

Interviews:

Interview for the Spanish magazine "Margen" (by Manuel Lemos)

I don't understand why you, having such a privileged position in the world of music (you were singer and keyboardplayer of a famous techno-pop group in Belgium back in the eighties, you composed and produced for many bands, engineered...) you go to the world of electronic music where only few can make a living out of it.

Electronic music and ambient, especially the kind that evolved out of the seventies has always been my thing, my roots, you know.

*When I founded the Belgian band **1000 Ohm** around 1980, I was 18. We were really focussed on synthesizer music, but in that period we were also very pop-oriented because pop-music in the eighties was really very synth-influenced; with bands like Depeche Mode, Ultravox and The Human League. As 1000 Ohm was succesfull we spend a lot of time in recordingstudio's and by the time the band split up in 1987 I had become a studio-engineer/producer just because artists I did meet in the studio asked me to engineer or produce them.*

*So after years of hard work, it's fun working in the musicbusiness but it's hard work, I even managed to buy one of Belgium biggest studio's, **ACE STUDIO** in Antwerp.*

When the financial stress of this studio was gone, I just felt the need that, apart from working on other artists, I had to compose music for myself, music that I really liked myself, no compromises to recordcompanies or so.

Just the stuff I like 100 %.

And this is where there's no other way for me than to make electronic, melodic music.

I never had the chance to compose this kind of music because their wasn't a market for it.

*When I started working on my first album "**COLOURS**" I even was convinced that there wasn't any market for this.*

Nowadays it seems there is a little market that is starting to grow a bit.

Every year the academy of German radio WDR gives rewards for electronic/instrumental music in three categories; best artist; best CD and best track. With your second CD "GEOGRAPHIC**" you won all three awards (something that in all those years was only done by Dutch musicians Ron Boots and John Kerr).**

Tell us about this experience.

Well, it was a great experience. I just got a call from my recordlabel "Groove Unlimited" asking me to make sure that I was present at the "Schwingungen" awards, so I knew I was nominated for one of the categories but I never expected to win in all categories. :-)

It was a very important happening for me as it confirmed the fact that there are a lot of people listening to and enjoying my music.

It gave me the energy to go on with what I am doing and also made me aware that I should only release music of high quality.

It was also a healthy thing to meet fans and realize that I'm not only composing this music for myself but also for them.

"Geographic" supposes a before ("Colours") and a later ("Docking") in your music. Tell us about these two other albums. What's the difference between them and "Geographic"?

On my first album "Colours" I was looking for a direction. As I mentioned earlier, I wasn't aware of an electronic music scene, so some songs on "Colours" have a bit of a dance or pop crossover most comparable to "Deep Forest".

The emphasis on this album was already on melodic and atmospheric well produced synthesizer music but it was to evolve in the second album "Geographic" which completely concentrated on high quality melodies and arrangements. It's in this album that I realized that I had developed my own style, that has parallels to Vangelis' music, but unlike others I never had to worry about coming to close to the great Greek's work because I had my own signature.

*After "Geographic" I composed **"DOCKING"**. This album is a bit more intimate and sometimes more complex compared to Geographic but it has a kind of beauty of which I am very proud. It was quoted by many reviews as being better, more mature than "Geographic".*

*The only thing I'm quite sure of is that "Geographic" and "Docking" feel different but have the same signature. That's also a bit my trademark, the **upcoming album "Human"** is again a bit different to what I've done before. I guess I hate repeating myself.*

Your most important influence seems to be Vangelis' "Chariots of fire", "1492", "Voices" and "Oceanic" as well as the "Berlin School" and "World music". Which other musicians/styles have influenced you?

*Here I really want to pay respect to **Ennio Morricone**. From him I learned how to arrange simple melodies into a beautiful and big composition. In my youth I was also pretty influenced by prog-rock bands like **"Yes"** and **"The Alan Parsons Project"**. I also love **Debussy's music** and ofcourse there's **Vangelis**. In my personal CD collection you'll find a lot of different styles, the only criteria is "quality" whether it is rock, pop, world, classic or contemporary instrumental music. The only style of music I really dislike is nowadays' techno or dance and most of the mainstream chart-music.*

Apart from your arsenal of synthesizers, in your music we find ethnic instruments, for example from Japan and Jamaica. A lot of people believe that electronic music is cold, is this your way to give the music warmth, to give it a heart?

In my studio-career I've worked with so many different nationalities of musicians that it is almost impossible not to have some ethnic influences. Also ethnic or even traditional instruments have so many different sonic possibilities

that it would be a shame to ignore them.

I can understand that many people think electronic music is cold, but that is because they haven't heard "warm" electronic music, I mean electronic music made with a heart, with emotion.

*A synthesizer is an instrument that can sound very warm but also very cold.
It only depends on who's playing it. :-)*