

FEAR DROP - Questions to Stefan Knappe about S.I. / Answers: Early January 2012

1 - We once talked about the obvious link between this deep melancholic abstract music you play and promote, and the concepts attached to early German Romanticism (feeling, Sehnsucht, inner unity, nostalgia, exploration of the unconscious...). My opinion is that your series represents very important current contributions to these experiences. Can you tell me your thoughts it?

Yes, there is surely a strong connection between the search or yearning for an (utopian) "Unknown" and early Romanticism! Dealing with the "Unknown", which is of course a paradox (how can you say or express anything about a scope that is by definition unrecognizable and un-realizable?), has in its core this deep urge or drive to go beyond the known, the limitations of our selves, environment and society. What could become reality? It's a question or process of inner and outer transcendence. And this is, as far as I understood, also what the early Romanticists were thinking about.

2 - A very important concept in early Romanticism is the idea of dissolution, that one can feel in Caspar David Friedrich's paintings for instance; the "beauty of sadness" you once celebrated with Maeror Tri, being the core of this dissolution movement as a "nostalgia of unity". Can you tell me what the concept of dissolution represents for you?

The dissolution of the self also means the detachment of all bounds and limitations. It stands for the wish to unite with everything around, mentally and physically seen (which is, at the end, the same), the "oceanic" feeling. Psychoanalytically seen, the wish to go back to where we come from, to mothers womb, to an objectless and subjectless state of being. Just being. Becoming a "self" is a very difficult and dangerous process, we loose this early "pre-natal" state, but I believe that the knowledge of "how it feels" is still somehow encoded in our bodies. This is what the "Unconscious" means for me: A knowledge you can not think about. Dissolving into sounds and music is maybe the easiest and most beautiful way to express the sadness that we lost this early state of what you could call pure unconscious being. But it also brings back the feeling of it, the "atmosphere" of how it was maybe. So at the same time you can feel the sorrow, but also the condition of the "pure being", the dissolution of the self.

3 - The music you promote with your label(s) is linked to the concept of soundscape, as musical landscape, the word landscape being very accurate here as the music draws metaphors of water, wind, soil, currents... Is this link between music and landscape something important for you?

Yes, definitely.. with this metaphor one tries to find a way to describe the spatial quality of soundscapes. If you try to describe music, you simply must use metaphors, as the direct experience of listening is something beyond language.

Besides, watching or experiencing a vast landscape can evoke similar feelings of yearning and "feeling tiny", dissolving into something bigger (and more important) so to say. A lecture in feeling humbled.

And another point is that the sounds a landscape/natural environment can have are often quite similar to the sounds we hear in ambient soundscapes. So, with electronic means we came back to the sounds of nature, and copy them.

It's another allusion to the thesis that with these soundscape we try to go back to the earliest experiences of "feeling one" with everything around (nature = mother).

4 - There is a very interesting point you develop in the presentation of the Substantia Innominata label, the fact that it is based on: "The Un-known, The Un-nameable, The Un-speakable, The Un-thinkable, etc.: Various aspects related to "The Unknown". Do you think

that music is the best (or only) way to reach these areas in the mind, areas that words can only approach without ever being able to reach them?

I'm not completely sure if music is *the best* way to express or reach these areas in general. And it's definitely not the *only* one. I can only say it's the best way for *me*. Probably every human being can find a kind of "best technique" if she/he wants to develop it, usually using some kind of art-form that goes beyond rational thinking and language. But there are many ways to "go beyond rational thought" so to say, using drugs, experiencing nature for longer time, dancing, doing trance-inducing sports, etc... many are based on old trance-techniques shamans know since a very long time. I think our brains are "made" to have these experiences, I would even say they really need it to stay fully intact.

5 - Is there a common request you send to the bands and artists when you ask them for a recording on S.I.?

Of course, I tell every musician & artworker to have this concept of the "Unknown" in mind when composing the sounds or the artwork. To work on it. To really *confront* yourself with it! What it means for you. What it triggers in you, emotionally.

Some tell me ALL what they do artistically is based on this concept anyway, somehow. But I think it can be important for the process to make this challenge really very conscious to yourself again. There are links between the conscious and the unconscious, the unknown world, and we have to find them.

6 - The fact is that on Drone Records the pieces were necessarily short, due to the 7'' format. Have you changed to the 10'' format so that the artists can provide longer pieces?

Yes, it was one of the reasons indeed. Though the main reason was to start a series with a really different concept than just "creating drone based music". The 7" is great for presenting newcomers for concentrated listening, but its more like a snapshot. The 10" format can hold much longer compositions.

7 - There is another artistic movement, this time it's from the 20th century, and it also aimed to reveal the functioning of the mind: Surrealism. Do you link your music to their researches?

You mean with TROUM? No, we haven't really worked precisely with topics of Surrealism, but as the first "art-form" dealing especially with the Unconscious and the dream it is of course a big influence. Trying to find techniques to make the processing of the ID visible. Though I think Surrealism was also very much influenced by the *early* Psychoanalysis which dealt for a main part with sexual themes in a too concrete way. And that's not really our focus, as the Unconscious consists of much more than of suppressed sexual drives.

On the other hand, what is really great in Surrealism is that it expresses also more an approach to perceive and understand the world (& the mind) than a certain fixed style: An enlargement of reality through the means of dream & unconsciousness. Everything is possible in Surrealism, there are no limitations. Everything floats, nothing is fixed. Trying to find an area or point where all contradictions & antagonism are not existing anymore.

So, as a worldview, Surrealism is always present!

8 - It seems that, to you, the function of music is maybe as much political as it is poetic, a function of "liberation". Do you think that music has got powers that are yet to discover, that it is still a wasteland, where we can find surprises? Could this be a new meaning for the "experimental music" tag?

I do indeed think that you can not separate the "poetic" from any "political" functions. Though that's not linked to any concrete form of political ideology. The question is rather the process of opening your mind for something new or even alien. To learn the ability to confront

yourself with "strange things" instead of congealing to a every-day routined thinking & behaviour. Maybe it's more a general question of total liberation (of the mind, then als of the society?).

I'm absolutely sure that there are many secrets and powers to reveal within music, seen as vibrations, waves, and energy. Humans tend to think they have a good picture of the "reality" but thats not true - we can only recognize a very small part of the world around us. We have *started* to understand a *little* of ourselves and the universe!

I'm not sure if it's really "a new meaning" for "experimental music". I suppose whenever you try to "experiment" with sounds and methods to create music, this approach is already existing in your blood (=your mind), consciously or unconsciously. But It's surely not a bad thing to make all these implications conscious to yourself, it's not "just music" that exists in a vacuum. "Just music" is not existing!