



THE SEARCH FOR RESONANCE - A REFLECTION

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1. ABOUT THIS TEXT

In the following document I will start by describing the progress of my project from the initial application and entry into the artistic research programme, via major turning points, up to developing a working method and making some new artistic choices.

I will discuss the new insight I gained during the early stages of the project, and elaborate on the personal revelations that made me make some different and quite unexpected changes in the project's framework.

I will then try to describe the process that led to my method of using fictional characters and their stories as a background to widen my creative repertoire as a music composer and performer - all tied together in one cross-disciplinary work.

I will finally comment on the resulting artworks and public feedback on these, and finally try to contextualise my processes and methods in relation to my field of practise. I will also investigate if my work has succeeded in bringing something new to this field.

This document contains links to music and other works created as part of the project. It is therefore recommended to use a digital copy to preview this material as you read.

Bear in mind that the musical pieces released under the artist alias MENTAL OVERDRIVE is best experienced in a proper dance club setting, with the powerful sound systems and social backdrop such music requires to be fully appreciated.

As a disclaimer, I will sometimes refer to areas within science, meta-science and philosophy that have informed this project, ranging from "sound healing" via quantum physics to theology and occultism.

These are fields that I, as an artist, have taken liberties in sampling inspiration from, but it does by no means suggest that I inhibit any profound knowledge about any of these fields. They are rather used to initiate thought-processes and spark ideas.

2. PROCESS - FROM THE SOLIDITY OF SOUND TO THE FLUIDITY OF IDENTITY

In this chapter I will describe the developments and key events that has shaped my project from the set-out three years ago, up to the artworks presented in my final exhibition.

2.1 BACKGROUND

When I first started working with this project, I set out to expand my understanding of the concept of resonance and «explore correspondences between frequency and geometry», as described in my first abstract.

My departure point was a fascination with the physical attributes of sound. This was a fascination that probably stemmed from an artistic practice mostly focused on electronic dance music, with its emphasis on low-frequencies played at high-amplitude on powerful sound systems.

My understanding of sound was that it was a phenomenon that could be *physically present*, in the same manner as material objects or living creatures. In the years prior to applying for the artistic research programme I had played with ideas on how to create sound works that could be perceived as “invisible, ephemeral sculptures”.

I had also recently discovered the field of *cymatics* and other techniques for visualising sound waves in physical matter - techniques I immediately was attracted to, and wanted to explore further in my work.

What I didn't take into consideration back then, was just how vast and many-faceted my associations with the word resonance would eventually become. This is something that gradually dawned on me during the first year of working with the project, as I will be discussing in the following chapter.

2.2 TURNING POINT #1 - NEW UNDERSTANDINGS

In the first phase of my study, I started digging deeper into ideas surrounding frequencies' relation to geometry and the sound visualisation techniques as described above.

My sources ranged from internet searches to a selection of more or less empirically assessed books on the subject (see reading list below).

The material I found ranged from research on sound frequencies' effect on physical matter from a strictly scientific viewpoint, to radical metaphysical ideas about the nature of sound, vibrations and the physical universe.

Some of the more “fringe” ideas were often rooted in eastern spiritual belief-systems or western occultism, but also, at the most extreme end of the spectre, in information-age conspiracy theories springing out from contemporary internet lore.

I was especially fascinated by the suggestion that the contemporary tuning-system of A3=440Hz is nothing but an elitist weapon meant to enslave and mislead humankind, and that A3=432Hz would put the world at peace (!).

Other contemporaries approached alternative tuning systems in a less conspiratorial fashion, like Finnish artist and composer Aleksi Parälä, who is very prolific in producing techno music based on his and Grant Wilson-Claridge's “Colundi” micro-tuning concept.

It seemed that I had opened a Pandora's Box of rather wide-ranging information on the subject, and at some point I felt overwhelmed and confused by the sheer noise the material represented.

To add to this noise, my own associations with the very word “resonance” also started to broaden. I had already experienced that sound and music could invoke resonance on many other levels than the purely physical, be it emotionally, spiritually or politically, but it wasn't before I had the time to go deeper into the material that I realised to what extent this meant something in relation to my creative processes.

It was this widening of my understanding of the concept of resonance and shift of focus away from the purely physical aspects of sound that ended up being the first big turning point in the project.

2.3 TURNING POINT #2 - GETTING PERSONAL

To begin with, my method of working with the project was a model I had tried and tested throughout my 30 plus years of practise as a professional artist.

It went something like this:

1. Discover a field of interest.
2. Use it as a source for inspiration.
3. Create and present artistic results.

My expectation had always been that these works then were meant to live their own independent “lives” as artworks, totally detached from their creator.

I was also of the opinion that I was in no way responsible for defending my own motivations for exploitation of these sources of inspiration. So when I called a piece of music released under my Mental Overdrive pseudonym “5th Night of the Galactic Underworld” (Love OD Communications 2008), I didn’t feel in any way obligated to elaborate further on reading about the “2012” myth of the Mayan Calendar that I had used to create both the mood and the title of the work.

Also, “No lights on me” was an often and jokingly used phrase that would pop up among my closest contemporaries, whenever the question of stage presence came up. In the field of club and DJ-culture that I operated in, it had always been normal to view performers and their public as “one single organism”, and not make artists “stars” with a focus on personality and celebrity.

Or responsibilities.

I had mainly escaped having to be too personal and intimate in my work, and rather enjoyed keeping it that way.

But all this changed rather drastically when I, during one of my presentations at a 1st year seminar with fellow Ph.D. candidates, was asked by one of the supervisors: “But where are *you* - as an artist, in this project?”

This simple question came a bit as a shock, and a real eye-opener.

It struck me that I had never really reflected on my own role as an artist in any profound way before, but had always taken the viewpoint of “looking out from inside” in my creative processes. I had never really been confronted with myself and my own motivations in this way before.

This turning of the mirror challenged me to become more aware of my own role in my creative processes, and had a big impact on how I approached my work with the project onwards.

Where I had started by wanting to look at how the sound I made created resonance in the world around me, I now felt that I had to start with investigating the source of these sounds.

I realised that I simply didn’t know at which frequency I was transmitting.

Or why.

I will get back to these questions in the last chapters in this text.

2.4 TURNING POINT #3 - ENJOYING THE SILENCE

The third big turning point came with the collective impact that the Covid-19 epidemic had on society.

From being someone who regularly travelled to play or work at least once a month to some destination in the world, I suddenly found myself geographically stationary for the first time in my adult life.

My initial reaction was one of restlessness, to which I responded by diving into accelerated productivity in the studio. But after a while I managed to adjust to the new pace, and rather use the less stressful situation to take a closer look at the new turns my project had taken.

As the water became still, it made me aware of my own reflection.

Playing into this new state of self-reflection was the fact that the year 2020 was the 30th anniversary of my main musical project MENTAL OVERDRIVE.

This jubilee was to be marked by sharing documentation and memorabilia from the last three decades of my artistic life through my website and via social media.

The anniversary required me to look closer at my own artistic output and history for the first time since I started making records, and in retrospect revive both my life as an artist, as well as on a personal level.

With the new context I was working in through my research-project, it felt natural to also investigate how my past played into how I approached my working methods today.

I discovered that this retrospective reflection raised a lot of new questions relating to my research project.

What had actually been my reasons for seeking to express myself through the medium of sound throughout the years?

And who was I actually expressing?

Was I looking for external response, or was I trying to create works that only resonated with my own tastes?

Based on what criteria did I make my creative choices in the way I did?

How did the way I viewed myself affect my creative freedom, if at all?

I also questioned whether I could ever be able to make something “new” with the habits and skillsets I had developed over the years. Could I find a method to break up old patterns and look at my work from different angles, and if so, could this also change the resonance I created in my audience?

As these new questions strayed quite far from my original research question, I realised that I would either have to choose between following these new trails, and leave the old ones, or vice versa.

Or come up with a method to look at things from different angles - all within the same project.

3. METHODOLOGY - STRUCTURING A FRAMEWORK

I have always been a fan of restrictions, and conceptual, underlying structures applied to creative processes.

This ranges from the concisely defined aesthetics and coherently communicated public images of musical artists like Germany's Kraftwerk, or San Francisco's art- and music ensemble The Residents, to Danish filmmakers Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg's "Dogme 95" movement.

Kraftwerk's visionary take on technology and the future of communication acted as a clear voice in the pre-techno and internet age, and to this day their impact can be traced to a well of contemporary artists.

