations with other artists is not something that

we are used to. Lightbringer actually came as an idea from Necro Facility, rather than from Covenant, with the intention to have Eskil to sing on it. However it turned out to be something more. Eskil tells me that we will experience a different melody build up then we are used to, and that it's all about fear and loathing in Helsingborg, Sweden. I guess you cannot be more cryptic than that!

As Lightbringer will be released as a limited edition we came to discuss how vibrant the Synth scene is today and happily enough I can conclude that, although still a niche scene, Covenant has not slowed down on touring (note: Eskil just came back from a Gothic Cruise in the Caribbean). They say that the globalization that has come as a result from a better infrastructure (read Internet) in markets like South America and Eastern Europe really has resulted in that bands like Covenant continuously finds new audiences, and adds that 'they' really find it exotic with synth music, creating a foundation for new sub cultures in those countries.

Speaking of sub cultures it was logical for me to ask about their various side projects like Cement (Eskil's noise project) and Joakim's joint venture with Ronan Harris (VNV Nation) exploring classical music from an electronic perspective. Eskil tells me that Cement actually came about, apart from the fact that he really enjoys noise music, as a wish of entering (and travel to) the Japanese music scene, where noise is big. But also to somewhat alter the common public image of himself, showing that there are more sides then just Covenant. Although Joakim's classical endeavor didn't continue I am pleased to inform you that Cement is alive and kicking. Major noise inspirations are Brighter than death, White house and Geometric, of course.



#### THE MUSIC PRODUCTION PROCESS

Many fans claim that "Sequencer" is Covenant's greatest achievement and when discussing this with Joakim and Eskil they neither disagree or agree, but notes that it stood out from the crowd at the time and that ever since they have tried to do everything opposite to it. However, it was the album that led Covenant out into the international arena. At its release critics claimed it to be too techno, but in retrospective the distinct bass sound of Sequencer defined the Covenant sound. Sequencer was all about samples (12 bit) using gear like Akai S950, Emu ESI32, DX7, and Prophet 2000. Combining that with a TB 303 clone, some distorted samples and a mixer, they were set to rock.

Speaking of it we started to focus on the production process of things. The common public version is that Eskil writes it all, but that is far from the whole truth. Normally, Eskil will show up with a demo containing verse, refrain and possibly even some drums (or Daniel Meyers will send over some stuff, the third new member of the group). In parallel to that Joakim works on soundscapes, pads and more. The band has always worked very much in parallel processes in making their songs, Joakim tells me, and that they neither work as a traditional band nor has any desire to do so. Specifically it's key for Covenant to create unique sounds that very few could actually understand how they have been made – the more electronic sounding the better. Stubbornness is probably what it is all about.



After the demo material has been merged with Joakim's material (which may take some time I understand, after listening on their discussion on the topic), Joakim takes on writing the lyrics. Inspiration comes from everything, I learn, when he tells me about poems, web searches, trending topics and more, all hopefully brought together to something that relates to the music at hand. The song "Stalker" actually started just as a loop, a small refrain, some stolen lines of verse, before they actually started to add some rhythms to it and the right sound. Interesting to note is that Joakim and the team is very keen users of NI Absynth for completely altering sounds. By reducing and reducing the polyphony the Absynth will actually reset itself, generating very interesting sounds. At the end Eskil will pick the whole thing up and make the final production on his own, never the two of them in the same room at

that time. Note: apart from "Northern Light" Covenant produces everything themselves.



#### IN THE STUDIO

Although Covenant has its roots and inspiration in old classics like Human League (Eskil) and Kraftwerk (Joakim) they tell me that their songs being built in the studio are more a merge of New Romantics, Goth elements and dance music, e.g. Underworld. Covenant has never denied that they are happy to steal loops straight off,

but then tweaking them so much that you really need to know your music history to figure it out, heavy compressions is a key ingredient here.

Another core element and something that is an integral part of Covenant's music is the bass sounds and I ask Joakim to give us some hints on how to go about creating those. He tells me that there are two main ways that they are using. The first tip is to use a digital synthesizer for the attack (to get the bite!) and an analog synthesizer underneath as a sub bass to get the real depth, and finally run the whole thing through serious compression so that they "melt" together nicely. Another way of fattening a bass line is to add a bass drum to each note. E.g. when using the TB-303, which has no depth, you compensate this by adding TR-808s/909s for that fat sound, this is especially true for songs over 130bpm. Nicely enough several hybrid synthesizers, like the Virus exists today, that are both digital and analog. More or less all compressions are made using software plugins.

The Covenant boys are keen users of software based production methods; Eskil is a Cubase-guy and Joakim an Ableton Live adept with some Fruity Loop Studio on the side. Joakim tells me that they love to try out all new software plug demos they can get their hands on. Joakim enjoys experimenting in Ableton Live by creating his own racks. He also mentions a couple of favorites of his like the EchoBoy by Soundtoys and Expert Sleepers dub delay with automation. If their budget had allowed it the software studio would probably be complemented with things like the Waves effects suite.

As nice as software can be, I cannot visit Covenant in the studio without talking about hardware. As mentioned previously their studio has gear from floor to ceiling, with favorites like tape delays, pre amps, Nord Modulars G1 and G2 and Universal Audio 6176 vintage channel strip. I learn that there are more than 30 different synths in their studio with thousands of pre-sets. In the beginning they only had 20 single hit drum sounds, Joakim tells me. Less is more I guess, especially if you delve into the number of presets you have in a standard DAW.

Eskil and Joakim are in perfect agreement that the Korg MS20 is their all-time favorite, if they could only choose one, since it is so versatile and its ability to produce such a noise you wouldn't believe it, as well as how nicely it interacts with other synthesizers. Just listen to Goldfrapp, Joakim suggests. Other favorites: Eskil – Moog Voyager, SCI Pro One and Virus; Joakim – Nord Modular, DS Evolver and Waldorf. Joakim adds that the Oberkorn step sequencer also comes quite handy and that he sometimes enjoys working in a Tangerine Dreams style, and letting the synthesizers play for themselves.

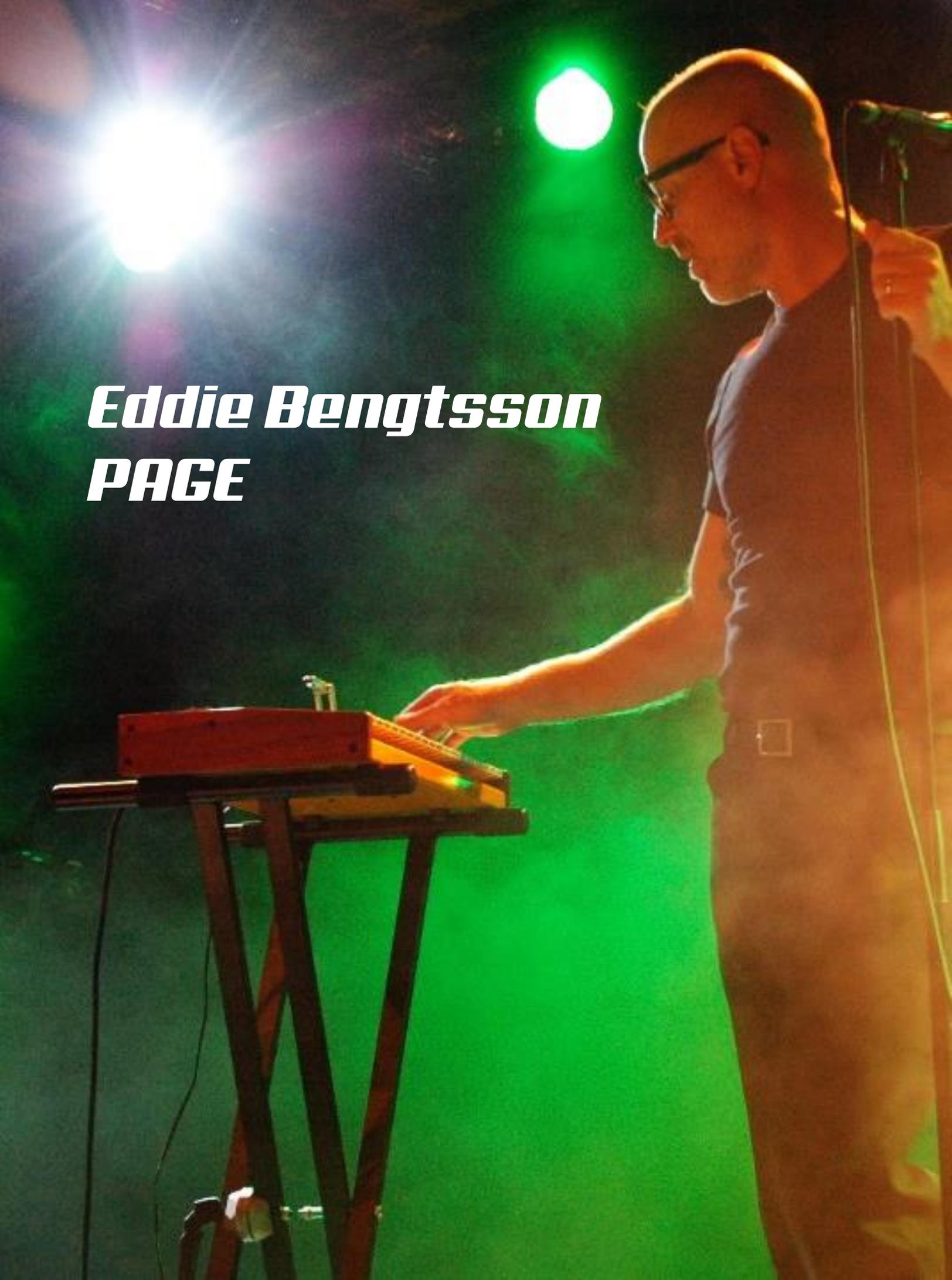


#### MOVING ON – FUTURE EVOLUTION

The sound of Covenant is quite unmistakable and I'm curious whether they ever discussed taking their music in new directions, Eskil and Joakim says that every band has its soul or identity and concludes that the more experimental sides of themselves will have to be nourished in their various side projects going forward. And from a music production perspective it seems that Covenant are fairly content with their current thinking – meaning e.g. that sometimes it is healthy to think of your band as an entire orchestra, which helps you placing your sounds correctly in the mix and don't be afraid to kill your darlings, Joakim adds with a smile. Samples are still a vital part of their music production, even old samples from the Prophet, Emulator 2 library and sounds from the old Mellotron, especially when doing choirs. Covenant does not want to sound like they are using a real choir. It is supposed sound electronic and vintage.

Finally, we rounded of the discussion with Covenant on stage; what they use today and their take on new advancements both from a stage experience and the iOS explosion. Eskil says that on stage they normally use the Nord Modular, a G2X and a Prophet 2000 (they have at least five of the latter), and this is mostly because they are robust and will not break on long trips. Meaning that this is quite a traditional Synth/EBM stage set up, I ask whether they have considered more visual equipment on stage such as the Audio Cubes, used by Björk and Mark Mosher on stage, or why not an iPad, for that matter. But they seem reluctant to do so, although cool, they do not want to risk using equipment that might break or not project correctly on projector screens or similar.

Before we wrap up and getting ready for taking some picture I ask if they are using iPhone/iPad applications. Although Eskil indicates that he is pretty keen on Brian Eno's ambient iPhone app this has not yet emerged into the production process of Covenant.

A man with glasses and a dark t-shirt is playing a keyboard on a stand. He is positioned on the right side of the frame, looking down at the keys. The background is dark with a bright green light source and a bright white light source, creating a dramatic atmosphere. The text "Eddie Bengtsson" and "PAGE" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

***Eddie Bengtsson***  
***PAGE***

## EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH SWEDISH SYNTH-MAESTRO EDDIE BENGTTSSON

Page is currently celebrating 30 years as performing artist on the Swedish synthpop stage and are currently planning summer gigs after the release of their first new album in 10 years. Stereoklang got an one on one interview with the synth pioneer Eddie Bengtsson, who's electronic music really kick started the Swedish synth-pop scene in the 80's, active in Page, Sista Mannen På Jorden (Last man on earth) and This Fish Needs a Bike. Page really became the Swedish answer to Yazoo/Erasure, OMD, and Depeche Mode, and made ground for popular acts like Elegant Machinery, S.P.O.C.K and many others. In this interview we have invaded Eddie's home studio to take a closer look at the synthesizers



and music production gear he uses and what it really takes to make a great synth-pop song.

Neatly mounted in a corner of a 10sq/m room, sharing the space with Star Trek memorabilia and a huge vinyl record collection, several of the classic hardware synthesizers are hooked up and ready to bleep. Although Eddie tells me he have had

to sell of several synthesizers from a logistical point of view I enjoy finding vintage gear like the Moog Rouge, a Korg DW 6000 and the personal favorite of Eddie's the Yamaha CS15 (used on every album), coupled with recently acquired gems like the Moog Little Phatty, the Moog Voyager and then some modern virtual analogs like microKORG and Yamaha CX1x.

