

Interview Frank Van Bogaert Sequences Magazine (part2)

Did you take part in any musical activities before starting your solo career?

Of course. In 1980 I formed the Belgian new wave band "1000 Ohm" together with a "synth-minded" friend, a drummer and a bassplayer.

By 1981 we released our first single called "A.G.N.E.S." which became a very big hit in Belgium and a lot of other countries. (it's a shame it didn't get into the UK)

We sold tons and tons of that one and it is still being re-released as a "new wave classic" on different "best of the 80's" compilations almost on a yearly basis.

That song got me and the band kind of "catapulted" into the Belgian pro-scene at the age of only 18 ! We got signed to a major record company and started spending lots of time in different studios, and that's how I began to love being in a studio and dreaming about having one myself.

With 1000 Ohm I also must have done about 200 live gigs from 1980 to 1987 before we split up. In the end the other guys of the band chose a "real" job and I was kind of left alone in the studio, not that I minded at all, working with other musicians and being asked to produce or engineer other bands.

So what prompted you to go solo?

It wasn't until 1997 that I could afford to spend time on my personal music, I mean spending time in the studio.

I had bought ACE studio and had very heavy loans to pay of.

If things would have gone wrong then I surely would have had to flee to some obscure South American country !!!

But when all this was through I started booking the studio for myself to work on my favourite music, electronic music, a kind of music I was convinced died a silent death by then. Do you know that it's only after I released "Colours", my first album, that I discovered there where also other people still active in this musical "niche".

After 1000 Ohm spilt & you produced others music did anyone famous come along, any particularly memorable moments there?

I've worked with about every Belgian star (and also a lot of Dutch stars), but you know the saying "Big in Belgium". (big laugh)

None of these would ring a bell in the UK, apart from .., yeah, maybe Toots Tielemans does ring a bell !

Let's think ; I've done an album with "The Flying Pickets", they're well known in the UK I guess, also I've had "Gary Langan" working here for two months on a Belgian band two summers ago.

He's the guy that engineered "ABC's "Lexicon of love", YES' albums "Drama" and "90125" both of "The Buggles" albums, "Franky goes to Hollywood" and co-founded "Art Of Noise", worked with "Brian Eno", the list goes on.

I was very honoured that he loved working here at ACE. He also got to know more about Belgian beers!!

Concerning your solo output, your first album "Colours" was released in 1998. What are your thoughts & feelings about it now?

"Colours" is an album on which you hear a musician who knows what he wants but has yet to find his own style. On "Colours" you hear a bit of Tangerine Dream, a bit of Deep Forest and a bit of Vangelis but it had yet to come together in a lot of "Van Bogaert" It isn't until the next release "Geographic" in 1999 that you can hear my

definite and personal style.

With "Geographic" something magical happened, suddenly I made a kind of music that was very recognisable as being "me".

For the following release "Docking" and now "Human" I've never had to worry about what direction to follow.

It's all there, I've got my own sound. Every coming release will of course be different (I hate repeating myself) but that recognisable sound and feel will be there !

How did you become involved with Groove & have you found that your association with them has lifted a great deal of promotional work off your shoulders?

As I released "Colours" myself, I had to find some distribution for that album.

Through my business connections I almost had Sony Belgium ready for that ,but in the end they found it to risky and they pulled their hands off so I started surfing the net in search of "electronic music" distributors and found, to my big surprise, a lot of them.

Most of them all wanted to sell "Colours" and also did, but it was the Dutch company Groove Unlimited who sold most.

Whereas other companies where ordering shipments of 10 copies, Groove was ordering several shipments of 50 copies in a very short time. They even got me some extra promotion so they got my attention and that's why I invited Ron Boots of Groove to come to the studio and have a listen to what was coming up (work on "Geographic" was at a high).

He loved what he heard and wanted me to sign to his label, this was also a good thing for me as they had all the connections in this "niche" market. Speaking of promotional work; of course they made life easier for me but I'll always try to help wherever I can.

They're working in a small market with small means !

Melodic music such as yours always seems to have a greater potential for a crossover into the general public, more than the Berlin School style for example. Have you found this to be the case?

With melodic EM you have indeed more of a chance to appeal to an audience who don't know anything about EM's history, as opposed to Berlin School A lot of Berlin School fans buy Berlin music out of nostalgia, I know I do as I am still a fan of old TD and Schulze releases.

I don't think there's anything wrong with that apart from the fact that because of that nostalgia, Berlin School has become some sort of "musical ghetto".

To me that's OK as I can get in or out whenever I want but let's make it clear that in order to achieve big record sales you preferably don't want to make electronic music anyway.

But then again, if you have a heart for it; that won't stop you from making EM.

Does the fact that you work with so many different kinds of musicians (in your studio) mean that your future work will take on a greater range of influences/inspirations in the future?

I guess so, I've always been very open to all kinds of music.

To be honest, I'm addicted to music so I'm constantly in need of new music, whatever the style, if it touches me I'm pleased.

That's why this studio is a kind of heaven to me. Everyday new musicians are coming in and from time to time there's a musician of whom I think "hey, you could do some stuff on my personal music, you inspire me".

Some time ago I worked with a singer that touched me so that I hired her to sing on one of my new tracks. She's a black girl trapped in a white body, if you get what I mean.

So suddenly that track got a, dare I say it, Pink Floyd feel (cfr. The Great Gig in the sky). So as I said, I've got my own style, trademark but I'm constantly letting other influences in never knowing where it will lead me to.

That's the beauty of it all !