The Residents wild experimentation with art, music and theatre made them odd luminaries adopted by post-punk era Europeans, and showed that DIY culture could extend far beyond running your own record label, creating your own graphics and videos, and break a fair deal of musical boundaries in the process.

"Dogme 95" challenged filmmakers and actors to operate within strict frameworks that pushed them to put focus on performance and strength of the raw material at hand.

In the world of literature, Oulipo (Ouvroir de littérature potentielle) is a French group of writers and mathematicians who since 1960 have experimented with creating texts based on mathematical underlying structures in order to explore constrained writing techniques.

As an example, Georges Perec's 300-page novel from 1969, "La disparition", later translated to English by Gilbert Adair under the title "A Void", was written in its entirety without using the letter "e".

I find these techniques highly inspiring. In my own work I've sometimes used writing as an alternative channel to my musical output, but also as an integral part of it, as in my *transmedia* project "Earthbound - Surfing the Apocalypse" from 2012 (<https://earthbound-surfingtheapocalypse.blogspot.com>).

Another example from my own practise, is that I have tried to keep the amount of music-making tools in my studio somehow limited over the years. I've had a habit of re-selling any piece of music technology that didn't get used on a regular basis, or had become outdated due to overuse.

This way, my sonic palette at any given moment could be explored within its limitations, something I believe both sparks creativity and can result in a more individual "sound".

I believe this is because limitations really pushes creativity whereas endless possibilities can rather can be overwhelming to the point where one gets an illusion of progressing with a project, when all that really happens is that one gets lost in the fascination of "what can be done" and what appears "new" in the process.

Based on the three turning points described in the previous chapters, and a basic need to sort all the information I had gathered, I thought it would be interesting to create my own dogmatic framework to work within.

I had often been hiding behind a multitude of aliases in the past. On one of my first record releases, the collaborative single "Hallucination Generation", released under the artist name The Gruesome (Crammed Discs 1989), I was credited with different names for the production and engineering of the record, in addition to the artist name of the project.

Thus the record was produced by "Syamese", engineered and edited by "Joker" and released by the artist duo "The Gruesome Twosome", consisting of myself and Samy Birnbach.

It struck me that a more thorough play with identities could be a way of looking at my research material from more than one angle, and explore what would happen to my artistic output when operating from different viewpoints.

I could also see in what way different approaches affected how my work resonated in different ways with the public.

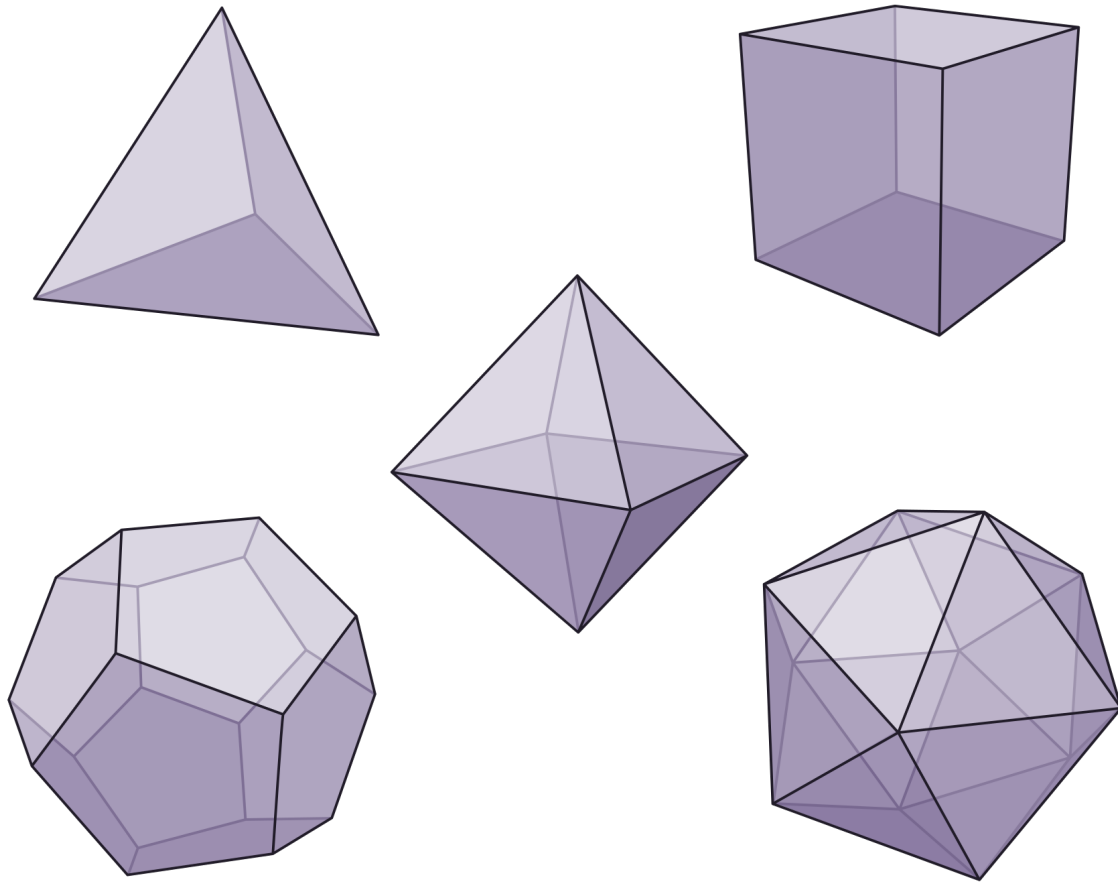


Image #1: The Platonic Solids

3.1 CREATING NEW NARRATIVES

One of the rabbit-holes I had fallen into when searching for information on “relations between frequencies and geometry”, had led me to a fascinating theory from Hindu cosmology, on how sound was the very source of the creation of the universe, with physical matter described as “crystallised sound”, or “frozen waves”.

More specifically, it describes how, out of the sound “Aum”, where the three Sanskrit letters represent the beginning, middle and end of every existing phenomenon, our entire universe is believed to appear.

From a perspective more aligned to “hard science”, I learned that in order to create vibration, there usually must exist a potential for some form of oscillation between polarised opposites.

Moved into a spiritually philosophical viewpoint, this oscillation could be interpreted as the interplay between the “yin” and “yang”, the basic elements of ancient Chinese philosophy, especially taoism, where these forces are believed to lie at the source of every phenomenon in existence.

But the ideas of these “basic polarities” could also be applied to the opposing charges needed to generate electric flow, or the alternating current used to create electronic sound through an electromagnetic speaker, which are central processes to the tools I use to create my electronic sounds.

Another recurring structure within the more metaphysical fields of philosophy I was looking at, was the triangle, or trinity. This represents “God in three persons” in trinitarianism and Christianity, but the geometric form of the triangle is also the only shape making up the first of the “Platonic Solids”, which are the only 5 shapes that can exist in three-dimensional space where all sides and angles are equal (see Image #1).

The *Tree of life*-diagram (Image #2) of the Jewish *Kabbalah*, is believed to be a diagram depicting God’s manifestation from abstract existence towards embodiment in the physical universe. This is represented by 10 “nodes” that symbolise the different stages of this creative process.

The first of the “nodes” or *Sepirot*, represents “Keter”, or *limitless light* - also referred to as *singularity*. This symbolises energy in its most primordial form, out of which all things are created. It can also represent consciousness in its purest form, acting as both creator and observer of its own creation.

The next two *Sepirot* on the Tree of life are “Chockmah” and “Binah” which represent the active/passive duality-principle very much in alignment with the above mentioned “yin” and “yang” principles in taoism.*

These archetypes of duality have historically often been referred to as “masculine” and “feminine” energies, which is a terminology I have chosen to

consciously avoid in order to not confuse them with definitions of sex or gender.