### **What is used use for what?**

The CX1 is used as the mother keyboard and the DW 6000 mainly for strings. "Sound 11 is a personal favorite" Eddie says. You can for example find it also on all S.P.O.C.K songs. If Eddie on the other hand only were to take one synthesizer with him to a deserted island it would be the CS15. In fact Eddie tells me that due to the flexible routing and filters; he's able clone the bass sounds of all other synthesizers with it, if you treat it nicely. Perhaps the only drawback is the useless noise generator, which is too weak, although a weakness that many synthesizers has as he puts it.



Neatly tucked under racks of synthesizers a well-hidden Roland S760 sampler can be found. Curious about the fact that this particular device hasn't been replaced by software versions already, Eddie admits that years of collecting diskettes has made him somewhat lazy, somewhere among all those hundreds of diskettes there is always that one with the right sound. But I

wouldn't be surprised if that device will be left out from future productions in favor of software alternatives.

The lazy side of Eddie shines through on several occasions during the interview and for the last two records other people have contributed in replacing sounds with updated versions. However, the new Page album actually came as a turning point for him and a lot of hard work has gotten into it, resulting in more focus on sound search and music production than before.

Moving on to the next rack of synthesizers Eddie tells me that the microKORG is actually a very capable machine used primarily for strings and pads. The Rouge on the other hand is the real stage machine and a trade mark for Page in live sets. It's compact and easy to bring, cool looking and splendid for single oscillator sounds. (Indecently the Rouge uses the same circuitry as the Taurus II Bass Pedals). (Listen to this song, all sounds by the Rouge by Hannes Rasmus.

<http://www.vintagesynth.com/audio/moogtherougedemo.mp3> ) Other old gems like the Roland SH02 and Moog Prodigy have been replaced with new bass and sequencer gear; the Moog Little Phatty, as you can easily spot on the new Page album.



### Why all the Moogs?

Easy answer would be that everyone is talking about them, prestigious and expensive stuff that is. And although proud to have them, some drawbacks can be found also here; the sound is a bit chilly and there is no noise generator to be found at all, as with the Prophet 8, it takes forever to heat up and sometimes the oscillators are not really in sync. The Voyager is really a beast and lit up it looks

really impressive. Currently it's mainly used to discover cool sounds in the studio it might end up on the stage someday. "But why on earth did they implement this totally useless performance pad on it, when turning the knobs is the way to do it and it is not even multi-touch, which might have given it some extra advantages". I asked what's next and Eddie kind of suggests that a DSI Mopho might end up on the rack within short.

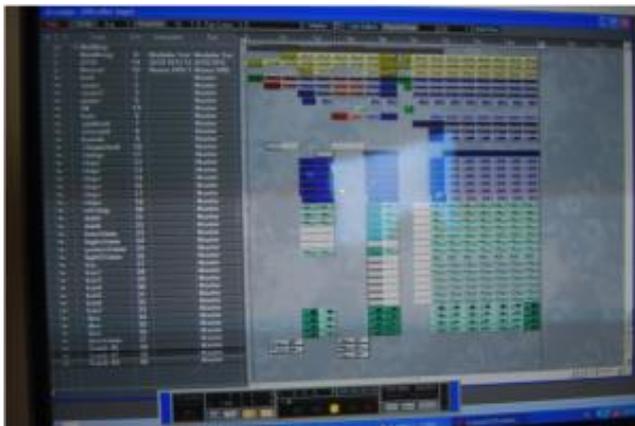
#### **Where do you start making a song?**

"Never, or very seldom, I have an idea or the song in my head. When I feel like making new songs I always start off with a bass, then adding drums, melody and finally the vocals. I really need to get the beat going first."

I asked whether Eddie use loops in his composing, but no, no loops what so ever, and the main reason for this is that Eddie is first and foremost a hardware guy and in order to do loops effectively you need to know your software studio much better. Eddie is still on the old version 2 of Cubase.

#### **Music production perspective**

When Eddie makes his songs he makes them basically completely dry, meaning no effects, apart maybe for some simple pre-sets, such as small room reverb etc. and the reason for this is that he wants to maintain an organic feeling to the music as long as possible into the production process. He almost never uses sequencers either, he tries to play all synthesizers manually and the same goes for drums, although sampled, very often my drums are real acoustic drums. Eddie seldom uses his synthesizers for drums either since he wants a more organic sound. Below is a screen shot from one of the songs on the new Page album, uploaded in Cubase.



Interesting to know is that Eddie often comes back to punk music when describing his synth-pop. His love for space and punk combined makes the foundation of Page, clearly visible in the fact that almost all songs have a 1/8-th bass. And he says that he uses his synthesizers as if they were guitars, so you will often find a traditional bass and comp guitar set up, but made with synths.



### **Experimenting with other electronic styles**

Listening in on Eddie's music, be it Page, SMPJ or TFNAB you can always tell it's Eddie, so I had to ask if he had done any music in other genres. And the answer was yes, however modern styles like trance, euro-beat, glitch etc. he only gets bored doing – it is too easy. “Not even the money lures me to do this” he says, every

time he has tried to make a trance song it always ends up him adding more into it, as he hates that monotone feeling. However, he has been somewhat into more ambient stuff, made under the name Jeddy 3

### **Working with vocals**

Comparing with other classic synth-pop bands, like Yazoo, Depeche or the Human League, Eddie very seldom have choirs or duets, and I asked him why this is so, since it very often adds to the overall sound. The easy answer from Eddie is that he seldom has the time, but it's something that he would have liked to include. Looking at the new Page album, Eddie has included a cover of an old Liquido song where he and Marina are singing together for the first time. (Marina Schiptjenko was the one encouraging Eddie to re-start Page as BWO decided to put their music adventure on hold for a while). Going back to recording of vocals I quickly understood that this is something done at a recording studio and that Eddie had little insights into what microphones and compressors were used etc. On stage he always uses his trusty old Sennheiser E845.

It is obvious that for Eddie it all boils down to the love of music and music making and that the inspiration for how he constructs his songs and works with his synthesizers is a carbon copy of the traditional line up of a guitar band. He tells me that a dream of his would be to perform on stage with a complete guitar line up, all made up of synthesizers. Speaking of inspiration I believe his massive library of vinyl records will last for many more records going forward.

### **Eddie as a producer**

I asked Eddie if he had ever worked with other bands in the producer role. To start off, Eddie tells me that he is not the type of guy who can take the seat behind the mixer board; he is not technical enough for that. So when he works in that role he's more centered on the arrangements and structure of the songs. One of the bands he has worked the most with is the Danish act TV2 (still one of the biggest bands in Denmark) and if you tune in on the song “Jorden heldigeste” on the album “Handen af smatt brandbart” you will immediately hear that Eddie has been in charge. Other bands that enjoy working with the Swedish synth-pop maestro includes iSatellite and Celluloide.



***Alan Wilder***

## EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW — ALAN WILDER (EX-DEPECHE MODE) TALKS ON SYNTHS, MUSIC CREATION AND HIS UPCOMING AUCTION

Steelberry Clones got a talk with none other than the synth legend Alan Wilder (ex-member of Depeche Mode and now front man of the electro/synth experimental act Recoil). Few can match the track record of Alan Wilder and few have had such an impact on the synth scene for the past 30 years, or so. Alan Wilder's Recoil continues this tradition into the 21st century exploring the boundaries of electronic music, and since Alan now is in full preparation of delivering probably the world's biggest Depeche Mode memorabilia auction at the Zion Arts Centre, we simply had to pose some questions



to him regarding his music creation legacy, gear and plans moving forward.

“Collected” is the name of Alan's big auction on Saturday 3rd September, for detailed information on how to join please follow this link:

<http://auction.recoil.co.uk/>

So in just a few weeks' time, over 400 lots will go under the hammer as Alan Wilder sells a large selection of musical / studio equipment and

memorabilia at auction. Many items are very collectable and hold special value having been used extensively in the recording sessions for classic Depeche Mode and Recoil albums, as well as live performances on the 'Black Celebration', 'Music For The Masses', 'World Violation' and 'Devotional' tours.

But for most synth/electro fans this is truly not just any ordinary auction, but a clear reason why we needed to pose some questions to Alan about the auction in general and about his music making legacy in particular.

**Why are you running this auction? Is it for charity, or something else?**

It's for the charity of Alan Wilder unfortunately. Let's be honest, divorce is an ugly thing and the record business has been in crisis for some time now. Having said that, I'm not over sentimental about retaining every little detail of my musical history. In fact I still have a large collection of essential items, all the releases I have played on, many photographs and unique personal things. But really, I need more space (and peace) in my life and this goes part of the way to achieving that. Indeed I found it an evocative and cathartic experience to sift through all the collectables – the actual sorting and cataloging process brought back great memories and I was able to re-live some key moments which I had inevitably forgotten about, reminding me of how lucky I have been to have enjoyed such a career, doing something I'm passionate about.

**Will it not be hard to let go of many of these unique items – any particular items that are special to you, that we should keep an extra eye on at the auction?**

Yes – many do hold wonderful memories of course but I don't find myself actually using most of the equipment for example. One of my new year's resolutions for 2011 was to start streamlining my set-up at The Thin Line Studios. My needs have altered since laptops, soft synths and plug-ins have come to the fore, and therefore passing on some vintage gear and historical items seemed like a good way to start. The Steinway grand piano and the 'Devotional' drum kit are two things I'm letting go with a heavy heart. Thankfully I have a second piano, and can't really justify having two at the moment. And if I feel like picking up drumming again, I guess I can easily find myself another (cheaper) kit. As for something to keep an eye on in the auction, I think the unreleased box set known as DMBS 1-4 is likely to spark major interest. Known as the 'Holy Grail', these are the 4 extremely rare white labels from the Depeche Mode boxset that was never released. It was recalled at the last minute for unknown reasons. The Emulators with my own sound samples, the guitar used by Martin Gore for the 'Devotional' tour, and my touring wardrobe & stage clothing should all prove very popular. We have art proofs and one-off posters, and already we can see that album acetates are extremely desirable, being so rare. Only one or two are ever produced for a record release and I have quite a few of these iconic records. A few selected teaser items are currently on sale via eBay, and more will be added as we approach the auction.

**Will you be joined at the event by any of your old band mates (DM)?**

Not a chance :)

**How can you part with your first synthesizer, the Minimoog?**

I guess you could say that the mini-moog does hold particular value as it's been with me for such a long time, throughout my career. It was the first synthesizer I bought around 1977, pre-Mode, when I was a member of Dafne & The Tenderspots. It was a big deal for us at the time as it was quite expensive and we couldn't really afford it until we secured our record deal. It is still probably my all-time favorite synthesizer due to the famous fat 3-oscillator sound, and of course it's an absolute classic. I continued to use it for many years on early Mode recordings such as 'Construction Time Again' and 'Some Great Reward' and even had a midi update added during the eighties. However, I also own a

'midi'-moog, which is the rack-mount version of the original mini-moog. It pretty much sounds the same and serves my purpose in the studio. I found that I wasn't using the original moog any more, and like many of these items, it has been sitting around gathering dust. Much better than that all these old synths should be cleaned, restored, repaired and passed on, to people who will dote on them, use them again – individuals who will fully appreciate their history and the symbolic (as well as practical) value they hold. And, the moog will no doubt increase in value, like most vintage gear. These synths are like old cars that need to be driven. The way I feel about most items in the auction is how I feel about the gold discs for instance – I never wanted to display them on my walls in some ostentatious way, and I think often the musicians themselves are not too bothered about those things. Gold discs mean a lot more to those who are more peripheral or outside of the original experience, but who are very passionate about what they represent.

**Regarding the patch discs for the Emulator's and Akai's – have you made some backup of those sounds somehow?**

Yes, of course, I have a copy of the sounds for myself.

**The sequencer EDP Spider, was that your first sequencer? And does it work? It's not clear on the web page – they are prone not to work.**

I believe it does work but I didn't have the unusual connecting cable to actually try it out. I guess it was my first and only non-computerized sequencer! Not that I used it much – although it was used to create the bass sequencer part for the Aggro mix of DM's 'Never Let Me Down Again'.

Conclusively, if you are Depeche Mode fan or collector of vintage synth gear this is the one event not to miss out on. Now moving on to the music creation side of things we wanted to ask Alan all those questions about his gear, music creation and plans for the future that comes when having the opportunity to talk a guy that has been a part of shaping the modern synth scene.

**Recoil has been on quite an extensive tour recently, can you let us know how it was received and what your forthcoming plans are?**

The European shows went really well at the start of the tour, particularly in eastern parts and Germany, Hungary, Poland, France etc. The US shows were a bit up and down, but generally quite successful I would say. I do think USA is the most difficult territory to tour, and it was a bit of a relief to follow that down to South America where the fans are so passionate and the crowds always wild, excitable. It was quite an experience there.

Regarding on-going plans, this year has been so busy with other personal things which have sadly got in the way of making much new music. I have never undertaken a Recoil project with a particular idea in mind, usually just a very vague notion. My approach is always both experimental and methodical so I just start throwing different sounds and loops together until I get a spark. I may say to myself that I'd like to work more with live musicians or perhaps not include too much spoken-word but these loose rules are never set in stone. I prefer to allow the music to flow completely naturally. I hope to get going soon. Time will tell...

