

INTERVIEW with JUKKA MATTILA / KAOS KONTROL für Degenerate-Magazine , early 2003.

1) Drone Records is one of the few labels who has succeeded in maintaining their original idea and to create their own 'brand' from it. When you founded the label in January 1993, how conscious was your idea about what the label should be like then and in the future? I could imagine that the first ideas (the whole concept of only releasing 7"es, hand made sleeves, later re-releases) came about somehow by accident and later became established as guidelines for the label.

You guessed right! First we just wanted to put out the first Maeror Tri vinyl. In order to create something special and with no graphic-design abilities, we made those handsprayed sleeves. From this there arised the idea to do a whole series with the same concept – always handmade covers by the artists.

2) The whole 'drone' concept has been with you since the very beginning. How do you personally see the concept of a drone? What is a drone?

Damn, that's a question !

I think basically a drone is a "minimally shifting, floating long tone". But for me or for us it was always a bit more, using a wider spectrum of sounds and frequencies. I think what is decisive (and more broader) is the floating, atmospheric character of a sound-entity. So even harsher sounds, or more concrete elements brought together in a floating way, can be drones or "a drone". To regard it more visually maybe, a drone is like an energy-stream moving in time and space where I can put parts of my deeper self into, and leave parts of the more rational mind behind – so to say "go with the drone" and forget thinking by doing this.

I think the original drone-conception (which was in fact unknown to me in 1993) from LA MONTE YOUNG or original INDIAN MUSIC is a bit different – decisive is that it's really one tone you play, and meant is a real TONE. I was pretty amazed to find out later about the history of "drone" music.

By the way, I remember somebody in the network asking many people by e-mail: "what is a perfect drone?" – don't know if he ever published all answers, but would really like to read the results once. He is called Martin Friberg and comes from Sweden if I recall correctly.

3) In a way, Drone Records has created a sort of a network of artists and bands around it which could be seen as a scene of its own. Do you think that Drone Rec. is a part of some particular scene? Do you have a problem if someone connects Drone Rec. to the contemporary industrial scene (what ever that is these days)?

No. I see Drone indeed as a further development of the (post)-Industrial-scene, as explained before. At the end many ideas and concepts from the pre-Industrial-time can be re-found in Industrial and thus also formed "today's Drone-scene". Important for me was also the cassette-scene with the aim of building a non-commercial network of creative minds (see also Klaus Jochims [founder of TELEPHERIQUE and in former times doing the DRAHTFUNK label] NETWORK-idea), a network of many people and not just putting out the same three or four projects all the time.

But I'm not sure if you can really speak of a special scene around Drone Records. There are many labels who publish stuff that goes more or less into the same direction, atmospheric noise, dark ambience, ambient Industrial, there are many notions for a sound music that is similar. I would like to see Drone Recs. more as a part of a broader music-scene: it's a kind of non-academic (in the sense the musicians have not studied music or composition – it's possible, but not necessary), "emotional experimental music", which again means for me it's experimental music not based on too abstract concepts, but on the sensitivity for SOUND itself. Maybe one could say: experimental music done by HEART and not by BRAIN. And there's of course all kinds of different types of styles existing in this broader understood "scene".

4) Why did you choose the medium of releasing 7" vinyls? I personally love that format, but there are lots of people who don't like to listen to this particular style of sounds on such a format because you have to be constantly turning the sides and also the playing time is very restricted.

But this is exactly the gain you have from it: you only listen to one side, and during that time (knowing you have to turn it again soon) you can't do much more, except: listening. The 7" format is a very nice medium to fully concentrate and focus on the music. And to listen 5 minutes very concentrated can be much more satisfying than listening 5 hours with no pause, but just as a background. Really going INTO something, and if it's just 5 minutes, can touch you deep inside and kind of "strengthen" your core-feeling of existence.

5) You have already released a 7" by one Finnish band, Mnem and will be later releasing material from no Xivic as well. What do you think of the Finnish industrial/ambient etc. scene in general and are there any bands who you'd like to mention?

Hm, I must admit that I don't know so much artists working in this scene in Finland, MNEM and KAOS KONTROL were my first real stable contacts. There are some new contacts like MUSICALLY INCORRECT RECORDS with the great RATS WITH WINGS (not totally sure if they are finnish though)-releases, so it seems it's a small, but vital scene.

6) Having worked in the industrial/ambient/drone scene for such a long time, how do you see that the whole thing has changed over the years? For example, the tape scene has become very minimal whereas the CDr is extremely popular these days. Any thoughts on this?

Sure, the CDR-scene is today's cassette-scene in a way, working usually with the same principles. It seems the formats might change but there's always enough activists doing "their" thing apart from the mainstream, even apart from "alternative" mainstream (whatever that means). I think there's a point where personal communication & exchange of ideas/philosophy/politics & of course the experiencing of other peoples music/art becomes more important than making money. And at this point (which is not always clear to define of course) the real "alternative" to the culture-industry begins. The experimental experimental / ambient / drone / whatever-scene has grown over the years if you ask me – first there were only few acts with rather high editions, now, beginning with the cassette-culture there is an absolute mass of self-produced music working in that area – editions are smaller, the whole is not surveyable anymore. But there's always something new to discover on the other hand. Maybe it's my very subjective view as I grew up in this scene – but regarding the amounts of demos I get with good material, I can only state that the whole scene must be growing.

7) You have also established a sort of a side-label, Transgredient Records which has thus far released material from your own band, Troum. Do you have plans of releasing other projects on this label as well or will that be the business of Drone Records? At the moment only Troum-stuff and Troum-collaborations, also due to lack of time..

8) Could you give us a list of some artists/bands whose 7" releases will see the light of day on Drone Records in 2003?

Not sure if they all will come out in 2003, but here are some definite plans: NO XIVIC is a project from Finland with no release yet, but the demos he send were so overwhelming genius that I couldn't resist. Very intense digital ambience. With SOLEILKRAAST it was the same, a project from France (originally involved in Reggae-bands and African music but then he changed totally – without knowing any experimental stuff, into atmospheric-noise !), which goes into a similar direction. Then we have CISFINITUM from Moscow, doing a very dark form of experimental drone & industrial, both members being classically trained as musicians!

YANNICK DAUBY will do another 7", the very first split 7", with MICHAEL NORTHAM. DAUBY (from France) is for me one of the best field-recording artists, but he's not very known so far. I guess MICHAEL NORTHAM needs no introduction?

Let me mention to other artists, CHRISTIAN DERGARABEDIAN, originally from Argentina now living in Spain, and OVUM from Sweden, both doing very original & daring atmospheric music since years. These 6 should be the next drones.. of course changes are always possible.