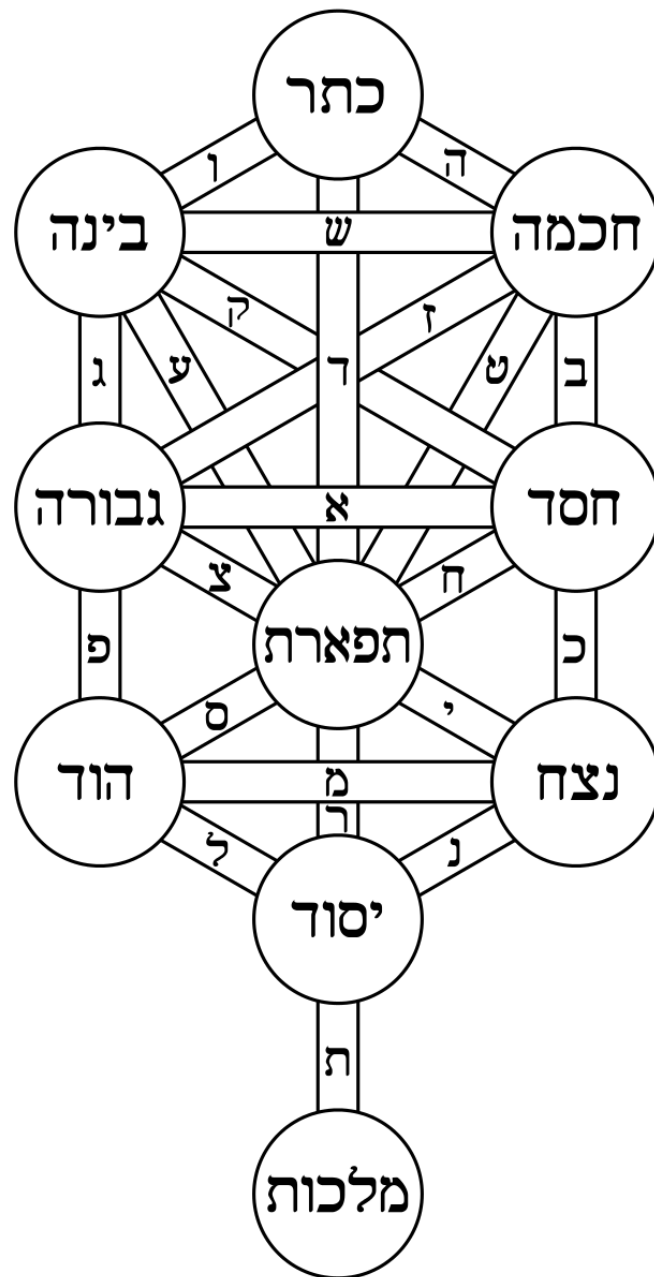


Image #2: The Kabbalistic “Tree of Life”

I decided to try and create a structure in my project based on a trinity model freely associated with these philosophical concepts, and see if I could use three archetypes as inspirations to create “lenses” to look at my research material through.

This way I might be able to establish three different perspectives from which to look at my work, and hopefully make some interesting discoveries in the process.

I concluded on “splitting” myself into three different versions of myself, each inhabiting a parallel timeline to my own life over the last three decades, and started writing three different narratives describing these fictional lives.

Coincidentally, they all made music.

I dubbed the story a “multi-dimensional autobiography” and gave the three storylines additional attributes like “past”, “present” and “future”, and made a set of rules as to what kind of music technology each of the characters were allowed to use, and what kind of emphasis they would focus on in their creative processes.

I also decided to let the three fictional characters reflect upon their own artistic choices from inside the multi-dimensional autobiography, thereby moving some of the reflective material required for an artistic research degree away from my “real” personal perspective - the one you are reading now.

These “personas” should not be only read as freely constructed fictitious personalities, but rather versions of myself who have nurtured and emphasised different parts of their potential through different experiences and choices in life.

By working under these role-playing dogmas, I could both look at myself from different angles, but also see if my work resonated differently with the outside world as a result, like a house of mirrors set at different angles.

To fully grasp these new roles, I also started experimenting with changing my appearance according to the characters, and changed my wardrobe in line with which of the three versions of myself I went into the studio to work as.

3.2 DEFINING THE CAST

I made these three different fictional characters somehow caricatures of myself, and through them I tried to describe three alternative timelines to my actual life story. This allowed me to distance myself from my “real life” legacy as an artist, with all the excess baggage one accumulates over 30 years as a music professional.

Moving some of the reflective part of my work inside the artwork itself, also made it possible to use the role-playing to explore new ideas within each character’s archetypical framework, much in the same way actors utilize Lee Strasberg’s “method acting” techniques to develop their roles

The characters got working titles based on a trinity model of my own design, with the first one named after the Tarot card “The Fool”, symbolising consciousness in its most neutral and unbiased state.

The second was named “Fire” after the element symbolising movement, action and force, and the third one “Water”, representing nurture, emotion and depth.

The following texts are more in-depth descriptions of each “persona”:



Image #3: "The Fool" from the Rider-Waite tarot deck

3.2.1 MY FIRST STORY (THE FOOL)

This is a version of myself who never moved away from his hometown, or pursued an artistic career.

He rather settled down at a very young age, raising a family, while working as an electrician. But after three decades of trying to suppress his own creativity, the "bubble" bursts, and he goes through a series of emotional breakdowns paired with psychosis-like experiences.

This triggers him to relocate the synthesizer he has stored in the attic since his teens, and to start experimenting with making music. His mid-life crisis also sparks some drastic changes in his private life.

I assigned the artist name WAVE∞FORM to this character, where the focus is on experimentation and abstract sounds, mainly created through improvisation.

In this process I'm often using modular synthesiser systems coupled with software solutions like Native Instruments Reaktor or Max/MSP, in order to work with less restrictive timelines and avoid equally tempered tunings.

The main incentive has been to try and adapt the role of someone who has a minimum skillset in music production but a good insight into electronics and technology.

This character is mainly driven by curiosity, is very open to new ideas, and very much lives in the present. Due to the lack of skills and experience, he represents the “newborn consciousness” in his artistic approach.

The music of WAVE∞FORM can be heard here: [https://
waveform1.bandcamp.com](https://waveform1.bandcamp.com)



Image #4: Selfie, 1982

3.2.2 MY SECOND STORY (FIRE)

This character is shaped on the backdrop of my actual musical history over the last three decades. It describes someone who is restless, driven and without much concern for consequences of his actions, as long as he can keep moving forward.

He embraces the hedonism of early club culture and lives a reckless lifestyle pretty far removed from the life of his originator.

This is a road that leads to some quite bizarre experiences, ranging from trauma sparked by psychedelic drugs, to strange meetings due to a talent for getting drawn towards the less conform parts of society.

He lives in Berlin, but leads a nomadic lifestyle.

I have attributed all music I have released under my MENTAL OVERDRIVE alias throughout the years to this character, but at the same time taken great freedom in rewriting the personal history of the character in question.

As an inspiration I loosely used the film “The Usual Suspects” (Bryan Singer 1995), where main antagonist Keyser Söze (Kevin Spacey) builds an intricate fictional lie culled from a bulletin board in the interrogation room where he is questioned.

I gathered all memorabilia I could find from my own career, spanning from posters to reviews and rave flyers, and tried to imagine an alternative story for the artist that had left these traces of activity.

This was done in order to see if it was possible to see my musical history in a new light by changing the narrative, but also see whether the writing would change my output under this artist name during the artistic research period, leaning on the backdrop of the new story.

The present technological toolkit for making the music of this character is mainly concentrated around hardware and software for rhythmical electronic music production, with an emphasis on quantisation and musical elements synchronised to a set BPM (Beat per minute).

My main tool in recent years has been the Octatrack, a sampler/sequencer from Swedish manufacturers Elektron, often coupled with a selection of hardware synths and drum machines including Roland’s TR-8, Moog’s DFAM and Arturia’s Drumbrute. The final production and mixing has been done in Ableton Live.

The music of MENTAL OVERDRIVE can be heard here: [https://
mentaloverdrive.bandcamp.com](https://mentaloverdrive.bandcamp.com)



Image #5: "Selfie, 1984

3.2.3 MY THIRD STORY (WATER)

The third character is someone who is far more emotionally driven, and who embraces the past in ways that his counterpart could never understand.

He is nostalgic at heart and happy to keep nurturing the aesthetics he found attractive in his formative years, to the point where progress represents more of a threat than new opportunities.

A member of the "DisCon" movement (The *Disconnects* - an underground movement working for detachment from digital technology, especially when wired to the internet for personal data harvesting and searchability), he spends his days meeting "real people in the real world", while *Screenslaves* (people using online digital technology) haste around him in their digital haze.

He lives in London, where he spends his days walking in pre-defined circles around the streets and canals, meeting real people having real conversations.

For this character I have created the artist alias NΔEON TEΔRDROPS - who champions a retro synthesizer-based sound. There's a strong emphasis on

melodic elements and melancholically charged harmonies, and this is the only musical project that includes the human voice and lyrical content.

I have made the music of this artist alias with analogue synthesizers and drum machines recorded directly onto analogue tape, including the first drum machine I owned, a Roland TR-606 Drumatix (see Image #6).