**I know that Vince Clarke and Martin Gore worked on remixes for the Depeche Mode remix album, plus that they have been active producing techno tracks together, any chances to see some involvement in these types of projects from your side as well going forward?**

I often collaborate, as I am doing right now for a couple of tracks on an upcoming Talk Talk tribute album (due early 2012), but no plans to work with Martin or Vince. The TT project is very interesting with a lot of good artists involved. More will be revealed in the near future.

**We interviewed Swedish EBM act Covenant, where Daniel Myer is now a permanent member. How did Daniel influence the work of Recoil, what will be his role going forward and how was it like working with him?**

Actually he and I have become good friends. I admire his approach where he just gets on with things without getting too precious. He has boundless musical energy and a high output as a result, which is impressive. I guess he has inspired me to be a bit more spontaneous, make music on the move, and I love his Architect project and also the new Haujobb work (some mixed by Paul Kendall). Daniel is very imaginative when it comes to remixes. He produced some excellent re-workings of a Recoil track called 'Want'.

We (Recoil/Architect) hooked up for many live shows during 2010/11 and Daniel even joined Recoil on stage recently (along with Nitzer Ebb) for the Short Circuit Mute event at The Roundhouse, London.



**Could you elaborate a bit how you interact with your project partners in the studio? Are you the 'producer' or are you equal peers in the creative process?**

I am both producer and collaborator. I nearly always begin with some musical ideas (although occasionally I may include a voice sample, like The Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet used on 'Jezebel') and I try to choose people who are technically proficient, who I also think will be empathetic with

the Recoil approach. Good examples would be Joe Richardson and Diamanda Galás – both incredible singers with open-minded attitudes. The basic music (I wouldn't call them songs at that stage) should at least lay a framework and some atmosphere to hopefully inspire the vocalist. Once a singer has come up with some ideas and we have recorded them, I then re-work everything, trying to wrestle it into a final piece. What we end up with can vary from a fairly straight song through to anything else that feels natural, or that just 'works'.

**In the open letter ‘Music for the masses – I think not’ – you talk about the change of business model for the industry. But the change is also about the other end, the listeners. Considering that the studio is now inside the laptop, distribution is done via Soundcloud/Bandcamp and marketing via Facebook/Twitter the slogan would be – “music made by the masses”? Or will the big money win in the end?**

Hopefully not. I am increasingly disillusioned with record companies and what they don’t do for artists anymore, but not disillusioned about music and opportunities for good music to become available – even if it yields little income for the artists:( We all have to adapt I guess, and leave the record moguls to invest only in their pet projects, manufactured acts, A&R whims and fantasies. The rest of us will just get on with what we can, trying to generate revenue in other ways using the on-line tools at our disposal (or perhaps more live performance), with the more entrepreneurial types will coming to the fore I suppose.

**From a more electronic music production perspective we have some more specific questions for you; there seem to be a fatigue of software instruments and using the mouse as the major way of interacting, on one hand there’s a growing number of knobs and button controllers as well as the new button matrix controllers (Monome, Launchpad) but also the multi touch screens (iPhone, iPad, Lemur) and the object controllers (Reactable), and on the other hand there seem to be a revival for the analog and in particular analog modular.**

**What’s your take on this development with a background as trained musician on piano etc. and using hardware synthesizers for decades? How much do you just play instruments or are you happy in the producer seat arranging in Protools/Logic etc.?**

For someone who plays piano, drums, a little guitar and enjoys the tactile nuances of performance, I actually do most of my work ‘in the box’! And I’m ok with that – I never really got on with Mackie control and, even though we use launchpads live, for what I do in the studio I prefer the more meticulous editing approach. My main sound sources however are sampled performance loops and sections. I like to utilize the digital technology to manipulate these, retaining the human performance feels contained therein to try and create new, never-before-heard combinations. Soft synths don’t interest me much. Plug-in effects can be useful but often I apply very little to my original samples because they have all their inherent effects already built in. I’m interested more in dynamics, the jigsaw-like relationship between each musical part, the space and the overall atmosphere generated from a given soundscape.

I haven’t heard much music which sounds like it was inspired by a piece of kit. On the contrary, most of what we hear is clichéd and predictable (but that has always been the case). As far as new-fangled toys, controllers & plug-ins go, I’ll look over the shoulders of those getting all gooey about them and occasionally dip into something of interest but I don’t see the toys themselves coming up with the ideas.

As always, the human brain and one’s imagination are by far the best tools.

**The equipment used for 'subHuman' is quite well documented on your web and in interviews. Any new stuff you added recently?**

No – I use less 'stuff' in fact, more idea discipline.

**You seem to have used lots of analog and vintage synthesizers over the years but what about analog modulators apart from the VCS3?**

I'm neither a modular expert nor a synth purist. I like twiddling the knobs and chancing upon happy accidents, and I enjoy feeding samples into analogue processes for filtering, envelope shaping and so on.

I enjoy old-school units like the Roland Space Echo for example.



*The Roland RE-201 Space Echo is truly a Vintage (1973) piece of music technology with lots of appeal even today. It's not a synth, but a Tape-Echo machine for creating true analog echo effects. The RE-201 is a simple system in which a small loop of tape records an incoming signal and immediately plays the recorded sound back over a couple playback heads before being erased over by new incoming audio. A real analog*

*system with warm, gritty and almost noiseless operation, the Space Echo can provide warm, unpredictable and highly tweakable echo effects.*

In the early Mode days, the inaccuracies and idiosyncrasies of Daniel Miller's ARP 2600 or Roland system 100, with their respective sequencers, would make for almost random events. The tuning was wonky, and the triggering of sounds via cv/gate, creating odd envelope shapes and squirting filters, could pleasantly surprise you in a way you didn't expect. You don't get that with digital units. I do miss some of that these days but I also remember how long it could take setting all that stuff up, and the frustrations when the boxes just wouldn't do what you had in mind.

**You have made a few longer pieces ('1+2', 'Hydrology', 'Black Box') which are more evolving, introducing several themes. They remind us a bit of symphonic pieces, with themes coming and going. Do you have a vision making longer tunes?**

Well I always have an often clouded vision when making music, and allowing that to migrate and evolve as you go is one of the great joys in creating. At times, I end up combining several ideas into one long piece where others might divide them into separate songs. I do enjoy music which takes time to unfold, and which doesn't conform to the standard pop/rock structures.

**What about the super quality sound mentioned in the open letter 'Music for the masses – I think not'. Have you made any attempts making music that really make artistic use of the hi-fi of 24/96k?**

There is a bit of extra 'air' and presence/warmth when working at higher digital rates but most people don't ever hear music in that format and the processing memory needed to run everything is far

greater, inevitably slowing down the computer. Since I work mainly on a laptop these days, I tend to stick to what the majority will end up hearing (24bit, 44.1 kHz). If I do experiment, I'd rather go super high bandwidth to see what can be achieved. We did work at much higher rates for the 'subHuman' 5.1 mixes for example.

**One final question. We know you are using lots of samples from all different sources. On 'Allelujah', there's this bass line and resonant organ hit – is a sample of Redshift?**

No – I'm not familiar with Redshift



***OMD***  
***Andy McCluskey***

## WHAT DOES THE FUTURE SOUND LIKE? AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH ANDY McCLUSKEY OF OMD

Time for yet another synth-pop pioneer to enter the front stage, here at Stereoklang. I had the pleasure to talk to none other than Andy McCluskey, 50% of the legendary act Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, OMD for short. Few other acts have had such an influential role in the development of the electronic pop music scene, with classic hits like Maid of Orleans, Enola Gay, Messages to name but a few. I wanted to ask Andy all about OMDs re-emergence on the music scene, their work in the

studio, past and present, and of course their most recent album "History of Modern".



### Looking back

For those growing up in the late 70's and 80's, OMD was as well-known to "synthpoppers" as any of the other leading acts at that time, i.e. Kraftwerk, Depeche Mode, Tears for Fears, Gary Numan, Yazoo to name but a few. I asked Andy how it all started. He lets us know that he and Paul started composing music when they were about 16, basically making music with what they had at hand (consider this was mid 1970s really primitive in other words). Andy was asked to join the band that Paul was involved in, but pretty quickly realized that they had much more in common and decided to go on their own. So in the very early days, what

was later to become OMD, it all started as a pure hobby. Back in Liverpool it is easy to picture two young guys at home listening to Kraftwerk and dreaming of success. It was also in Liverpool that their first real gig came about, at a club called Eric's. It was also at Eric's that they saw other bands that were thinking along the same lines, like The Normal (featuring Daniel Miller) that made Andy and Paul realize that what they were doing had relevance on the music scene.

Steelberry Clones – “where did the band name come from?” Andy – “we were assigned to do a one off event and we really wanted to come up with the most preposterous name they could ever think of – Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark – having absolutely no meaning whatsoever”. “There were no master plan!”

### **Biggest milestone**

With a career covering decades I certainly thought that Andy would think of any of their great concerts or when any of their now legendary albums like the poetic “Architecture and Morality”, ecstatic “Junk Culture” or “Dazzle Ships” hit the shelves, selling millions of copies, being the obvious choice. But no, Andy tells me that the biggest milestone for him was when he, in his own hands, was holding their first ever 7” vinyl single “Electricity”. “This was a record by Paul and I!” Andy says. This must truly have been a magic moment, as an any teenager at that time with a passion for music would browse through the import boxes in your local record shop as a weaken treat, finding rare issues of cool acts, imagine then to find your own piece of work.

With the single in hand, gigs started to come and OMD played as warm up act to Joy Division. Then Gary Numan, who had just bought their single Electricity asked if they would like to perform with him. The following year OMD themselves were the main attraction. Andy also remembers that this was also the first time, when performing with Joy Division, that they saw a real Pollard Syndrum in live action. The Pollard Syndrum was one of the first electronic drums and was capable of many different sounds. The sound favored by most recording artists was a sine wave that pitch-bends down, most famously heard at the beginning of “Good Times Roll”, the opening track of the Cars’ 1978 debut album.



### **History of Modern**

“History of Modern” represents a highly anticipated come back from one of the most influential electronic pop acts to date. Skeptics were questioning if they could re-invent themselves and why are they doing a retro-flirt. I kindly asked Andy about the retro-flirt and although Andy was not so keen on the term retro in relation to the new album he admits

that if going back to your roots and re-discover that unique and distinctive OMD sound, “then yes let us call it retro”. For Paul and Andy it was really important to get that “voice” of OMD back, that sound they left behind. “We spoke with our own authentic sound”, Andy says.

Starting to work on the new album it was important to OMD that it shouldn't be a copy; they needed to have new and fresh ideas. According to Andy "there are too many bands of our generation that do not have anything more to say."

#### **Who needs analog gear?**

Whether you're a synth geek or not, talking with OMD without spending time discussing synthesizers is unheard of. In relation to their new album it is kind of refreshing to hear Andy speak so warmly about modern music production and the use of computer technology more or less all the way. Andy and Paul are ProTools fans and in the beginning Dropbox acted as their main way of communication.

Interestingly enough though, this way of making music was not creative enough so they went back to make music in just the same way as they did when they recorded their first albums. OMD has always played all their sounds, tunes and chords live and basically only having a drum machine playing some sequenced rhythms to accompany them in the recording sessions. "In those days we used a tape machine as our DAW, we recorded on tape and then literally cut and pasted the tapes, so I would sit by the tape machine and Paul by the keyboard, now I sit by the Mac and Paul still by his keyboard". Speaking of ProTools I asked Andy if he had any particular favorites plugins and with no hesitation (and possibly with no surprise to me) he mentions EchoFarm. "I am huge fan of EchoFarm, switching it on and instantly everything sounds like the old days." says Andy.

"Back then everything centered on classic analog Korgs and Rolands but now we are purely software based". "The first synth we acquired, via a mail order service and cost us 7GBP for 36 weeks in a row, was the Korg Micro Preset". "Looking back it was a horrible piece, but it did kick start the sound you here on Messages and Enola Gay". "Other gear that created our sound was e.g. the Vox Organ, my bass guitar and a Korg MS20". "That was it really". But their arsenal of arms grew over the years and the money from their hits made it possible to add polyphonic keyboards like Prophet 5 and Oberheim OB-X and also samplers like Emulator and Novatron. I remember reading the full list of equipment on the inner sleeve on Dazzle ships – a rare statement on an album in the broad pop genre. Andy, however, stops for a second while we delve further into something that starts to become a vintage synth porn discussion, and remembers another classic piece of equipment that they used; the Selmer Pianotron, a strange keyboard that Andy hasn't seen anywhere since, sounded pretty much like a Kalimba, and apparently added the right ingredients to Electricity. The Selmer Pianotron and the Weltmeister Claviset are virtually identical instruments. The most probable reason for this is that Weltmeister manufactured all of these electric pianos, and Selmer imported and rebadged them for sale in the UK.



The three knobs to the left of the keyboard are used to adjust tremolo speed/depth and bass boost, but none of the controls really make a noticeable difference in sound. I assume the bass boost is a passive circuit just like the Rhodes Bass Boost control. Volume is adjusted on the bottom of the piano with a knee lever that can be folded up for storage and transport.

