

**Full version Interview with Ben Fleury-Steiner through e-mail for E/I magazine,
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Troum is:
Martin Gitschel aka the Glit(s)ch
Stefan Knappe aka BarakaH
based in Bremen, Germany
project exists since 1997
style: we call it „transcendental noise“
www.troum.com
troum@dronerecords.de

1. You are from Germany, home of the very influential Berlin School of electronica and many influential industrial artists, while there are connections to this music in Maeror Tri, Troum is much more interested in making trance like drone music. How did you become interested in this new sonic direction? What are your influences both musical and otherwise?

It was a long process, though we would like to point out that we don't only do "trance like drone music", our spectrum is much broader (we think). And MAEROR TRI was not really influenced by any german industrial artists, though the NEUBAUTEN were quite popular of course. We began with MAEROR TRI in 1988 when we were teenagers, we grew up with & were influenced by different genres from the more "alternative" scene: punk & hardcore, new wave & wave-rock, industrial & noise. We discovered that there were some so-called "post-industrial"-groups doing a more atmospheric & ambient kind of music, like HAFLER TRIO and ZOVJET FRANCE. This "ambient industrial"-influence was maybe the most important, but we mixed it up with all kinds of other influences & ideas. Many people think we must have been influenced by 70's psychedelia or 60's minimal music or even german "Krautrock", but that's not true. Our musical "education" began with the 80's, we are true childs of the 80's you could say, and from there we developed our very own style that later flew into TROUM. TROUM is like a logical continuation of MAEROR TRI, result of a long process that started somewhere in the middle of the 80's. It's not like "now we decide to go into this direction", It's a much more subliminal, subconscious process. You just do the music you feel you HAVE to do, and later someone names that somehow.

We think that a good part of the creative output can't be rooted back just to "musical influences". There is something "inside" that finds a manifestation through music, you can't control it rationally.

2. While this obviously a subjective question, I'd be very interested in getting your perspective on the power of the "drone." Where does its power come from? Is it a product of both the individual's surroundings and his/her mind or both? Going further, does what is happening in Germany--in terms of politics, the environment, and other public issues--influence the way Troum makes sound? Or could there be a Troum in any corner of the globe? And why do drone music fans tend to be so fanatical about this music? Is it something that they "get" that non-drone fans do not understand? **THOUGHTS ON THIS QUESTION: I SUSPECT THIS QUESTION WILL GIVE US THE CORE NARRATIVE OF THE ARTICLE, SO PLEASE TAKE YOUR TIME TO REALLY GIVE AS DETAILED A RESPONSE AS POSSIBLE. THANKS!**

We think: "The DRONE" is, like pure noise, a kind of "end-point" of music. Yes, the Drone is a product of the surroundings AND the mind, it's a kind of direct link between the inner psyche and environment or nature. In the Drone almost everything that could be rationally analyzed is gone, it's just "pure" sound or tones. Like all matter around us, sound consists of frequencies with a certain spectrum, the nature-laws that build matter are also viewable in sound, its just a different entity of the same. And our human body & psyche consists of the same matter that builds everything else, light, sound, matter. A Drone is so basic that it represents these core elements, also to our psyche. Somehow the Drone is the point where micro- and macrocosmos unite. A Drone can be very focused and dense, but also appear to be wide opened & largely suspended, at the same time. It is as like the start- and endpoint of music falls into the same "one something". Relating to religion, one could even say that the Drone represents God: it's the oen that contains everything else, but it's not identical with everything else!

We're not religious and wouldn't call ourselves being esoteric at all, but in music and especially in drone-music lies a mystery that brings you to these elementary questions. This also answers the questions about fanastic drone-listeners. You can find something very basic & elemental in here.

Regarding the Troum-sound: No, it's not a question of living in Germany or the politics of a country. Of course, living in an affluent western country enables us to buy instruments, have the space & free time to do music, etc: the basic conditions are given. But what is expressed in the music are human UNIVERSALS. Theoretically everone could find a way to this more "elemental" music. Then at the end again it's of course a question of your individual environment & development which music you'll be able to listen to: which music is dominant in capitalistic countries and why (culture-industry), how's the individual inner-psycho defense-structure build ? Is there any chance at all to get in contact with this kind of music? For most people not.

We made quite often the experience that people who never had any impact with "drone-music" feel very attracted to it when they listen to it for the first time. Something you can't explain at all with musical influences or politics.

3. Troum has released projects on more established independent labels and on very micro, web based CD-R labels, to your mind which holds the most promise for promoting drone musics in the future? Do you think drone-based ambient music will grow in terms of listenership in the coming years? Why/Why Not?