In addition I have used a Dave Smith Instruments OB-6, an Arturia Matrixbrute and external analogue processing like Elektron's Analog Heat saturation processor.

This is also the first musical project I've done where I use my own voice for singing.

The music of NAEON TEARDROPS can be heard here: <https://naeonteardrops.bandcamp.com>



Image #6: The Roland TR-606 drum machine used by NAEON TEARDROPS

4. ARTWORKS AND ARTISTIC RESULTS

4.1 TEXT WORKS

After defining the characters, I baptised the story “Pyramids On The Moon - A Multi-Dimensional Autobiography”, and started publishing the text as it was written on its own website: <https://pyramidsonthemoon.com>

I also set up social media channels for the project through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and shared links to every chapter I posted. Medio December 2021 the project’s Facebook page has 456 followers, Twitter 63, and Instagram 294.

Within the framework of the storytelling, I could now experiment with composing, publishing and performing music under the three fictional representations of myself, and share the results out in the real world.

Modelled on the method acting technique this would involve starting my week by writing passages for a chosen character, before going into the studio to create music “in character”.

It would also involve changing my wardrobe according to the different roles to the point where I had to go grocery shopping in a leather jacket for the first time since 1985.

At the point of my final exhibition all chapters for each character up to that point were also collected and printed in three different booklets that were handed out to guests at the opening.

4.2 RECORD RELEASES

Through the record releases I didn’t share all information about the overall project, but rather let the musical output speak for itself so that I could observe the unbiased public reactions on each release by each artist.

I could now see how the music of the different artist aliases would resonate with various audiences, if at all, and also see if the music reached into new territories, or sparked new responses to what I had been used to in the past.

The following records were released as part of this project:

4.2.1 WAVE∞FORM - WAVEFORM01 (2 X LP/LOVE OD COMMUNICATIONS 2020)



Image #7: WAVE∞FORM - “Waveform01” (Love OD Communications 2020)

The album “Waveform01” was released digitally and on double vinyl through my label Love OD Communications in 2020.

The material consisted of modular synthesizer improvisations recorded in the studio or at live performances, which were later edited, re-arranged and finally structured in post-production before release.

Some of the compositions, like “Wave_02” or “Wave_012” are mainly based on slowly building up various randomly tuned “drones” that eventually start to inter-modulate with each other and create an abstract “sea of soundwaves”.

These were created by adding elements while listening for “interesting passages, which were then developed further into the resulting compositions.

Based on the character as described in the “The Fool”, I tried to drop any focus on traditional tonality or musical theory in the process of “curating” these compositions as they were made, but rather leave them as open and “pure” as possible, in line with the character’s lack of musical knowledge and production skills.

Other tracks on the album, like “Wave_03” and “Wave_09” were created with sequencers running in random to trigger various oscillators via reverb and delay effects, while adding other rhythmical elements and dialogue samples, pointing to the “ambient techno” tradition of artists such as Biosphere and other artists associated with labels such as Apollo and Warp Records’ output in the early nineties.

This was partly a result of the techniques applied, but also a more conscious way to place the music of this project into the context of a genre-specific affiliation that I thought suited the story and character.

Most of the compositions on this album is recorded directly onto stereo tracks rather than multitracked, although some of the raw recordings were layered using Ableton Live.

The main modules in use were models like Mutable Instruments’ Braids, 4MS’ Stereo Triggered Sampler, Strymon’s Magneto, Intellijel’s Metropolis sequencer, Noise Engineering’s Loquelic Iteritas and a selection of filters and function generators from brands like Bastl Instruments, Pittsburgh and Serge.

All in all, I feel that this album presents a different outlook on composition than my output as an artist has represented in the past, mainly as the material is detached from the “functionality” that dance music often requires one to be conscious of.

This “functional” aspect is based on the need for such pieces to work in the setting that dance music is played in, with extremely powerful and tuned soundsystems set up in specially designed locations. It also more often than not require that people actually dance to it.

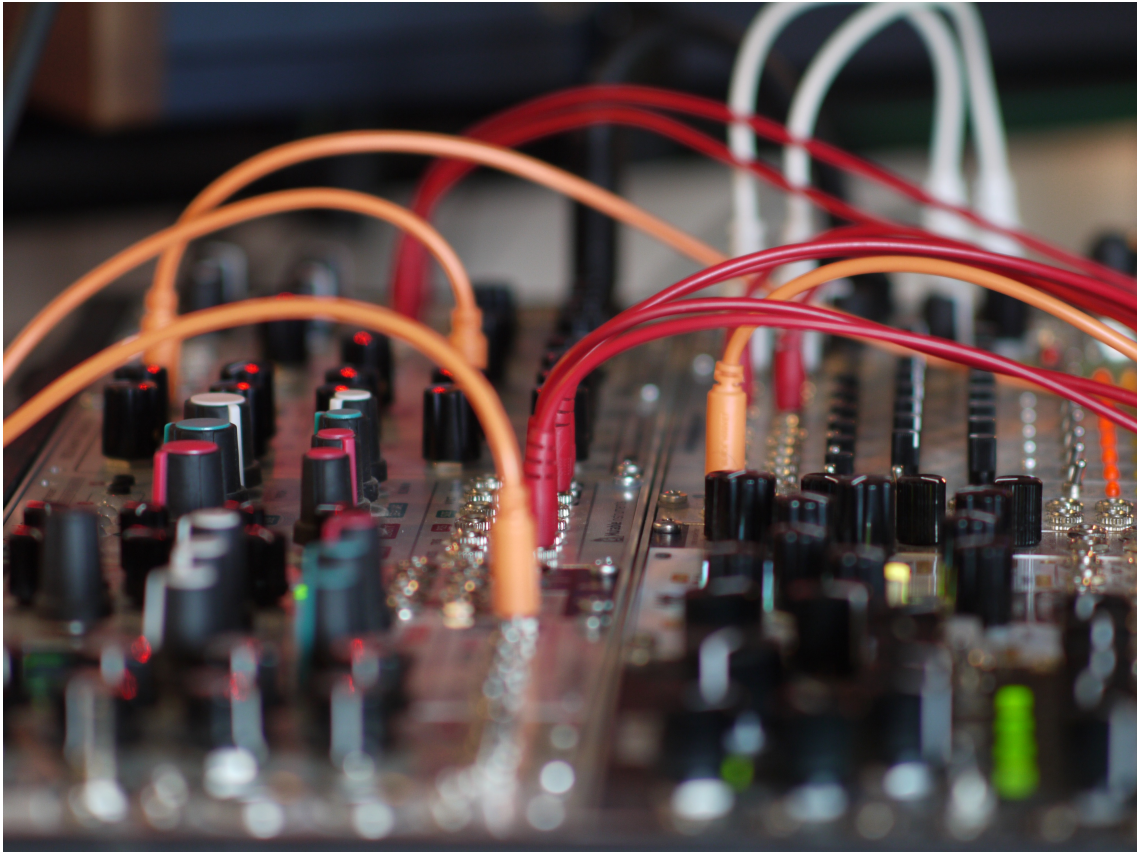


Image #8: Detail of modular system used by WAVE∞FORM

4.2.2 MENTAL OVERDRIVE - INTEGRATRON EP (12" VINYL/ LOVE OD COMMUNICATIONS 2020)

As the MENTAL OVERDRIVE alias already had its own legacy of releasing techno records over the last three decades, the main challenge was to try and implement some of the new ideas that emerged from the writing process and main topics of the overall project.

The title track, "Integratron" was inspired by visiting a "sound-bath" at *The Integratron*, a Californian desert resort where small groups of visitors can experience meditative, ceremonial concerts performed on Tibetan crystal bowls.

The tonality of these bowls is based on ancient ideas of the *Chakras*, which are believed to be energy-centres in the human body, of which there are seven. Each of these are attributed to its own colour and sound frequency.



Image #9: MENTAL OVERDRIVE - “Integratron EP” (Love OD Communications 2021)

I based the composition on electronic sine waves tuned to these “chakra-tones” according to the table below (see Image #10), courtesy of Jamie Buturff. The tones were then played as an improvisation, before adding a more traditional techno beat and structure around them.

Creating the beats was done using techniques and equipment used by many producers in the genre, like Roland’s TR-8 drum machine, modern takes on vintage analogue synths like Arturia’s Matrixbrute and Dreadbox’ Erebus, and the hardware sample/sequencer Octatrack from Elektron.