### Searching the authentic

I recently interviewed the new UK act “Mirrors” who really has made a splash on the electro / synth pop scene and Mirrors also became the warm up act for OMD during the spring. Mirrors consist of four young guys in suits operating analog synths (German vibes anyone?). Andy tells us that, although he thinks Mirrors are a really cool act and have created a characteristic sound, they are typical in their search for the authentic. “I see a juxtaposition between having it all handmade and being electronic.”

says Andy.



And although Andy finds himself too old to explore everything new he does seem to be fairly updated on today’s synth scene, he’s a huge fan of the Swedish singer Robyn, and continues to add more obscure acts like Zebra and the Snake from Finland, as well as Andreas Kleerup. “I am definitely not an expert, but yeah I do go looking”, says Andy.

### Experimenting

If anything, OMD are renowned for their experimentation and Andy says that many of their early songs started out as mere noise and sound landscapes, and when contended, added melodies on top. This is especially true for the album “Dazzle Ships”, which often, and at the time, was seen as too far out. Today, the album stands out as very forward-looking and precious to many. Based on this I came to discuss with Andy the role of experimentation today (and as some claim; lack of experimentation on their recent deliveries). Andy says that when they started they were completely open minded – being experimental was almost seen as a means to an end. “We wanted to change the world – today it may seem naïve” says Andy. However, this was how precious music was to these guys, back then and as Andy now says you cannot be experimental for its own sake – “music has to give something to somebody, it needs to stand the test of repeated listening”.

I guess the days when you stand by your gear saying “Wow, what a cool sound...” has somewhat passed its expiration date for OMD.

Experimenting may also include embracing of new platforms and media to deliver music, that’s why I asked Andy how much they have embraced the world of iPads, tablet synths etc. Well, based on the fact that Andy earlier on in the interview showed his love for ProTools and more or less letting all his analog gear remain in the closet, it came as no surprise that Andy says “anything is great that can produce noise”, and continuing saying that; who would not wanted to have access to all these mobile soft synths, in the tour bus, back then?

#### **What does the future sound like?**

“What does the future sound like?” is the recurring mantra in everything OMD is set out to do for their next album, adding “Can we make that?” Andy is well aware of that we are living in a post-modern era where pop music is basically eating itself. OMD going forward is all about controlling their own destiny. For us here at Stereoklang the logical follow-up question to this bold statement is of course when the next OMD album will hit the stores and what it will sound like? “Any \*f-ing\* thing we say it will sound like”, Andy replies with a good portion of humor, I must add.

The new album is coming? >> “It will be ready, MAYBE, in 2013”

#### **Taking the initiative**

The 21st century kicked off as the era for revival of old synth acts, several famous acts, such as Alpha Ville and Ultravox, has decided to bring up their old gear and songs onto the stage again, dusting of their now classic hits. OMD on the contrary, although the fact that 80’s synth pop is very fashionable among young people today, did not follow that route. Paul and Andy had not been in the same room for 16 years when German national TV called them in 2005 and asked if they would like to come on stage. So in a sense it was a bit of an accident, and although Paul was a bit reluctant at the start OMD are now touring again – and with such a huge success I must add.

However, the landscape OMD are now touring in, has changed quite a bit, so at the end of the interview I briefly discussed how social media is shaping the musical arena. “The music industry is in a very strange place today. The labels did not respond to the new media. You and I remember buying vinyl or even CDs, but today music is an icon on my son’s laptop, without any perceived value”, says Andy.

# *Welle:Erdball*



## STEREOKLANG TALKS TO WELLE:ERDBALL ON GEAR, RADIO STATIONS, AND THE RELEASE OF THEIR NEW ALBUM "DER KALTE KRIEG"

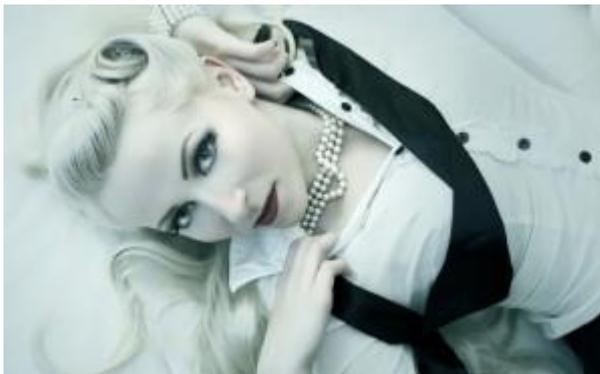
"Der Kalte Krieg" is the name of Welle:Erdball new album featuring covers of songs during the Cold War era. We wanted to know more of what has happened with the band since the DVD *Zeitsturm* was released and really understand what this Homo Futura project is all about. Honey and Freuline Plastique took some time to chat with us and transmit the latest buzz from the Funkhausstudio.



**Why did you start Homo Futura and what is it that you can do there that you cannot do in Welle:Erdball?**

In the beginning it was "Das Präparat" that started as an official Welle:Erdball side project. However, when we split up there were still some shows to do, so we did them anyway with a different set up (F.Nstein & Plastique). This worked out really fine and was a lot of fun. So we decided to keep going and it was really fun to create a new band, new image, new stage show etc.

*Official video of "homo~futura – Links-Rechts"*



**The Zeitmaschine played an important role in the DVD you released last year. Do you see yourself as time travelers when it comes to your music and the band image?**

We're traveling through time constantly – just take a look at your watch! Apart from that, music is definitely a good way to travel through time with your mind.

**You once said (some 10 years ago) that Welle:Erdball had a long way to go before reaching the goal of Welle:Erdball – The goal was to sound like Welle:Erdball. Have you reached that goal now and how is it shown in your music and visuals?**

I think we are really close with the new album “Der Kalte Krieg”. But we haven’t really reached our goal yet. It might sound hard to believe, but since the start of Welle:Erdball, all the concepts and partly the names of the broadcasts and songs were already set. And we still have to accomplish a couple of things on this list.

So it won’t be over for a long time.

**Could we expect a radio show by Welle:Erdball including only Gainsbourg song? We feel that the work of Serge matches the Welle concept very well. We’re sure he would approve of you bringing his work to a younger generation.**

Probably not. We’re not a “cover band” although we appreciate Gainsbourg’s work a lot.

But actually the upcoming release “Der Kalte Krieg” will contain only cover versions of favorite songs from different artists about the cold war and others.



*Serge Gainsbourg was a French singer-songwriter, actor and director. Gainsbourg’s extremely varied musical style and individuality make him difficult to categorize. His legacy has been firmly established, and he is often regarded as one of the world’s most influential popular musicians.*

**You have a lot of political and social ambitions with your songs, ranging from the criticism of gaming consoles to the man-machine integration. What areas are your main concerns today and why, and would you agree on the theories of a technological Singularity that has been put forward by e.g. Kurzweil?**

It is hard to comment on this. Since the opinion of Welle: Erdball not always is the personal opinion. I find it important that you first have an opinion at all and that there is a message in the music and in the lyrics. Not: “Come on, let’s have a party tonight!” :). And we see it as our duty to have a social commitment but we are no judges, who tell the audience what to think. It is only important that you form your own opinion or that there is a chance to do so.”

**What is it that you like about the 50’s sound?**

Well we’re using 50s aesthetics since the beginning and we’re all big fans of this era. The sound of the 50s and the subculture behind it was one of the first “punk” movements in music history.

Probably the most charming way of going against the mainstream.



**You describe yourself as hard working, keeping you self-busy 28 hours a day. Is that just the German spirit and work morale showing or do you have an artistic fire burning inside?**

I don't know if it is the German mentality, maybe a little...But under any circumstances is it the Welle: Erdball-mentality. We are working on a vision! We don't see ourselves

as a normal mortal Sex, Drugs & Rock'n'Roll music band, but rather as employees of a radio station, which broadcasts information, synthesized tones, music, plays, news... through the air to the listener.

**We appreciate that the German culture is important part of the Welle identity – Do you ever feel that singing in German is limiting your possibilities to reach your audience fully as you have many fans all over the world?**

We can't really do anything about the fact that we ARE German. We speak German every day, we think in German, dream in German, hate in German and love in German, doing it differently it would be / feel rather strange. Then we prefer to produce art and music in a proper way. German is the language we speak perfectly and that is better than writing songs in pseudo English, isn't it?

**We know that you love vintage gear like the C64 and MS-20. Why are these vintage machines so important to you, and have you also embraced any modern electronic music production tools and gear?**

80% of our radio station equipment is form the 80's or 70's, Arcade-Automats, Super 8-Projectors etc. and of course also analog synthesizers. I believe these things have their own soul and you can sense this soul, when you work with these instruments. And maybe the Welle: Erdball-listener can hear and experience a little of this soul.

Of course, we also have some new digital instruments, such as the Access Virus B, Korg EX8000...), but that is the minority. Welle: Erdball must sound like Welle: Erdball and PC-Sounds do NOT sound like Welle: Erdball!



*When the DW-8000 succeeded the DW-6000, it expanded it to 8 notes polyphony, 16 sampled waveforms, a velocity sensitive keyboard with programmable after touch, auto-bend, a simple arpeggiator and a digital delay unit. The Digital Delay was an astonishing goody for the time, offering up to 512ms delay, phasing, flanging, chorusing and other time effects. Both the Arpeggiator, Auto-Bend and Digital Delay make this synth an inspiring and great sounding machine to use for great 303*

*basslines, techno and house bass and synth sounds and more! The EX-8000 (pictured above) is a rackmount version of the DW-8000.*

**We know that you are quite secretive on your work in the studio, but do you think you could share some light on the creative process – where does it start and where does it end?**

That is hard to describe, then you really have to come to the radio station. It is really a small time machine... and it really works!

**We have a lot of readers in the electronic music production space, apart from the obvious machines and software, do you have any favorites past and present that has shaped your sound?**

I believe I am really a little KORG-fan (KORG MS-10,20, Poly61, DVP-1, VC-10, and Poly800) but also instruments from Roland like Jupiter 6, JX-3 or CR-78 are often used here. It might sound funny, but as a sequencer we are still using ATARI Mega4STE with Midex und Cubase 3.0 :)... And when it comes to Commodore64, we almost only use "Soundmonitor" by CHRIS H. Isbeck (1986) or program the tones manually in Basic or Assembler. I believe one of the main reasons why, why new music always sounds the same is that everybody uses the same tools... But music must not sound the same! So you have to use equipment which is NOT "mainstream". And good old analog high quality equipment is better than plastic garbage Plastik-M,II and digital PC-Hard/Software..."



*The Atari Mega STE was Atari Corporation's last ST series personal computer, released in 1991. The MEGA STE was essentially a late-model 680x0-based STE mounted in the case of the otherwise unrelated Atari TT computer, although a number of TT features were also blended in. The resulting machine was a more business-like version of the ST line.*

**We know that C64 is very close to your heart but have you used Chipsounds by Plogue? We feel that they really took emulation to the next level.**

We have not really dealt with that. The C=64 is for us not only a musical instrument, but also a good friend, who you can play with and rely on... And maybe the only machine in the world, which says: "I can't do much..., but together we can to everything above my technical limits!" You are really caught by the capacity, but at any time you can surpass it and do things with this home computer, which should not be possible."

**What do you think of the new Commodore 64? Do you have one? What are your thoughts on this, will the new C64 be a clear member of the band? What do you think we can expect from the new C64, will it be similar to the recently released new Fairlight?**

I don't believe there is a second time"! All part 2 are the worst ones ("Indiana Jones 2" :)). You can improve what is good, but that which is PERFECT can't get any better. This "new" C=64 maybe is a really nice "Retro-idea" but it is only a PC. I hate "retro"! Welle: Erdball is NOT a Retro-Band!!! We are the last ones from the original!"

