

GEORG GATSAS AND NORBERT MÖSLANG

GEORG: What's on your current playlist? What's the sound you think is really interesting to listen to?

NORBERT: I am listening to a lot of dubstep at the moment. [British artist] Skream's records are especially amazing. Black Dice, Animal Collective and Gang Gang Dance are great—their combination of playing with the usual rock instruments and electronic music is pretty refreshing. I am curious how they will develop in the next years. I am also listening to a couple of older records, electronic music from the '50s and '60s—Luc Ferrari and David Tudor, for example—and records that I get from friends and musicians by mail.

GEORG: You've been working on a couple of remixes lately...

NORBERT: Yes, it's something that I enjoy doing because I've been asked by musicians who come from different genres, not just the electronic improv scene. I did a remix for electronic musician Hrvatski; one for I.U.D. [members of Gang Gang Dance and Growing]; another for Swiss rapper Dani Goldin's record collaboration with Brooklyn hip-hop artist Sensational; and also one for a Swiss art collective called Bitnik, which installed bugs at the Zürich Opera and recorded classical opera pieces illegally. You could also call my latest solo record, *burst Jog*, a remix, because I used the first three songs of my other 2004 album, *lat nc*, but changed them completely by processing them extensively with the computer. I think a good remix should always transport the feeling of the original piece, but there should definitely be elements of your own way of music-making in it.

GEORG: How do you see your own path of the last thirty years? I think it's pretty remarkable how your sound evolved and the way you composed your music in those years. A common trap of the experimental electronic music scene is to stand still, to do the same thing over and over again—something that didn't happen to you.

NORBERT: I get bored playing the same sound or the same way after a while; that's the simple reason why I am eager to move forward. I could still play like I did on the

records with Borbetomagus twenty years ago, but that would be too easy. The only thing that I kept from the past is playing with analogue equipment, my cracked, everyday electronics. I'm not really attracted to playing live just by sitting in front of a laptop. It would bore me, though I started composing and recording music on the computer in 1996. I try to keep my work timeless or recent. It's the same path I follow with my visual work, my pictures and installations. Nam June Paik, with whom I played a show in 1991, is probably a father figure to me on how you should approach your work. His pieces still look amazing after all of those years.

There were a couple of basic moments which affected Voice Crack and my solo stuff. I played a show with my former partner, Andy Guhl, at the Total Music Meeting in Berlin in 1977. It was an incisive experience, as we found out that we didn't really fit into the improv scene around [saxophonist] Peter Brötzmann. People would usually put us in the same drawer. But the gig and the record that came out of the show resulted in collaborations with Borbetomagus, a group we felt much more familiar with. It was also necessary to get kicked out of certain formations in the '80s to shape my own personal sound, to speed up my own musical path.

The '90s were pretty important for me because there was a wave of young musicians and concert-goers coming into the experimental electronic scene, which was not the case in the '80s. A lot of these musicians got in touch with me, and great collaborations were realized, such as my performances and recordings with Jim O'Rourke. The breakup of Voice Crack a few years ago also was essential, and it forced me to move forward with my solo recordings and visual work.

GEORG: When you were already playing with Voice Crack in the '70s, there was punk rock and new wave starting. Were you interested in these movements?

NORBERT: I already played with different musicians in the free music scene in the late '60s and early '70s, beginning when I was seventeen, first on the piano, then on the soprano saxophone, which I used on the first Voice Crack album. I was aware of punk rock, but I thought there were more extreme types of music out there. I was more interested in music that was not so easy to get. So I went to free music shows and listened to those records.

GEORG: I also saw Throbbing Gristle and early Napalm Death albums on your record shelf.

NORBERT: Yes, I was more attracted to industrial music than to punk rock; it had a totally different feeling and attrac-

tion to me. But sometimes those industrial groups were too mechanical for me. In retrospect, I can say it's not a bad thing to be outside of a movement or scene. If you are a part of a movement, it's harder to do something different—people will always put you in the same drawer and you're always moving in the same circles. It's easier to do your own thing if your music is appreciated by different scenes.

GEORG: At the same you were listening to hip hop, reggae and dub ...

NORBERT: Definitely. I was especially intrigued how the dub musicians treated music as a free form. The same goes for ethnological sound. I still have a huge collection of tapes filled with field recordings. A friend of mine worked in an ethnological institution, and he would come over every weekend with a pile of records, which we taped. Most of these records were recorded in the '50s and '60s, sounds from Africa and Asia. My wife, Beatrice, was keen on reggae music, so I automatically got into it as well. I even went to Jamaica in the '80s with her and bought singles, and we witnessed the sound systems there. After the visit, we started a concert and reading series called "AfriKaribik" with friends here in St. Gallen, where we would invite musicians and poets for shows. We also started an alternative club called Grabenhalle, where Bad Brains played, among others, and an exhibition space, the Kunsthalle St. Gallen, where I was a board member for a couple of years. In the meantime I also did collaborations with other artists, including Alex Hanimann, who is also a good friend. I try to explore and work in different fields, not only the musical ones.

GEORG: We're here in St. Gallen right now. How do you see the situation for artists living here? My observation is that artists like you or Roman Signer live and work here, but you gain most of the attention from outside of the city, and on the international level. The local artists don't even try to get attention here.

NORBERT: Yes, that's why it was and still is important to make records and to distribute them outside of the country. I also don't know why the percentage of important artists coming from this region of Switzerland is unusually high ...

GEORG: Maybe it's the air?

NORBERT: Maybe it's also because everything here is so small and oppressive that the environment is pretty adverse. Sometimes it takes longer for a Swiss artist to step

outside and to gain interest on an international level, but then it makes you pretty resistant, and you keep making progress on your work. Just an example: When I would put out a record, I knew all the people here in St. Gallen who would be interested in it and buy it. I was forced to send the discs away, especially to other countries. Otherwise, the records would have piled up in my studio.

Maybe that's the main problem of Switzerland and its music scene. There's not enough exchange between musicians. Only a few try to listen to unusual sounds and to create new sounds. The Young Gods are one of the exceptions.

GEORG: Going back to air ... and nature. You just scored the sound track for Swiss director Peter Liechti's movie *The Sound of Insects*, which won the European Film Academy Documentary 2009 Prix Arte. Is the sound track different from your other work? What was the process of making music for it like? And will it appear on disk sometime?

NORBERT: Parts of the sound track are definitely different than the rest of my work. Peter Liechti recorded a concert that I did in my studio with his camera and his sound-recording equipment. He integrated bits of this session (sound and film material) into his new movie. Part of the sound track is also a recording session in Japan with Jason Kahn, Günter Müller, Christian Weber, Tomas Korber, and Katsura Yamauchi in 2006.

I created the music for the film in different stages. I saw the movie in a very early phase in Peter Liechti's studio. I generated sounds to the images from the film that I could remember. Afterward, Liechti did an early phase of editing with these sounds. As the editing and shooting of the movie progressed, I could watch the movie in different phases, and I generated new sounds for it as it went along. I also tried to integrate Liechti's personal vision of the movie within the sound track. The sound track will come out as a CD, but I don't know on which label and when exactly.

GEORG: The LUFF [Lausanne Underground Film & Music] festival in Switzerland invited you to play a night with Sunn O))), Keiji Haino, Oren Ambarchi, and Tony Conrad in October 2009. The billing looked like an all-star gathering of the international heavyweights of bass and drone music. How was that night for you? How was it for the other heavyweights?

NORBERT: The LUFF festival did an extraordinary job concerning this year's billing. It was an honor for me to close the festival as the last act. ■■