The result was that the elements of the beats and production techniques created a familiar framework for the genre, where the tonalities and timbres of the “chakra tones” could play out a kind of “otherness” in mood that was less identifiable with my previous output using equal tempered scales.

The A=432Hz Tones for the Chakras

By Jamie Buturff

Chakra	Frequency in Hz	Equivalent Note
Crown	216, 432, or 864	A
3 rd Eye	144, 288, or 576	D
Throat	192, 384, or 768	G
Heart	128, 256, or 512	C
Solar Plexus	182, 364, or 728	F [#]
Sacral	303, 606, or 1212	E ^b
Root	228, 456, or 912	B ^b

Image #10: Jamie Buturff's "Chakra tones"

The other compositions on the EP range from the EBM-inspired "TW-AW_18" (EBM=Electronic Body Music, a popular electronic genre in the mid 1980's championed by bands like Front 242 and Nitzer Ebb), which represents the "roots" of the "Fire" character, with a focus on industrial, hard-sounding beats and aggressive synth-lines.

"Portal" investigates a familiar sonic landscape but deprived of the clockwork-like beats of the other productions on the EP, while "Lockdown" looks at what happens when more melancholic, emotional melodic elements pair up with this project's production habits.

4.2.3 NΔEON TEΔRDROPS - AMNESIACS/BROTHERHOOD (7" VINYL/DISCON RECORDS/LOVE OD COMMUNICATIONS 2021)

The single AMNESIACS/BROTHERHOOD was released under the artist name NΔEON TEΔRDROPS in 2021 through my new subsidiary label Discon Records.

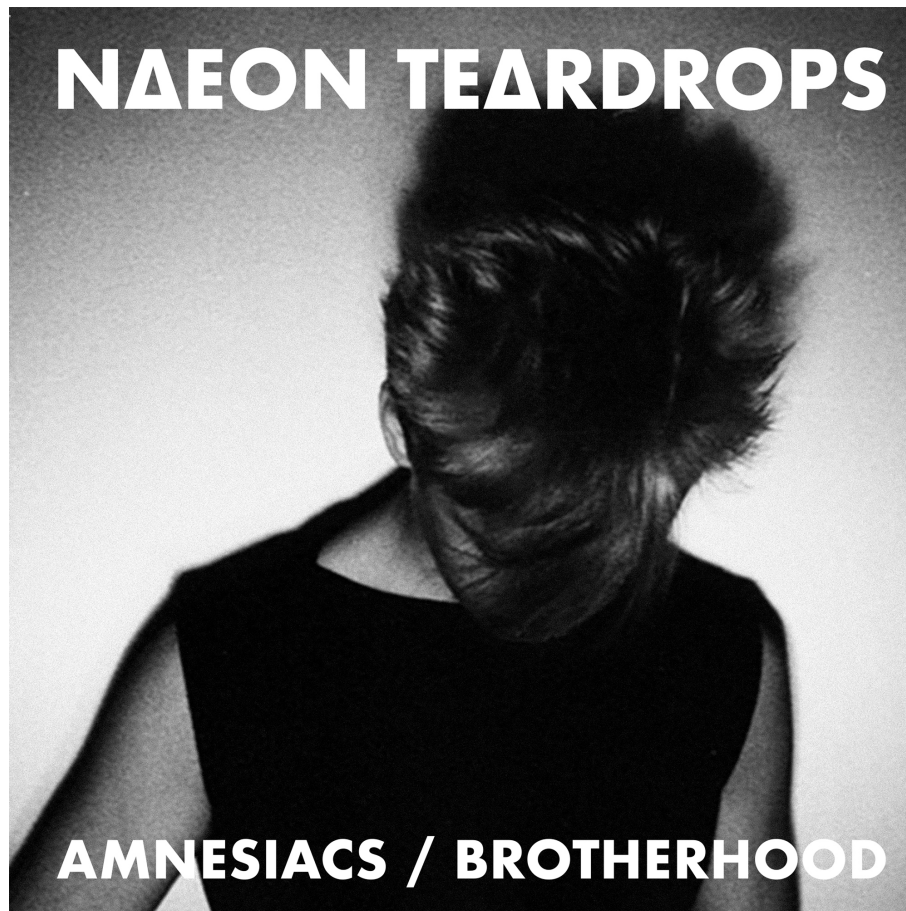


Image #11: NΔEON TEΔRDROPS - "AMNESIACS/
BROTHERHOOD" (Discon Records/Love OD Communications
2021)

The two songs on the single move into more traditional songwriter territory, paired with a retro, synthesizer-based production rooted in the sound of 80's bands like Depeche Mode and Fad Gadget.

The compositions were created layer by layer, starting with the basslines and beats, then adding synth lines and melodies until the harmonic sum of the elements resulted in something to write a vocal top line onto.

This is a way of writing that is rooted in the "one-finger" synth-playing techniques of aforementioned early synthesiser pop bands, where each member played their individual parts on monophonic synthesizers atop a programmed drum machine beat.

All my music writing has always been done solely by listening. My approach is usually informed by technological insight concerning timbres and "sound".

This is something I've actively nurtured throughout my career, making sure I create music from a more emotional and intuitive perspective rather than an intellectual and rational understanding of what I'm doing.

Maybe this is a result of my background of entering the world of music after the punk era.

The most remarkable aspect of these compositions, might be that it is the first time I have used my own singing voice in any of my recordings.

This was something which I found a very challenging task, not solely because I questioned the musical result, but more due to the emotional reaction I experienced in the process.

I have always been open to use different sound sources in my work, from field recordings to a large variation of instruments. But using my own voice felt extremely *private* and somehow vulnerable.

This came as a surprise, but also sparked a motivation to take up the challenge, even though I at one point said to myself that "I'd rather walk naked across the town square than let anyone hear me sing".

Writing song lyrics was also a fairly new exercise, although I've written some lines with earlier collaborators, and a process that taught me a lot about how words have to be "singable" and not only rhythmically adapted to the music.

Consonant-heavy words suddenly became apparent problems when I attempted to stretch them out across long melody lines, and the timbre and feel of every syllable became more important to me than the words in themselves.

As an example from one of the songs by NΔEON TEΔRDROPS that never developed beyond the demoing stage, I made an attempt to stretch the word "struggle" across three syllables with three different tones.

Needless to say, this was without success.

You could say that my earlier arrogance towards the apparent banality of pop lyrics was being challenged at its core through the lyric-writing process.



Image #12: WAVE∞FORM live at Skomvær Fyr, July 14th 2020. Photo: Aggie Peterson

4.3 LIVE PERFORMANCES

In addition to the record releases, I also did a series of live performances under the WAVE∞FORM and MENTAL OVERDRIVE guises over the three years that I worked with the research project.

During these performances I tried out new material and ways of improvising. I also tried playing in untraditional settings such as one performance as part of a yoga class in Svolvær in July 2020.

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, all performances after march 2020 were either cancelled, done in front of very small audiences or via digital streaming.

4.4 “THE SONIC NOVEL”

As an experiment, some of the text and music from “Pyramids On The Moon” was recorded into episodes of what I coined a “sonic novel”, inspired by the term “graphic novel” that I grew up with.

The format was somewhere between an audio book, a podcast and a radio play, and was posted on the project's own Bandcamp page: <https://pyramidsonthemoon.bandcamp.com>.

These episodes were also recorded onto cassette tape and displayed as part of the final exhibition.