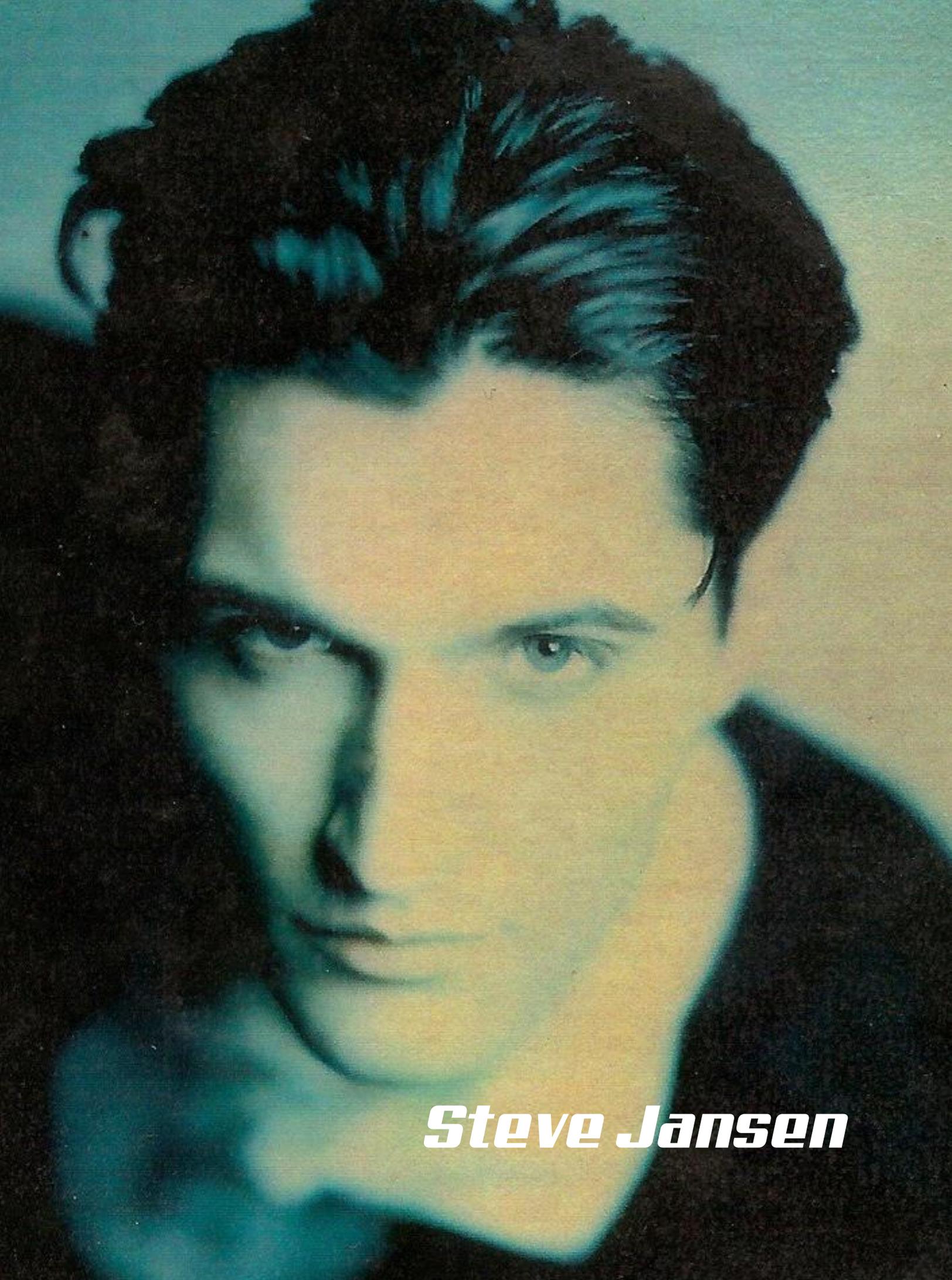
**Do you see your "children" use the iPhone as a retro tool in the future? Why do you think retro is important?**

The day before yesterday we had C64 retro, yesterday Amiga500, today Nintendo Gameboy and tomorrow the iPhone... Always what you connect to at the best time of your life and that time you want to keep permanently.

**What can we expect from Welle:Erdball in 2011/12?**

In October 2011 the new Welle: Erdball-Broadcats (LP) "Der Kalte Krieg" will be released, paired with a live-bonus-DVD, and a new Video-Clip. Then we will have our little European tour and then we will start working on the next broadcast "Dance music for robots". I think now we have more creativity than ever before and that must be taken advantage of.

**Best wishes from the radio station!**



***Steve Jansen***

## WORLDS IN A SMALL ROOM — INTERVIEW WITH STEVE JANSEN (FORMER MEMBER OF JAPAN)

Steelberry Clones had the great opportunity to talk to Steve Jansen during his recent visit to Sweden. Steve Jansen was former percussionist in the legendary 1980's new romantic act Japan (also featuring David Sylvian, Richard Barbieri and Mick Karn). After the band decided to quit in 1982 Steve has embarked on a long and successful journey, sometimes in collaboration with his brother David Sylvian on his solo albums, sometimes in more unknown appearances together with Japanese artists like Yukohiro Takahashi (YMO), but also driving more pop orientated endeavors with the Dolphin Brothers, which he started together with Richard Barbieri. Steve Jansen has at many occasions been dubbed as one of the most important percussionist of his time, and the characteristic sound that gave way for their all-time selling album Tin Drum, has provided him with the opportunity to play with most of the leading artists since then. I wanted to know more on what has happened since then, his views on today's music scene and the evolution of electronic music, as well as discovering his more recent works in the border lands between pop, ambient, arts and experimental music.



### **Today's music scene**

Steve Jansen is a highly productive musician, if it is not something on his own doing you will certainly find Steve in collaborations with David Sylvian, John Foxx, or as part of the band on tour with Ryuichi Sakamoto in Japan. So I asked Steve to give me an update on what he is up to right now and his collaboration with Sugizo.

Most recently Steve has been involved in finalizing Mick Karn's new

Dalis Car album, partly to keep his spirit alive, but also as a fund raising initiative for his relatives. Steve has therefore been active both as a mixer and performer of the new album and engaged in the process of reworking some of the new tracks. The yet untitled album is due out in the October – November time frame. As most of you know Mick Karn died recently and one of things that Mick Karn was doing at the time was to produce a new Dalis Car album. Dalis Car's first album "The Walking Hour" released in 1984 was an interesting album where the borders between various musical styles were mixed to

create a very unique album at the time. With Sugizo Steve recently contributed a rhythm track to a new recording, a track also featuring Mick Karn on bass.

With some thirty years as a musician, working across most prominent genres – as a new romantic pop star as part of Japan, to exploring the fields of ambient electronics and jazz fusion, to bridging the gap between modern art visuals and experimental music, it is highly relevant to ask Steve’s view on today’s music scene. Steve says that today’s scene is of course in many ways very different from back when he started his career. The power of the record companies put a lot of constraints and pressure on the bands to deliver on time, but also to make music in line with what they and the fans were requesting – “pleasing the record label almost became a means to an end”, Steve says. Today you have much more freedom to explore and the artists does not work under the same pressure. So although it is harder to make a living you are the one in control. With modern music technology you almost have endless possibilities to manipulate sounds and craft your own ideas – inside your head.

### **Back to Japan**

You really cannot write about Steve without touching on the subject of Japan, both as a band and as the country where both David and Steve over the years has continued to find inspiration, collaborations and a solid fan base. When Japan ended as a band in 1982, (doing their last tour in Japan, followed by a live album), the band members ended up doing several projects on their own or in collaborations with each other.

I wanted to know how this fascination with Japan as a country came to shape their music going forward. Steve tells me that it has probably been more that they have all individually made their own subjective interpretations of the music. And although it was a strong influence on the Tin Drum album, Steve says that more recently it has been more important for him to embrace modern rhythms and electronic sounds, although that he has in his collaboration with Sugizo been working to incorporate the sounds of traditional Japanese Taiko drums.



Steve and David Sylvian have over the years done several highly acclaimed albums where they have been exploring the boundaries of ambient, electronic and jazz. As a listener you can easily picture late night improvisations where Steve and David together with other musicians like Harold Budd and

Robert Fripp, would jam together beautiful ambient landscapes. I wanted to know if this was an accurate image of the music production process and how the songs took their shape. Steve directly jumps to the time of the Rain Tree Crow album, which in his mind was the best album they ever produced. “The four of us has always been very much drawn to the experimental side of things and it has also been very important that everyone in the team gets their freedom in the music production

process”, Steve says. It is also clear from what Steve tells me that the atmosphere is essential, since it is often a very long process from the first sessions to a complete album. For the Rain Tree Crow album they embarked themselves into Jack Lucier’s estate for a couple of months. Steve continues saying that when they were working on the Nine Horses album it was truly a laborious work where all the pieces gradually developed and evolved from exchanging audio-files over a long period of time. So even though jam sessions are a natural part of their creative process and far from always so successful,



the real treat comes from the “accidents” that occur during these sessions.

“During a session we would typically record everything and afterwards when going through the material we would find something that triggers our imagination and we will use these samples to create a library of sounds”, says Steve. The “accidents” will then be loaded onto a PC to be further manipulated either in ProTools or Digital Performer, the latter a DAW that has followed Steve for a long time. “It is a very stable and reliable system”, Steve

says. The sounds will be looped in such a way that it captures your ear. I came to ask Steve if he had any favorite plug-ins for the mixing and mastering side of things, but he says that it is very time consuming to enter the realms of plug-ins – “I prefer putting together a jigsaw puzzle of the raw samples”, says Steve.

#### **Borders between pop music and experimental**

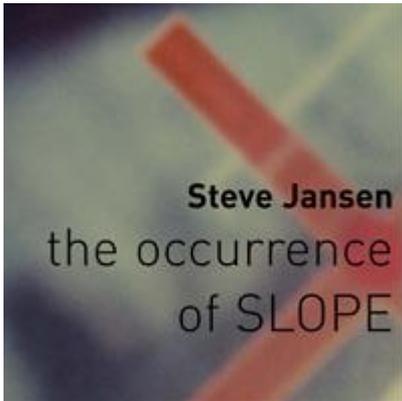
Steelberry: “You have been moving back and forth between pop music (Japan, Dolphin Brother etc.) and ambient music for quite a long time. Where do you feel most at home, where is your stage today?” Steve tells me that he does not go in the pop direction anymore, Dolphin Brothers were more or less a one off event in his career. Some collaboration has taken place over the years that are more pop orientated, but it is not a scene Steve personally seeks to explore. “I don’t set out to be radio friendly – my comfort zone would definitely be outside the pop zone”, says Steve. Steve rarely sings, despite the fact that he has a fairly good voice, so I asked Steve where the vocals went – and Steve tells me that he himself has never thought of himself as a good singer and that Dolphin Brothers was a one off event, but that it was an interesting exercise in itself to write “favorable” pop songs.

Although pop music is a thing of the past for Steve the legacy of Japan as the kings of the New Romantic era continues to linger on. Japan started out as glam rockers, but later converged into a style that took large inspirations from other acts at the time, like Roxy Music and David Bowie. The connections to Roxy Music was inevitable says Steve, “we had the same producers, we were in the same field of electronics and so forth – and it wasn’t until “Gentlemen take polaroid’s” and the Tin Drum album we really started to push our boundaries into new directions”.

Since then Steve and the rest of the Japan crew has deliberately moved away from the traditional pop scene, only to re-emerge in the form of the Rain Tree Crow constellation to which Steve comments: "The only piece worth listening to today".

#### **On his own with SLOPE**

Steelberry: "If you look at the SLOPE records you seem to be doing everything; string arrangements, drums, computer programming etc. Can you tell us a little about the concept of SLOPE and what your ambitions with SLOPE are?" Steve tells me that SLOPE is his first solo album and it took a long time to get there. Originally the tracks were aimed to be part of the Nine Horses album, but apparently came



to form the basis of his solo venture. Interesting to note is that the entire album was done virtually sending files back and forth, a mode of working that Steve truly enjoyed. The album features several prominent guest vocalists like Tim Elsenburg, Anja Garbarek, Nina Kinert and David Sylvian. "The album really required people who could deliver and it was an album that never could have been done in a studio setting", says Steve. Steve has more or less always been part of a team in the music creation process, so I asked Steve what it was like to do a solo project. Steve replies that of course it was intriguing to be

in full control of the material and the creative process; you really had the opportunity to take the music in your own direction, without compromises – Steve adds. "It was more challenging, more responsibility and more pride involved – it represents you", Steve says. "It had to be an accurate representation."

SLOPE clearly follows in the musical direction that all the former band members of Japan has pursued over the years and we came to discuss two of my favorite experiences where Steve has had a leading role "Worlds in a small room", by Jansen/Barbieri and "Kinoapparatom", which both takes a stab at merging experimental music with modern arts and visuals. I asked Steve how these albums came about and the fascination with Man With a Movie Camera? "Our intention was to add sounds to visuals, since you get such an immediate reaction – a drama where visuals help you interpret the audio", says Steve. "Kinoapparatom" can, depending on who is watching and what audio you add to it, appear dark, powerful, happy, and your perception changes depending on what you see and the sound will affect your impressions.

#### **Remaining on the niche scene**

Today you will find thousands of videos on Youtube and Vimeo featuring advanced electronic installations, augmented audio experiments, modular synthesis, computer generated noise to name but a few. We came to discuss whether this would remain as a niche scene or if we can see these alternative art forms emerge on the front stage. Steve says that it is a necessary part of the evolution of electronic music, a form of expressiveness that sometimes tends to be very non-musical. Some of

it could very well be commercialized, but in general it is clear that going for mass-appeal for a broader audience often is not so adventurous. “The pop formula is very recognizable”, says Steve and adds that the underground niche scene not necessarily needs to be mainstream going forward.

### Drums from the past

The Simmons SDS V, SDS5, or Simmons Drum Synthesizer was the first viable electronic replacement for acoustic drums. During the Japan era Steve was using the Simmons 5 so I asked Steve what he enjoyed with them and why he abandoned them after Tin Drum? Steve tells me that he actually only used them live and that they were actually a torture to use. Due to some strange plastic wrapping they did not have any real sensitivity to them and few modes of elaboration, thus extremely hard to play. But the good thing was that they always sounded the same and they looked good, Steve says with a smile (probably also remembering his soar arms and hands after each gig).