Yes, we think the scene will grow and find more listeners, especially through the internet-globalisation.

The reasons for this we described at answer Nr. 2. If the general "availability-structure" for this kind of music is better, it should find more buyers. For example we see this in the development of the drone-music coming from the metal-scene, like SUNN O))), EARTH, etc.... listeners who like this might go further and explore also other drone-artists. Releasing on small or more established labels? A combination of both is the best. You need the small labels for the newcomers & explorers, the bigger labels to spread it to new listeners.

4. Your own label Drone Records is committed to releasing vinyl only 7", where does your love and passion for vinyl come from? Are you tempted to go the way of the masses and release cd-rs? What do you think about some labels doing away with a material object altogether and releasing just digital downloads?

BarakaH: Please note first that Drone Records as label is only the project of BarakaH, not the one of TROUM. People always mix it up but its not the same.

- My love for vinyl is surely based on a true "sociological influence", as I grew up with buying vinyls. CDs appeared later and they simply don't have the aesthetic possibilities (cover-artwork, etc.) as vinyl. A vinyl-record contains the acoustical data as a real imprint, visibly, a real transformation of matter through sound. You can play a record even without currency, the sound is really "there". Thus somehow vinyl seems to be more "real".
- Drone Records won't release CDRs, but there will be soon a do-CD compilation on Tumult Records presenting a selection of tracks coming from Drone 7"es. In order to spread the music as good as possible this is very much OK.
- Same with releasing digital downloads. A good way to spread the music fast & cheaply. But the Drone Records philosophy only works together with the material object, the vinyl itself, and the cover-artwork which always comes from the releasing artist. I myself like it more to have an "object" together with the music, to have something "in my hands", it belongs to the music especially when the cover is a special thing.

5. How has Troum's music evolved over time? Is there any conscious effort in the way you make new music that goes on a cd or is it completely stream of consciousness? Do you hear sounds on colleagues' records that inspire you to take new directions when making music? THOUGHTS ON THIS QUESTION: I SUSPECT THIS QUESTION WILL ALSO HELP A LOT IN CONTEXTUALIZING THE ARTICLE, SO AGAIN PLEASE TAKE YOUR TIME TO REALLY GIVE AS DETAILED A RESPONSE AS POSSIBLE. THANKS!

The old question. Think we answered this in parts already at 1).

In our view, Troum's music over the time became more refined, dense, somehow more "composed" and in a way "song-oriented". Less improvised.

We think we found "our sound" and listening to other records won't push us into a totally new direction. Though we are not so arrogant to claim nothing around us influences us. It's always both, the environment but also what is coming from the "inside" so to say, always being in an interaction.

Same with the question "consciousness – unconsciousness": you can't do music without ANY conscious decisions, it is construed the same way as it might be regarded as a "stream" of unconscious matter.

But like in daily behaviour, the influence of the unconscious is usually under-estimated.

6. While when taken in the totality of your releases, Troum's sound could accurately be characterized as long, thickly layered, often dark, guitar-drive drones, Troum also traffics in aggressive industrial rhythms and pulses and thickly layered walls of ecstatic harmony. Indeed two of the three discs on your latest tripple cd 'Tjukurrpa' focus explicitly on these non-drone approaches to soundcraft. Although there are traces of these sounds in other Troum releases, rhythm and harmony are used much more sparingly, indeed playing a far more secondary role to the drone. Why did you decide to focus so explicitly on these other sonic expressions? Were you getting bored of making pure drone music or does it simply mark a point in the overall sonic evolution of Troum? Finally, talk a little bit about the influences on the rhytms and pulses disc and harmonies disc on 'Tjukurrpa.' They are both incredibly powerful listening experiences. The former is obviously very much influenced by tribal and industrial rhythmic elements--although very emotional, as the opening track is not easily categorizable as in the way it shifts and turns with simple rhythms that combine propelling the listener into an utterly ecstatic space-- but the harmonies disc seems to go some place entirely different. Harmonies is an incredibly moving set of compositions that use long high tones that slowly build and then crescendo effortlessly. Very, very moving music, but the antithesis of quiet drone music!! Please speak on how you approached making these two AWESOME discs on the remarkable 'Tjukurrpa'?

Sorry, we think it is a misunderstanding if you regarded our music as "pure drone music" !

With TROUM (but also back with MAEROR TRI) we always had this more melodic or emotional side, but also a more rhythmic / pulsating side.

TJUKURRPA was the effort to present these three sides (harmonies – drones – rhythms & pulsations) on seperated discs as a kind of MAIN work. To make it more interesting for the listener but also for us!