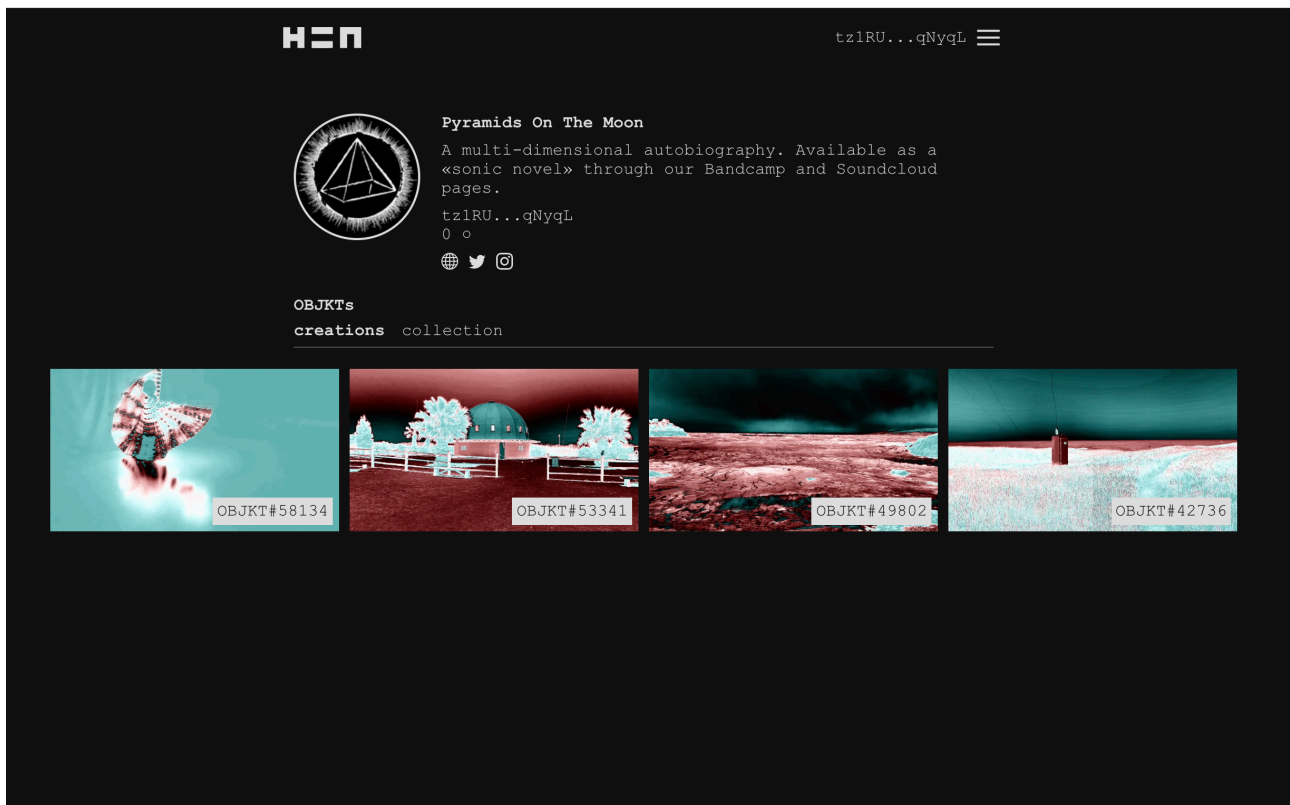


Image #13: Pyramids on the Moon's page on NFT platform Hic et Nunc

4.5 NON-FUNGIBLE TOKENS

I experimented with creating NFT's (Non-Fungible Tokens) out of visual works combined with music from the project.

These were inspired by a near explosion in the NFT market in the spring of 2021, but worked more as experimenting with this new format than an actual desire to become an NFT millionaire.

The NFT's can be viewed at: <https://objkt.com/profile/tz1RUgd1VdNFMcG2AKKEuKaqVJAMyDLqNyqL/created>

4.6 MUSIC VIDEOS

Music videos were made for the NΔEON TEΔRDROPS songs AMNESIACS and BROTHERHOOD, by directors Carl Christian Lein Størmer and Sandra Jensen respectively.

I also filmed and edited a video myself for the MENTAL OVERDRIVE track LOCKDOWN one week after lockdown hit Norway in March 2020.

All three videos can be viewed at: <https://vimeo.com/loveod>

4.7 PHOTOGRAPHS

A series of photographs were also used for artwork and as part of the final exhibition in Tromsø.

These included old self-portraits that were also used as artwork for some of the record releases as shown elsewhere in this document.

4.8 INSTALLATION WORKS

Parts of the documentation I used as a backdrop for the writing process was presented in the exhibition “The Search For Resonance”, which opened at Helvetesveitasenteret in Tromsø on November 13th 2021.

I created three rooms, each dedicated to one of the artist characters in my multi-dimensional autobiography, and displayed different installations and artefacts assigned to each personality.

For the WAVE∞FORM room I built a “wave-massage” bed out of a massage bench coupled with a heavily amplified transducer speaker hooked up to a small modular synth system. This allowed the public to connect their bodies directly to the vibrations of the music. I also printed a series of documents and pictures found during my internet searches and clad the walls with these.

For the MENTAL OVERDRIVE ROOM, I collected the above mentioned memorabilia and press-cuttings from my career and spread them across the walls to represent the “Keyser Söze” bulletin board that inspired this part of

the project. In addition I displayed some costumes and installation works from the past that were associated with record artworks and music videos created under this artist name.

In the NΔEON TEΔRDROPS room I set up a sampling work-station of the vintage music equipment that were used to make all my demos from the late eighties, and that I describe in the part of the fiction related to this artist (see Image #14).

The equipment consisted of an Akai S3000i sampler, an Atari 1040ST music computer running C-LAB Notator software, and a MIDI keyboard controller. I also set up a Sony reel-to-reel magnetic tape recorder playing back some of the new music demos from my research project period.



Image #14: The NΔEON TEΔRDROPS room at the final exhibition in Tromsø, November 2021

The main area outside of the three rooms were used to create a pop-up record store, a small live stage, and a DIY office where the public could see the different tools I'd used to create some of the pieces on display. These included a Sony cassette duplicator, a Canon ink printer and a small sound editing suite based on my MacBook Pro computer.

The NFT's mentioned in chapter 4.5 were also edited into a video reel and projected on the wall behind the live stage in the main room.

My main motivation for creating the exhibition was to show some of the background material I had used to inspire my work of fiction, but also show some of the results created through my role-playing using the three different artist approaches.

The intention was to play short live sets by each musical project during the opening, but due to sudden Covid-19 restrictions hitting Tromsø the week before the opening date, the original event was cancelled, and an alternative, private evening with invites only was set up instead.

I played a short DJ-set at this event. As myself. Whoever that might be.



5. PUBLIC RESONANCE - RESPONSE AND FEEDBACK

Surprisingly, some of the reactions and feedback I got on the various record releases was sometimes very much in line with the keywords I had written down for each character.

The WAVE∞FORM album was marginally promoted but well received on the more experimental electronic/ambient circuit. Live performances done under this alias were well received, both within audiences accustomed to the genre, but also to more “untrained” ears attending a “micro-tour” that took part in Lofoten and Vesterålen in July 2020.

On this basis, one can conclude that the new alias was quite successfully established, as the releases and live activities has led to booking-requests for performances and new commissioned work in 2022.

Still there is also a chance that the reception of this new project leans on my legacy as an already well-established artist in another genre.

MENTAL OVERDRIVE also received positive feedback on the new material released during this time. “Integratron EP” resonated well with the DJ-community, something that is well documented in the marketing report from German PR-company Savour The Moment, who did a promotion campaign in prior to the release: <https://www.fatdrop.co.uk/pf/L0DzsvulJ1pbjQNXvK9AccVE3MJ8Dw>

Live performances by MENTAL OVERDRIVE were mostly done prior to the lockdown in March 2020 were also welcomed on the club circuit. Live bookings planned for the 30th anniversary in 2020 were postponed indefinitely because of the Covid-19 situation.

As for the debut single by NΔEON TEΔRDROPS, this was promoted via German PR-company Hardbeat and US PR-company Declared Goods prior to release.

I was unaware that there existed such an audience for the genre that has been coined “Darkwave”, in which the single seemed to be associated with.

My own focus on more song-based, melodic, synthesizer music came to an end towards the end of the 1980's, but I learned that there had developed a fairly large following of this kind of material in the time that had passed since it lost my interest, something I found surprising, if pleasantly so.

The single seems to resonate quite well with the audience of this genre today, and eventually reached a chart position of #8 in the *Deutsche Alternative Charts* in September 2021.

It is notable that the reactions and comments to the NΔEON TEΔRDROPS songs differed in nature from the reactions to the MENTAL OVERDRIVE and WAVE∞FORM records.

Whereas the dance music and experimental sounds of the other two aliases appealed to people more as soundtracks to situation-dependent experiences, the music of NΔEON TEΔRDROPS seemed to reach people on a more personal and emotional level (see Image #16).