Steve is very much an acoustic person, he mentions owning a Roland V-Drum kit, but only uses it for rehearsals. “I tend to record stuff instead or use other sources”, Steve says. Steve uses a lot of samples that he puts straight into Reason’s ReDrum with minimum of effects. Steve enjoys the raw sound of the original samples. Steve admits that he is, just like Richard Barbieri, a Reason fan within reason. “I mixed Richard’s latest album and

everything was running live in Reason, not at all my way of working – I like to have it all recorded”. Steve has always been a highly acclaimed drummer and I asked whether he had any specific tricks up his sleeve, but he says that it is probably not so much any specific tricks or sounds that has made his sound unique but rather the unexpected placement of the sounds in the mix. “Later in the studio I can choose to humanize or de-humanize the sound as I please”, Steve says.



**Explosion of new gear**

Steelberry: “Today we have an explosion of soft synths, samplers and iOS/tablet type electronic instruments – is this a pure positive thing or are we losing our roots in what music creation is all about. “ Steve says that you still got the traditional format, you only got more options today – “and I am all for it”, Steve says. By saying that, it is clear that Steve is not a retro gear collector and what really count in Jansen’s world are natural sounds from real instruments. However, he mentions that for example Electric Keys is a natural part of his ensemble today, paired with various samplers. “What really matters is how you organically interact with an object or instrument – modern electronic devices can never replace the real instrument – there always have to be a physical act involved. The Garageband way of making music, the drag’n’drop style, really makes the creative thought process go away.



***Daniel B / Front 242***

## INTERVIEW WITH FRONT 242'S DANIEL B ON SYNTHESIZERS AND THE 'NOTHING BUT NOISE' PROJECT

Steelberry Clones got an exclusive interview with Daniel B (Daniel Bressanutti) from Front 242. Daniel B talks passionately about analog synthesizers, the future of Front 242 and his latest project – Nothing But Noise, with a scheduled album release on April 16th. Front 242 hardly needs any major introduction, for 30 years they have been shaping, defining and exploring the genre that later became the foundation for electronic body music (EBM). Several bands have followed in their footsteps since then. Front 242 started in 1981 in Aarschot, near Brussels, Belgium, by Daniel and Dirk Bergen, who wanted to create music and graphic design using emerging electronic tools. The first single, “Principles”, was released in 1981. The front part of the name comes from the idea of an organized popular uprising.

Patrick Codenys and Jean-Luc De Meyer had separately formed a group called Under Viewer at about the same time, and the two duos joined together in 1982. Bressanutti, Codenys and De Meyer took turns on vocals at first, until they settled on De Meyer as the lead vocalist. De Meyer came to write most of the lyrics and Valerie Jane Steele also wrote several tracks including “Don’t Crash”. They decided not to use the regular waveform settings on their synthesizers, arguing that creating the

waveform for each note was part of the creative process.



Dirk Bergen early on left the band to pursue other things, but Daniel tells us that they have remained friends for all of these years, and when the opportunity came up last year they decided to get back in the studio together with Erwin Jadot (a mutual friend) to bring us this new project

called Nothing But Noise (NBN). The new NBN album that will be released on April 16th brings us a very different sound, then we are used to listening to Front 242. NBN, apart from being done entirely by machines, has very little in common with Front 242 – it is a very complex sounding album with strong ambient influences, basically all instrumental and perhaps most importantly no drums. Daniel B tells us that this was a clear intent from the beginning – to do a full synthetic album with no drums in sight. Steelberry Clones has pre-listened to the entire album and we must say that it is an impressive

sonic experience to listen to all these analog synths pushed into a dark ambient world – a cinematic experience.

The members of Front 242 were heroes in the electronic underground scene all through the 80s and 90s, and have continued to record and tour to the present day. The band members has come and gone over the years but they all have one thing in common and that is their love for side-projects – all current members of Front 242 sport multiple side-projects spanning DJing, bands and film. Daniel B has produced a range of extra-curricular work over the years, including 'Male or Female' and 'Speed Tribe', a DVD and audio release based around the 2001 Le Mans motor race. Nothing But Noise, together with Dirk and Erwin, is Daniel's latest and most anti-242 project and of course we here at Steelberry Clones needed to know more about this.

**Can you tell us a little about the theme of the new NBN album**

"For us it was like a new beginning, and although it had been a long time since we stopped working together, we always had in the plans that at one point in time we should do something together. So when the opportunity came we basically did not have any specific plans for the new album – we merely did for ourselves, not something revolutionary, but something we both liked."



However, somewhere in the back of our heads we had two objectives; first we wanted to kind of explore where the music we all listened to when we were young (Tangerine Dreams, Krautrock, Kraftwerk, Stockhausen etc) would have been today if these acts had continued to produce material all the way to where we stand today. Secondly, we wanted to take on the challenge of not using any drums at all, especially considering our Front 242 background. "I would say

that the only real parallel to Front 242 is the sole use of machines."

**You have all been engaged in several side projects, alongside Front 242, has this been a way to keep the creativity up**

Not in relation to Front 242, I would say. Front 242 is actually more of a certain formula – you know what it is supposed to sound like, and in fact most of our fans (and the longer we keep going) want us to sound the same. At least speaking for myself – Front 242 is not my whole life. It's the same thing with a guitar player who at points in time also wants to play the piano – there are so many things to explore, but of course all the things you do outside of Front 242 will influence the work in the band – cross-pollination in a sense. The "Male and Female" album has definitely influenced my way of making music and in general it is easier to be creative in a new format, like Nothing But Noise, to explore new things.

**The announced break with Front 242, was that because of Nothing But Noise, or something else**

“As you know we (Front 242) do not make any records anymore – so I have plenty of time to focus on other projects.” Front 242 still have some booked concerts that we will do, especially in countries where we have not toured a lot, so we will still do occasional shows going forward, and for how long depends a lot on inspiration. When it comes to Nothing But Noise it is easy to say that we have the time and music is our lives



**Was it hard to start working again with Dirk after all these years – did you have a plan on what you wanted to accomplish**

“We talked about it a lot and we did not have a master plan what we wanted to do.” (Editor’s note: There is a lot of similarities with the recently announced collaboration

between Martin Gore and Vince Clarke – VCMG, two other guys who decided to make a techno album after 30 years without much contact at all, although Daniel B and Dirk has been close friends all these years). When Dirk left his 9-5 job, Erin and I pushed him to start working with us again – “If you ever stop working then we have to do music together”.

The whole Nothing But Noise album was more or less all about improvisation. In our respective studios we would do something and during a session we decided let’s keep this part and so the work progressed. We exchanged MIDI files and guides for how to set up the various parts. In most cases I made a base for the song and then in the studio we added solos and pads. So all the rhythmical parts were done before entering the studio.

**You have mentioned that you took inspiration for the new Nothing But Noise album from several of the great synth pioneers – what influence have they in fact had on the works of Front 242 and Nothing But Noise**

Easiest would be to say: “The use of machines – it is kind of magic; the sounds that come from non-traditional instruments”. The move from traditional instruments resembles a lot what we have seen in film as well, where we have gone from 2D animated movies from Walt Disney, to today’s super 3D animated movies, Pierre Henry, Stockhausen and others did the same in the field of music – introducing new technology. Personally Daniel did not want to learn any instrument, although started as a drummer, so he ventured into the field of synthesizers. Actually his first synthesizer was a Roland System 101 back in the 70’s. Things like the Fairlight was far too expensive, but the fact that Daniel got a job in a music shop allowed him to explore a lot of the new gear that came about, e.g. the Roland MC4 Micro Composer. (The MC-4 MicroComposer was an early microprocessor-based music sequencer released by the Roland Corporation. It could be programmed using the ten key numeric

keyboard or a synthesizer keyboard using the keyboards control voltage and gate outputs.) So in summary Daniel says that his biggest influence was through the love of machines.

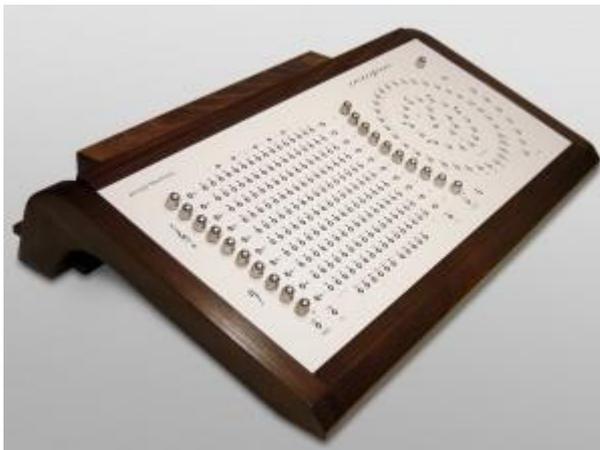
**You have a fairly large synth collection – any favorites and what do you think of the analog revival that we are experiencing right now**

In principal Daniel loves everything analog and in general none is better than the other – “it all boils down to what you need and what you have set out to accomplish”. When we ask again he does mention the Moog Voyager and the Virus, as well as the Oberheim. “Favorites change from song to song”, Daniel says. For example if Daniel wants to make use of a synth bass, he would never go for a KORG C1, but mostly he will end up in a fairly mixed environment – the difference always sits in the details.

Daniel then talks warmhearted about the difference of using a Tube Amp versus a Transistor Amp. Tube Amps are a real passion to Daniel, however if they would be active in other genres they would probably be more digital, “as of today we do not really need all that noise and crazy sounds that are out there”.

Going back to the analog stuff, Daniel tells us that he still sees the Roland System 100 as a very capable system, and when he goes shopping for modular stuff he prefer American suppliers, both based on quality and price. The Formant synth is also something that ranks high in Daniel’s world of synths – “It is not a hybrid – they sound like an old Moog VCS”.

On the Nothing But Noise album we have a very standard set up and in the center sits a Octopus sequencer, which from my perspective is more of an instrument then a controller. It has its roots in the analog world.



*While sequencers are machines to control synthesizers, Octopus stands out for a broad user base as a musical instrument. The merit lies in the directness, intuitiveness and creativity that gets unleashed by interacting with Octopus.*

**Why did you want to go all analog?**

According to Daniel – they wanted to maximize the experience, and be analog as far as they could. Together the trio has a huge set of gear and as Daniel puts it: “Why not use them?” So apart from the song “Brush”, which was not analog at all, actually it is not even synths – Brush was more about looping in a delay, Nothing But Noise features synths like the Virus Polar and the Juno 16 a lot.

Although he let us know that on future releases it will be a more mixed environment. “We are always working on new stuff”, says Daniel – meaning that we can expect more Nothing But Noise productions going forward.

**We noticed that you are using Cubase on stage – is this your favorite DAW or have you embraced other software as well**

Cubase has always been a companion to Daniel, however Daniel also points out that Cubase really lost the game when they weren’t able to handle video in a proper way, so for Front 242 we have been using Logic, and in general it is best to focus on one system. Daniel continues saying that Sculpture is probably the best, if not the only, reason to go with Logic.



For those of you who have not heard of this powerful synth: *Plenty of soft synths claim to be unique, but Sculpture, the physical modeling plug-in included with Logic Pro, really is one of the deepest and most powerful soft synths on the planet. By physically modeling the components of acoustic instruments, then feeding them through a downright insane chain of adjustments, modulation, keyboard*

*scaling, morphing, and alien voodoo, Sculpture is capable of sounding different from anything else out there. That’s not easy to do. Of course, the other side of Sculpture is that it’s incredibly daunting to learn. Parts are intuitive and fun to play with, like the ball in the Material panel in the center. But the modulation and morphing options at the bottom caused one good friend I won’t name, with years of professional preset design and synth programming, to exclaim, “Find me one person who understands how that bottom section works.”*

The song “Brush” on the new album is a good example of the use of Sculpture, Daniel B says. Daniel has more or less tested everything that has come including Reaktor (NI) and Reason (Propellerhead), stating that Reaktor’s Razor is a nice player, but that Reason is too much 808 for him (and far too complex – hyper informative and too cluttered, he adds). Razor on the other hand provides you with modular in a modular, kind of. Synplant is another favorite of Daniel’s – in a world where he would have entered into other musical genres.

**How do you take your analog experience on stage?**

This is tricky, Daniel admits and also says that they are far from final in how they would like to do it going forward. As of right now Nothing But Noise are still testing what would be the best set up. Today they are using three re-programmed Access Virus, together with Dave Smith’s Pro 8, and (believe it or

not) an iPad running the Animoog. “For us it is important to keep a real live sound”, Daniel says. The Animoog is used for solos and noise – a superior touch thing he claims, and something that has revolutionized how we perform with music. A multi-joystick kind of. Daniel says that they want to use iPads even more on stage – especially from an improvisation perspective. The iPad is even great from a projection perspective, when you have the opportunity to see the screen moving during the concert, something that Daniel says he has really been missing. “This will over time get rid of all unique touch devices like the Tenori-On and the Kaossilator over time. “I have expected this revolution for a long time”, Daniel says, especially in the world of controllers as we have been using the iPad as a controller for the Slim Phatty.