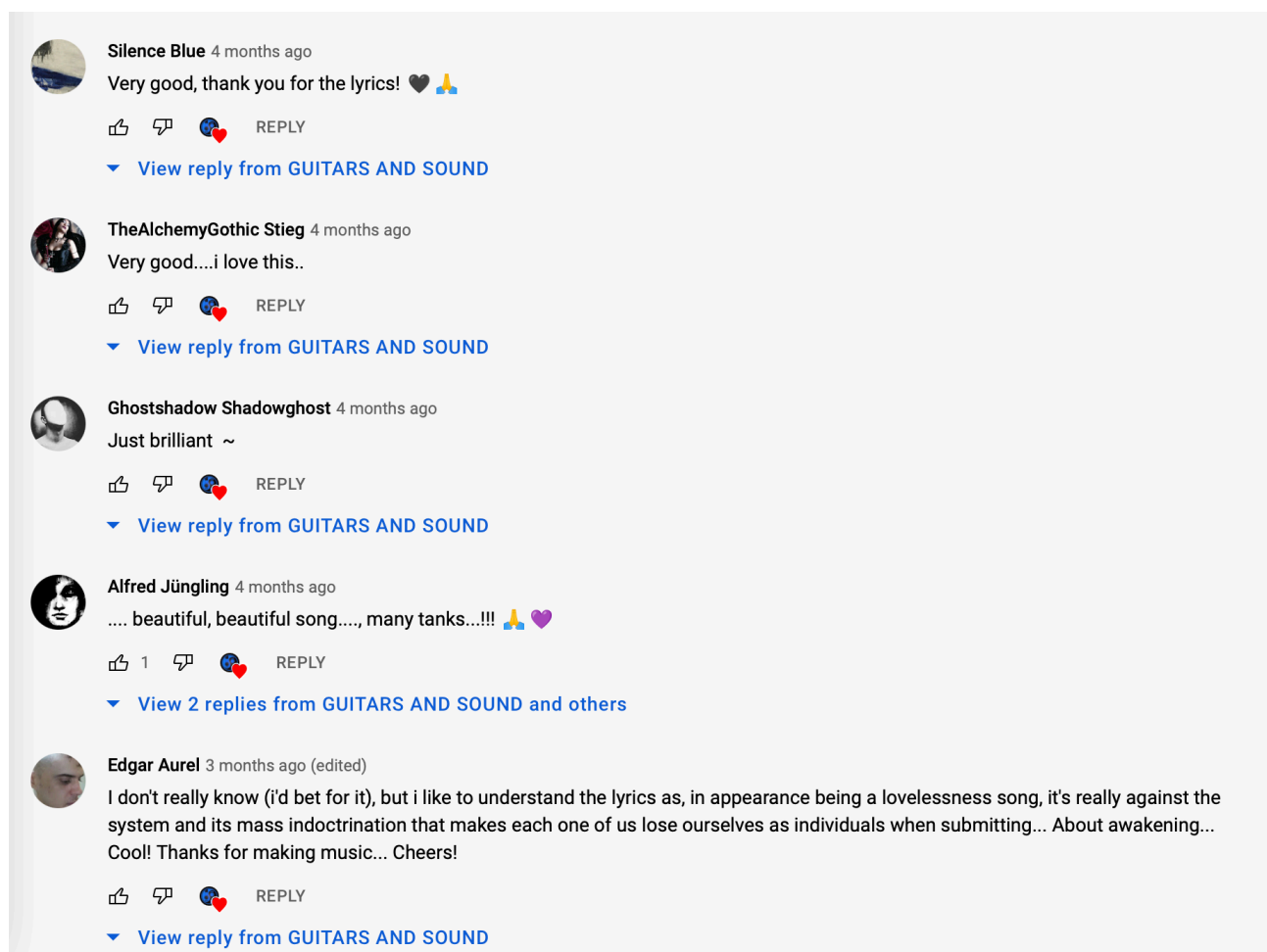


Image #16: Comments on the song “AMNESIACS” from the Youtube channel of “GUITARS AND SOUND”

6. ARTISTIC OUTCOME - CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD

6.1 ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES

One of the conclusions I have drawn after three years of working with this project, is that without working cross-disciplinary, with an openness to explore different methods in approaching my material, there would be no way I could have reached the artistic results that I have.

Neither would I have gained the same insight into my own artistic practice, had I not removed myself from the comfort-zone of more familiar creative processes as a composer and performing musician.

It seems apparent that working cross-disciplinary is quite established in the world of visual art, but more marginally chosen as a method amongst musicians and composers.

I believe there are interesting results to be gained from letting other processes inform one's "core" activities, and look at them from another perspective.

Personally, the research programme has enabled me to rip up old habits, get out of the "production loop" that artists working professionally often feel trapped in, and allowed me to take a step aside and re-assess what it is I actually *do* as an artist.

As an example, the WAVE∞FORM project and its connected character study has been very liberating as a way to enter a mindset of exploration, and has freed me from the immediate self-censorship that "the voice of references" can lead to after so many years of experience in one specific field of music.

Being too self-aware can definitely block the creative flow, and I find that having too rigid ideas about oneself can choke ideas before they are even given a chance to be explored.

It's difficult to express oneself and impress oneself at the same time.

With the imagined outlook of someone unexperienced it is easier to try out all possible ideas and freely improvise before entering the role of the curator of your own work.

As for MENTAL OVERDRIVE, I believe that looking at my own work in retrospect has given me new valuable insight, especially with the new freedom of thought that the re-writing of my own history has opened up for.

It seems I can still seek to stretch the limits of what can be implemented in the now well-established genre of electronic dance music.

Finally, I find the NΔEON TEΔRDROPS project the most unexpected outcome of all, with its rather culturally conservative approach to musical form and more traditional songwriting techniques.

But working within these restrictions both aesthetically and in relation to a well of references within the genre, there turned out to be new ground to be explored, at least on a personal level.

I have never considered using my own vocals on any of my work previously, but in the context of this specific project it was a challenge that I couldn't escape, and was pushed to explore new and unknown waters.

My conclusion is that looking at oneself and one's artistic practice from a distance is much easier when you imagine to be someone else.

6.2 A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

It has also been very revealing to analyse how the effect of one's attitude can be traced back to my own artistic identity, and somehow reveal my personal motivations and restrictions.

I have always believed that looking to the future and embracing the unknown was the only reasonable way to be creative, and to succeed in making something original.

But after my experience with this project I think this might be one of the great misconceptions of my generation.

The reason for this attitude might lie in my formative years as a music fan being spent in the era of post-punk and new wave in the early eighties.

Back then, the main aim was to tear down old structures and challenge the aesthetics of the status quo - at any cost.

My musical journey ever since has mainly revolved around a continued search for change, rooted in a feeling of belonging only in subcultures and alternative currents to the “mainstream” of popular culture.

To my own surprise, it now seems that I have very much been part of the popular culture I believed myself to oppose, only that I’ve found myself at the more unpopular end of it.

I now realise that even the mainstream has been going through constant changes. I just haven’t been looking for them closely enough.

To play with this identity crisis of an imagined rebel, I have deliberately turned this relation upside down in the world of ΔEON, the WATER character.

In this part of my fiction, I have imagined noise music and the most radical electronic beats to be the most popular, mainstream genres, and let melodic pop music become the only true underground.

I guess it was the only way I could lure the old idea of who I was to approach this type of musical material. In the past, these kind of thoughts would surely have been self-censored and aborted before even getting a chance to be explored.

This major shift of perspective has allowed me to realise that there is a confinement in rigid ideas about one’s own personality, and that this can be a hard obstacle when seeking to explore new ground.

This realisation stands in stark contrast to the the fact that a conscious self-awareness of identity has always been viewed as an essential asset in the area of music and music culture that I have been part of. It was always about being “authentic” and “keeping it real”.

But that requires you to be 100% sure who you are, and what reality is.

I now have a vague sensation that the “real” me is in fact only the one wondering who the real me is. In light of this project, all others seem to be equally constructed masks.

6.3 THE AGE OF SELF-REFERENCE

*“Those who do not remember the past, are condemned to repeat it.” (George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, 1905)*

Another reflection that sprung out of my experiences with this project, is that I’m now thinking that if you only keep looking to the future, you will certainly end up in the past.

I’ve now learned that approaching the past and exploring the more established cultural outlook that the story of NΔEON TEΔRDROPS and its version of myself represents, can be equally valuable in creating new ideas.

On a larger scale, the way that technology has propelled the awareness of music history in recent years, is immense.

Pop culture has always been a pool of cross-reference, and the introduction of sampling in the eighties took this practise into uncharted territory. Not only could you “steal” a reference to something, but you could steal the actual thing, and put it into a new context.

In current times, growing up with streaming services and online libraries where near the entire history of recorded music is available, is very different from having access to a couple of hundred vinyl albums and singles, as was the case for most people growing up towards the end of the last millennium.

This ability to be exposed to more than a century of musical history at one’s fingertips seems to have widened the awareness of contemporary consumers of music enormously.