### **Sampled voices and what happens next in the world of Daniel B**

Daniel and I came, at the end of the interview, to discuss the absence of sampled voices on the new NBN album, which in fact has been used quite heavily by Front 242 on many of their albums. Daniel



says that the truth is that you can't steal anymore, the world of IP rights has catch up with bands like Front 242 and Nothing But Noise. And to create everything from scratch really isn't an option – far too expensive and troublesome. What happens next? Daniel let's know that they are up for invitations to play live – all bands must tour these days, both because it is fun of course, but also

because that is the state of the record industry today. “Playing live is such an influence on what you do when you come home, you cannot compare improvising live versus improvising in the studio.”



***Karl Bartos***

## KARL BARTOS AND THE VOICE OF TECHNOLOGY: AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE EX-ROBOT FROM GERMANY

Some of weeks ago Karl Bartos toured a couple of cities in Sweden and Steelberry Clones, got an exclusive interview with the synth pop pioneer. Karl, being one of the four members of the classic Kraftwerk line-up and with several legendary compositions on his track record, i.e. Computer World, The Man Machine, Electric Café. To recap some of the more important activities it is worth mentioning that Karl founded the group Elektric Music in 1992, releasing the album Esperanto, and he have collaborations along the way with Bernard Sumner, Johnny Marr and Andy McCluskey. And since Steelberry Clones are in fact based out of Sweden it is worth mentioning his guest appearance with Swedish synthpop act Mobile Homes. After leaving Kraftwerk, some 25 years ago, the music that he and the rest of the band created is still a great inspirational source across numerous musical genres.



Karl has ventured into many different fields since the Kraftwerk days and has delivered highly acclaimed albums along the way, such as Communication – featuring such songs as “I’m the Message,” “The Camera,” and “Ultraviolet.

In awaiting his new album, due early next year, we wanted to dig a little deeper into the mind of Karl, by asking him about the music creation

side of things.

### **The new album in the works**

Karl is now producing a new album, but working in the studio is being like a scientist, tweaking and tuning – composing is the pleasure part! The production process involves starting with beta versions and then continues to work with the songs, improving them and making new versions – even though all twelve songs were set at demo stage. Here Karl adds a remark that stems from his German and Kraftwerk roots – “I go into the studio 8 hours every day”. Producing your own work requires making final decision, fighting yourself.

### **Being a director and the use of computers**

Composing is being like a director of drama – there are roles and dialogue. Making electronic music is like making an acoustic film. For Karl melody and harmony are key ingredients. And while composing the sound is an integral part of the composition. Working with synthesizers for more than thirty years Karl has built up a pallet of sounds in his head which he uses as basis while composing. Whilst there are infinite sound possibilities using electronic instruments – “there are so many sounds, I can’t listen to all of them”, only adding new sounds occasionally. Regarding electronic instruments Karl hasn’t sold any of his synthesizers and still prefers the old analogs. But just like computers – they are only tools. Like a craftsman that needs different screwdrivers but then he doesn’t love them – “computers are just eating my time”. Many musicians today turn to analog gear as they miss the tactile experience while creating but for Karl the important composing process is done in his head – not turning knobs or clicking on computers. That said the computers are used heavily during production of audio and video, sampling sounds.

Regarding computers, *Computer World*, the eighth studio album to come out of the Kling Klang studio, in these Twitter days we can assume that all these sound bytes like “It’s more fun to compute” would make efficient and highly acclaimed Twitter posts today :-). However, what is more interesting to know is that at the time of the making of the *Computer World* album Karl and the others had never actually owned or used a computer themselves. “During the making of *Computer World* we had a closer look at those incredibly smart machines at the IBM affiliate in Düsseldorf”.



Remember that the PC was just launched and home computers were if not science fiction very exotic at the time.

### **I robovox**

The robot voices are a trademark of Bartos music and appears on all his albums where he uses both vocoders and synthetic made voices. They are used for the dramaturgic effect – as “the voice of technology itself, or like

the voice God”. The robot voices are then not himself singing and can be used just like the narrator in a film. The voice technology has advanced tremendously the last years with products like Antares Auto Tune, Melodyne, Vocaloid etc. and they are used in numerous pop hits, but few have put them as permanent tool on their artistic palette.

### **Cracking the code of music**

Growing up in occupied Düsseldorf in the 60’s he was exposed to the likes of The Beatles and The Doors. Soon he wanted to make music on his own joining several bands. Already then Karl wanted to crack the code of music. Starting a solo career 25 years later it came as a surprise to him that he still had the same musical references. When searching for what’s the most important aspect of music the

answer was – melody. And great melodies are timeless – a melody can touch a heart, makes people listen. “Clever production is not enough – you need the melody. The most important parameter in music is the definitive pitch.” The collaboration with Bernard Sumner and Johnny Marr seem obvious combining Karl’s guitar based roots and strong pop melodies.

#### **A look into the future**

The new album Karl is working on includes songs written recently and also some many years ago. His past albums like *Communication* and *Esperanto* have had a strong theme but the five years as lecturer at the Berlin University of the Arts where everything has to be analyzed has made him tired of intellectualizing at the loss of creativity.



The University years have been demanding in a way but it was also an opportunity to make some research into visual art to add some weight to his CV. Karl has been working a lot with films the last decade making them and investigating the convergence of vision and sound. “The photography is one of the most important innovations to society”. Pictures, film and TV have changed the world. The videos are an important part of the live shows and includes clips from his own as well as others films (e.g. the 60s films *Blow Up* and *Peeping Tom*).

Following Karl’s interest of film in particular and media in general followed studying e.g. the works of Marshall McLuhan and others. The album *Communication* elaborates on the subject with the songs like “15 Minutes Of Fame” and “The Camera” etc. McLuhan’s most famous sound byte is “the medium is the message” introduced in his book “*Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*”. Asking Karl’s view on smart phones and tables as musical instruments or part of the creative process he concludes he hasn’t embraced them as artistic tools but that they appear to be more of an extension of man as anything else!



### Concerts in Sweden

When we met with Karl back stage after his performance in Malmoe, Sweden, we are pleased to announce that he admittedly had to agree that Malmoe probably has the most thriving electro scene in the Nordics and with excited audience listening to Kraftwerk songs, mixed with his own material – it was a pure joy to be there this evening. Karl performed a

plethora of all these classic songs that we have been listening to since we were kids, with beautiful cascades of video material to accompany the set. Somewhat disappointing though that he did not play anything from his upcoming album. On stage we saw Karl smile towards a blessed crowd of Kraftwerk advocates, singing the classic lyrics while at the same time managing the video performance. The only actual real synths seen live on stage was the microKORG doing its best to fulfill the need for vocoders. All in all, we dearly hope this was not the last time we saw Karl in town.

The new album will hopefully be released this year but also the back catalog is being remastered and will be reissued.



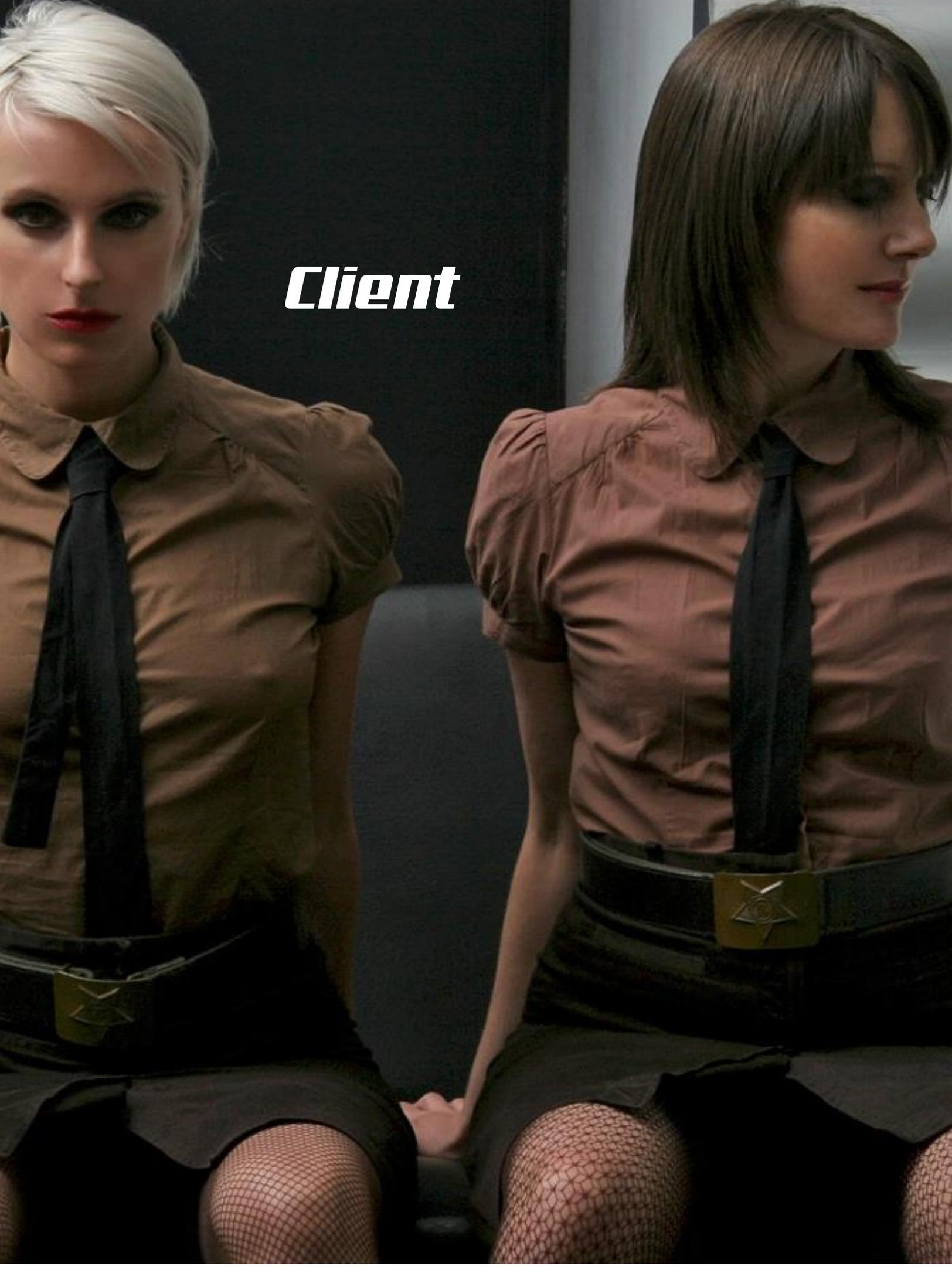


Gothenburg, Sweden, is hosting the Electronic Summer festival featuring acts like Covenant, Aesthetic Perfection, as well as the popular UK act Client, that has been part of the electro/synth pop scene since 2002. We remember watching their very first live performance back then, although at the time there were three client's on stage now they are apparently two (at least in this line up). Since the days when they were signed up with Andy Fletcher's label there has been several clients passing by in the lineup, with one remaining anchor client. Stereoklang caught up with Client for a quick chat right before they were due on stage.

Client put a lot of attention to their outfits on stage, like vintage female army outfits, and we discussed the importance of this.

"Client is and always have been future pop art band", and they let us know that the music always come first, but that their style is of course a key ingredient and that they have now chosen a new look called black widows to provide a bit of a Sopranos and mystique on stage, and a spice of New York. "We dress as what feels relevant at the time, and we want to show authority".

*Client*





The sound of Client has not changed much since we heard them back in 2002 – catchy melodies with heavy bass lines and strong vocals are just as relevant now as it was then, however Client has let us know that the new album has set course in a slight different direction: “Harder bass lines, a bit more sexy and flirting more with the dark scene”. This led us to ask what acts they were both inspired by and looked up to, and not really, we believe, to anyone’s surprise they mention the classic acts like Depeche Mode, Kraftwerk and Die Krupps. More surprising was the tossing in of Madonna into the equation, although focusing on her style of singing.

As mention in the beginning Depeche Mode’s Andy Fletcher played a key part in the start of their career, but that collaboration is no longer present and for their new album they looked for inspiration



elsewhere and approached David Francolini to have him produce the new album Authority that was released in March 2014. “Authority” has been described as an addictive powerhouse of minimal electronics, groovy rhythms and mercilessly catchy melodies.

Or as they put it themselves; “It’s the best album we have ever made. It is a timing thing and there is really

nothing really like it out there.”

As we continued to speak about the new album we came to discuss their studio set up, which according to themselves has changed quite a bit from the early days when they were in the hands of quite cheap stuff, now they have invested in one more expensive machine, apart from the Nord Lead they are also using on stage. And apart from the standard software DAWs like Pro Tools, one key ingredient that made a big impact on their latest release was to work with a real SSL Desk (Solid State Logic), which as they said: “It really gave much more warm vocals and sound palette”.

Client has for long have a strong fan base in Germany, and although we all know that the electro scene has always been highly popular in Germany we wondered whether they had any ideas apart from this that has put Client high on the charts there – is it all about the uniforms...