Musical genres and the matched, uniform personal appearances of fans of them, used to be so apparent when I grew up that they could act as social identifiers.

Nowadays you can't be sure if the person sitting next to you on the train, wearing a studded leather jacket and biker boots, is listening to opera or urban pop on their earpods. Unless you move uncomfortably close.

This shift in the predictability of music consumption, coupled with the tendency of a more archival exploration of references by new artists, seems to have led to greater freedom in creatively exploring the match between the old and the new.

On a personal level, becoming more friendly towards the past has also enabled me to somehow reconnect to the more *emotional* side of my art again. It has taught me not to immediately scoff at traditional musical forms that doesn't represent progress or experimentation, but rather communicate other valuable layers of the human experience.

This might mark a healthy punctuation of the arrogance that comes with always seeking something "new", while dismissing the past.

Even though this is a highly personal observation, and not necessarily a great step for mankind, I still find it an important realisation.



Image #17: Kraftwerk

7. CONTEXT - SOURCES AND REFERENCES

Because my project has ended up being of a multi-disciplinary nature with its linking of creative writing with music and visual works, it is not by default comparable to the field of popular electronic music that my former artistic practise has been associated with.

I will nevertheless try to connect to some sources of reference and look at my work in the context of others operating in the same area of music as myself, or who have been closely associated with it.

7.1 OTHER PLAYERS IN THE FIELD

Creating fictional personas is nothing new in the world of music. There is a long tradition of inventing alter-egos and building myths around one's artistic identity, especially within genres like pop, metal and electronic music.

I personally grew up with influences like The Residents and Kraftwerk, as mentioned in chapter 3 above, and without having a personal relationship to his music, I was aware of David Bowie's use of alter-egos, from Ziggy Stardust to The Thin White Duke.

None of these influences expanded their myth-building into the same scale, but The Residents continuously developed stories around their musical output, from "Mark of the Mole" to "God in Three Persons".

Among my post-acid house contemporaries, Richard D. James AKA Aphex Twin has been a master of building and containing popular myths surrounding his own public character, to the point where his followers seem to sometimes question their own sanity.

Others, like Bill Drummond and Jimmy Cauty's KLF, showed what kind of impact a solid plan of action combined with very creative performances on and off stage, plus a string of very entertaining mythological concepts could have on pop chart positions.

Both of the examples above also show the sheer force of popular myth can have when armed with a special talent for manipulating the music press.

On a perhaps "deeper" conceptual scale (no pun intended), the underwater tales of Detroit's Drexciya is probably the most fascinating of myths within techno music, where James Stinson and Gerald Donald managed to communicate politically charged discussions through fantastic frameworks and a genuinely original musical expression.

Moving over to the history of literature, Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935) introduced the idea of *heteronyms* - in contrast to pseudonyms, of which he had more than seventy different names to write under.

The idea was that whereas pseudonyms were "false" pen names, heteronyms had their own physique, biography and writing style, much like my own project. I was not made aware of his work until after opening my final exhibition, where one of the guests pointed out the connection.

As for breaking new ground, I'm currently not aware of a project totally similar to my own, with fictional character development used as a method to widen one's creative repertoire as a music composer and performer - all tied together in one cross-disciplinary work.

7.2 IDENTITY QUESTIONS IN CURRENT NARRATIVES

The way the project took this turn towards a question of identity rather than one of exploring the physical attributes of sound, is an interesting development in itself, but also aligns to certain current narratives.

In the field of electronic music that I have been associated with, there has been a strong focus on questions of equality in recent years.

This has led to a process where one has finally seen more visibility of female artists, artists of non-white ethnicity and artists representing the LGBTQ community, both in the music media and in the booking-habits of club promoters.

My project does in no way directly touch in on the challenges of any of the above mentioned groups, but raises remotely similar questions around the individual right to decide one's own narrative and identity.

This has ethical implications. The play with identity I represent through this project is very far removed from having to fight for equal rights, social acceptance of one's gender, or going through a daily struggle with systemic racism.

Instead my outlook deals with the ultimate epitome of "sampling culture", where the luxury of being free to design one's own identity is more a sign of privilege rather than a result of oppression.

Also the desire to change the facts if they don't fit your narrative is also something very visible in certain areas of current day politics, and in the social media-driven denial of scientific facts among some groups.

8. AFTERTHOUGHTS

I find it interesting that my project turned into one of artistic identity as soon as I started looking at the impact my musical output has had in the past.

Mirroring oneself in the reaction of an audience can be very revealing, but it can also dictate the shaping of who one believes to be as an artist.

If this dynamic only acts as a self-affirming feedback loop, you might find yourself inside a “filter bubble”, where you’re not getting any response of actual value, other than to keep you producing “more of the same”.

Through the shift of perspective that this project has helped me acquire, I believe it is now easier to assess the impact my expressions have on my surroundings, and help heighten the understanding of my own motivations for being creative.

The experience has inspired a stronger will to develop and experiment.

As for turning the spotlight back on oneself, I’ve always been very cautious of there being a certain level of narcissism connected to any form of artistry, and I guess this has been one of the reasons I have never wanted to get too close to my own person, and rather tried to look outside myself for inspiration.

Which, in hindsight, seems far more narcissistic. Only true narcissists would be afraid of being revealed as one.

When it comes down to it, I guess my artistic personality is rather mouldable.

The question might be to what extent we will believe in the myths we create about ourselves in the future.

And how we impact others through them.

In any way, the methods I have explored through this programme is definitely something I will continue to develop in my artistic practise in the future.

I will keep probing my characters through writing text and publishing music under the different artist aliases, and try to search for their full potential as both avatars and muses, trapped in the same imaginary bodies.

It could also be interesting to see what would happen if two or more of them got together for a “collaboration” in the future.

Whether or not they will morph into one personality in the end, is a huge question. And whether this will be the “new me”, is an even bigger one.



Image #18: Selfie, 2020

9. READING LIST

The following books have been read for background research during the research project period. Some have been used for inspiration in relation to the music biography as a format, and others have been used to get an overall insight into the fields they describe:

Genesis P-Orridge - Nonbinary: A Memoir (Harry N. Abrams, 2021)

Jonathan Miller - Stripped: Depeche Mode (Omnibus Press, 2009)

Lol Tholhurst - Cured: The Tale of Two Imaginary Boys (Da Capo Press, 2016)

Phill Brown - Are we still rolling? (Tape Op, 2011)

John Higgs - The KLF: Chaos, Magic and the Band who Burned a Million Pounds (Orion Hardbacks, 2013)

Johnny Marr - Set the boy free: The Autobiography (Dey Street Books, 2017)

Peter Hook - Unknown Pleasures: Inside Joy Division (It Books, 2013)

Peter Hook - Substance: Inside New Order (Dey Street Books, 2017)

Bernard Sumner - Chapter and Verse: New Order, Joy Division and me (Thomas Dunne Books, 2014)

Stephen Morris - Record, Play, Pause: Confessions of a Post-Punk Percussionist Volume 1 (Constable, 2019)

Stephen Morris - Fast Forward: Confessions of a Post-Punk Percussionist Volume 2 (Constable, 2020)

Ketil Bjørnstad - Verden som var min, Bind 2: Syttitallet (Aschehoug, 2016)

Ketil Bjørnstad - Verden som var min, Bind 3: Åttitallet (Aschehoug, 2018)

Dr. Andrew R. Gallimore - Alien Information Theory: Psychedelic Drug Technologies and the Cosmic Game (Strange Worlds Press, 2019)

Michael Pollan - How to change your mind: The New Science of Psychedelics (Penguin, 2018)

Rick Strassman - DMT the Spirit Molecule: A Doctor's Revolutionary Research into the Biology of Near-Death and Mystical Experiences (Park Street Press, 2001)

Dan A. Davidson - Shape Power (Rivas Pub, 1997)

Stan Tenen - The Alphabet That Changed the World: How Genesis Preserves a Science of Consciousness in Geometry and Gesture (North Atlantic Books, 2011)

John Michell - How The World is Made: The Story of Creation According to Sacred Geometry (Thames Hudson, 2009)

The Wire: Adventures in Sound and Music (Monthly magazine, 2019-2021)

In addition, a large number of online articles have informed the writing of the multi-dimensional autobiography, including themes discussed on, but not restricted to the following websites:

<https://www.resonancescience.org>

<https://www.gaia.com>

<https://www.electricuniverse.info>

<https://www.cymagic.art>

<https://ra.co>

<https://www.factmag.com>

<https://www.whitelight-whiteheat.com>

<https://bandcamp.com>