“Yeah, the Germans do like uniforms, but to be honest, it all boils down to the music in the end of course. We sold the music back to them”. We believe we all know what bands and artists Client are referring to, but they also talk warm heartedly about their long time hero David Bowie, and the still strong love for the Berlin music scene. Bowie would obviously be a dream to work with and although they have not been very active when it comes to collaborations they do mention some activities involving Covenant, Karl Bartos and The Libertines.

Future – as far as we could tell no new material is in the making at present and most of their time going forward will involve touring and as they said themselves that we have come to a point where we can allow ourselves a little bit of cherry picking – so stay tuned for Client coming your way soon.

A man with a goatee and sunglasses is holding a keyboard instrument, possibly a synthesizer or digital piano, against a dark, textured wall. The instrument is tilted and has a label that reads "Fusion-Cyber".

***Assemblage 23***



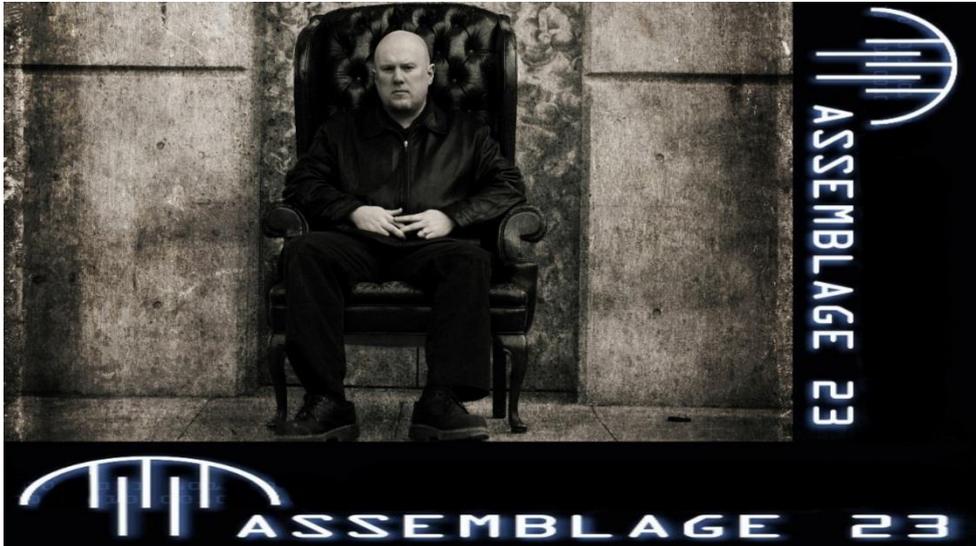
Assemblage 23 played a well visited concert in Sweden on August 30th and we took the opportunity to meet up with the band back stage a couple of hours before they were due on stage. And without us asking it is clear that A23 enjoys playing in Sweden – “One of our favorite places and the girls are nice”...

Assemblage 23, aka Tom Shear, has always walked his own way on the electronic music scene, avoiding falling into the monotone EBM trap that characterize many of the bands of the same era. Being experimental is perhaps a too strong a word, but Tom is definitely more into bringing in alternative sounds into his music paired with a stronger focus on the melodies. This does not mean at all that A23 does not flirt heavily with the EBM scene, one strong evidence of this is A23’s side project Surveillance, and you can listen to the recently released remix album on Bandcamp.

According to Tom he always keep a hefty sized “ideas folder” on his computer, both containing material for upcoming A23 albums, but also a lot that does not fit. The ideas that had more of a Nitzer Ebb and Front 242 flavor actually ended up being the foundation for Surveillance Oceania album. An album and project that actually started out as a crowd funding project and did so nicely. We asked A23 on the interest of making more collaborations with other artists, but Tom made it clear to us that it would not be fun to collaborate with Tom: “I have very strong ideas and quite stubborn”.

Speaking of computers it is interesting to know that A23 is very much a virtual synth project, of course hardware exists both in the studio and on stage, but the main part of the material is all made in Logic Pro on a Mac, and one of Tom’s favorites is the Spectrasonic Omnisphere, which has a very good

sound set. But hardware do play an important role as well, especially looking at the physicality and the programming. To Tom the line is blurring and mentions how Depeche Mode's album Black Celebration really kick started this evolution in electronic music.



From a hardware point of view a favorite machine is the Access Virus, mainly because it obviously sounds great and has a versatile sound spectrum, but perhaps equally important is the fact that it has a modern sound and good wave table / FM stuff. We asked if they have considered incorporating tablets in their set up, and from what we learnt this is perhaps not all too far off since apps are less expensive and, at least for the iOS platform the tactile element is very good. It is also clear that if you compare with the days of the Fairlight system, and the days before Ebay, times are clearly changing in favor of music creation.

Inspiration wise A23 are, as many bands of today's synth/electro scene, back in the 80's – "The greatest time of pop music". Tom goes on listing some of the key influencers; DEVO, Human League, Fad Gadget, Depeche Mode and OMD. Tom continues; "The bands in the beginning of your life – stays with you." For DEVO specifically A23 admires the weirdness and the cones – arty and weird. A23 is nothing but weird on stage and their stage outfit is very much the same as they like to appear in private – jeans and t-shirt kind of guys. "The suit and tie stuff is more for the white collar workers in synth music – we are more blue collar workers, I guess."

In the synth / electro scene many bands are criticized for their extensive use of back tracks and that nothing is actually played live on stage, we asked A23 how much would be live on this performance. The answer we got was: "We try to play live and we do fuck up". Mainly Tom's partner on stage uses different approaches at different occasions, but normally Mike will play new parts on top of the pre-recorded back tracks, as well as adding additional bass lines and pads.

Apart from touring we also got a clear hint from Tom that a new album is in the making, and apparently due sometime next year. Identity wise it is not certain in which direction A23 will take the new material, as of right now work is ongoing to sort out the different threads. Speaking of this we came to discuss how A23's music come about and the composing process, and according to Tom 70% of the ideas are sprung outside of the studio. Listening to all sorts of music has always been a key ingredient, one particular source mentioned both from a music perspective, but perhaps more importantly from a poetry perspective is Leonard Cohen. In the end good music is always, and always will be, good music – "Look at any Kraftwerk or Beatles tune it doesn't matter if 15 or 70 years has passed they are still relevant".

# *Tara Busch*



## INTERVIEW WITH SYNTH FASHIONISTA TARA BUSCH AND I SPEAK MACHINE



I Speak Machine (Tara Busch and Maf Lewis) has recently finished another of their live gigs in Malmö, Sweden, at Inkunst, this as an integrated performance with the ongoing art installation Sisters Academy. The band, being welcomed in a surreal environment featuring blindfolded students and experimental activities going on all over the place, fits nicely with the horror-futuristic music and visuals that I Speak Machine (ISM) performs on stage. Just like ISM the Sisters Academy are not just there due to general fascinations with the obscure, but rather a closer search into the realms of our existence and human conditions.

For those of you who have not seen ISM on stage, their live performances is far more than playing backtracked songs and soundscapes on laptops to visuals on the screen. Tara, a true machine geek, will bring a plethora of hardware gems on stage paired with intriguing vocals run through vocoders and the like. Perhaps not the most obvious route considering hers and Maf's common roots in the downtempo electronica band Dynamo Dresden. However, Tara and Maf apparently weren't content with performing in the straight forward rock/pop format. Tara have always had a fling towards dark and disturbing music, music that leaned towards horror and sci-fi, filled with those bizarre soundscapes – almost limitless in their nature.

Neither Tara nor Maf are 'true' horror/sci-fi geeks, but these type of movies do represent great reflexions on culture, and through ISM they have developed a new process on how to do things in this genre, without getting trapped in the conventional like the use of Theremins and scary strings. This also means that ISM do not operate in a conventional way, such as adding music to a film score, but rather let the two grow and develop organically together, and through cross-pollination in the creative phase let music and visuals influence each other. And perhaps more importantly it is all being developed for live performances, not for home cinema viewing.



Tara's machine park on stage is quite impressive and truly adds to the genuine feel of their show. Moog Sub Phatty alongside Vocoders, Ring modulators and Moog Analog Delays make way for intriguing knob twitching in real time. However, and as far as we know, Tara does not have more than two hands, so select parts of the performance is naturally run on back tracks, such as drum samples, sequences from the SCI Pro One, and occasional fuzz. Everything else is live on stage, including all the characteristic vocals signed by Tara and her vocoders.

On Tara's blog Analog Suicide it is easy to get acquainted with Tara and her fascination with synthesizers, but there is more to be found in the closet that points in the direction of jumping on the



electronic band wagon, like her first encounters with artists like Led Zeppelin – “It all sounded so different”. Led Zeppelin had so many new and strange disturbing sounds – somethings that can only be generated by machines. This also ties into the core of Tara's musical universe when she in 2004 bought her first main synth the SCI Pro One, a synth that will always have a special place in

her set up. Described as a really approachable and versatile synth – still being used on everything coming out of the ISM dungeons. More recently, among the ones who keep track of Tara and ISM, will almost get the impression that Tara (ISM) is sponsored by Moog, and sure it is true that Tara has been endorsed by Moog, but the fact is, that the affections is mutual. According to Tara the workflow on Moogs is outstanding with their nice integration capabilities, patching with Mooger Foogers, and how it inspires you through intuitive exploration options. Voyager is the work horse, paired with a 104 delay and the Cluster Flux pedal.

Comparing with earlier works of Tara the transformation into ISM represents a big shift in her song writing, at some parts it is even hard to realize that it has actually been written by the same artist. According to Tara this is in large due to her rock background and that her earlier songs were written with a band in mind. ISM, on the contrary, is a much more self-contained approach to music creation. ISM's project “The Silence” started as concepts flying around. The Silence emanated from Maf's search for silence – getting rid of sounds, and through this concept the music evolved. Both Tara and Maf stresses the need for these two parts, music and visuals, to evolve in parallel, such as finding the themes while the script is being made. No part should outweigh the other.

For those into synths, electronic music and music production have most likely not missed the recent opportunity to win a Moog Sub Phatty signed by Tara and Gary Numan. Tara has had the opportunity to work with several of the electronic music pioneers, like Gary, John Foxx and Benji, all famous for their exploration of using machines as their main instruments. Benji came to engage with Tara and ISM when invited to co-write the score for their latest film *Zombie 1985*. Gary's kids actually played parts in this movie. With common managers and creative links between the different artists Tara has now become an integral part in this team of electro pioneers. More recently this has meant that Tara and ISM have been touring together with Foxx and Numan. For Tara they are all big influences, although Foxx was a much later discovery than Numan. Tara remembers the big impression she got the first time she heard Numan's “Cars” on the radio: “I felt as abducted by aliens, never heard anything like it and I have always been revisiting it”. Gary is, according to Tara, an artist that has the capacity to continuously evolve as an artist. Foxx she describes as brilliant in writing lyrics and without

going into details she refers to some sort of exponentialism, something quite reasonable relative to the scope and overall direction of I Speak Machine.

Tara and Maf has now finished their European tour, and are now joining forces with Gary Numan for some shows in Los Angeles. In the mean time we will end here with one of ISM's latest tracks on SoundCloud, quite an outsider really – it is a cover of Simon & Garfunkel's track 'Sound of silence'. But Tara is clear on her opinion on this; it is a beautiful song filled with melancholy darkness, and a personal favorite since childhood – dressed for the future through Tara's Voyager and Cluster Flux pedal.

Links:

<http://analoqsuicide.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/ispeakmachine>

## STEREOKLANG - OUTRO

The journey continues...

In a near future when we know of no separation between humans and machines, when humans extend their mind with nanobots and becoming superhumans, what kind of music will they make?

A superhuman being shaping our minds and movements across the digital universe, the electronic machine made sounds will pass through our veins and cells with the speed of light, making your body move to the sound of our common and expanding universe. We are all entering an age when life is not exclusively biological anymore. The question is how and when we do the transformation. Singularitarians has already started this transcending journey, having recognized that the future is already upon us. Fully materialized in the new millennium we capture, evolve and morph electronic sounds, beats and visuals to generate the full power of singularity. Our sounds matches the evolving digital grid, as do our ever increasing electronic world. One single mind can do so little, billions of minds intertwined with the ever growing processing power of our machines will create our world.

Pioneering our music and graphics into the realms of Singularity puts us onto a journey where it is not obvious who is creating what and generating the ambient electronic beats of the future. Nonbiological intelligence will have access to its own design and will be able to improve itself in an increasingly rapid redesign cycle. We'll get to a point where technical and electronic progress will be so fast that unenhanced human intelligence will be unable to follow it. That will mark the Singularity.

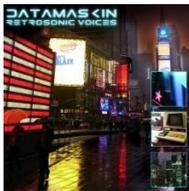
Social media links and websites:

<http://stereoklang.se>

<https://soundcloud.com/t-h-e-c-a-v-e>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/Steelberry>

<https://www.instagram.com/stereoklang/>



Listen to the full album on Spotify and iTunes:

<https://t.co/bv4WNLCllC>

<https://t.co/LwXmXN00W4>

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