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By EP & Adok/Hugi

Romeo Knight is a musician, guitarist and former AMIGA demoscene composer.

What's the origin of your nickname?

It's the title of a rap disc of the rather unknown rap group "Boogie Boys", released in 1988 or so. I was so fond of this disc that I made the title my nickname. I also used a lot of samples from this disc for my mods.

Where did you grow up, and how did this environment contribute to the development of your abilities?

Well, I grew up in a middle class family in a German city. It's true that my parents saw to it that I got into music at an early age by making me attend flute and, later on, clarinet class.   Before and during my scene-time, I actually "enjoyed" a classical clarinet tuition.

What artist do you admire the most and why? What's the best piece of music you've ever listened to?

This might become a very long answer. Since I was interested in a very wide range of music and styles there are or have been role-models in all areas: It begins with Rob Hubbard and Martin Galway since their music was the first that inspired me to compose music for the C64 myself. I guess many people experienced the same. Chris H ülsbeck also has to be mentioned because his soundmonitor was what enabled me to compose music in the first place (because I was not clever enough to program myself). Back then I even typed in his piece "Shades", which was printed in the German magazine "64er"! Times were like that.

Concerning electronical music in the widest sense there's hardly anything which can be compared to Depeche Mode, especially from '85 till '95. Ingenious melodies and songs, combined with ingenious sounds, 2 good voices and all of this without copying themselves

during all their development - for me this is something ingenious, especially since they not only emphasized electronics narrow-mindedly but also used acoustic sounds like guitar and piano from time and time.

Regarding (pop) producers, Trevor Horn is the greatest one for me: The first propaganda album, the first seal album, "Slave to the Rhythm" by Grace Jones, they are milestones of music history.

As a guitarist my greatest idols are: Rocky George of "Suicidal Tendencies", Dimebag Darrell (RIP) of "Pantera" and Marty Friedman of "Megadeth". What in my eyes connects the three of them together is the fact that they can express themselves using the guitar directly as if they were talking to you. They can make the guitar sing and tell a story with a guitar solo. There are few guitarists with such a cool combination of hardness (which I am principally looking for in guitar music) and emotionality. Tips: "I'll hate you better" or "You can't bring me down"/Suicidal Tendencies, "Cowboys from Hell" or "Floods"/Pantera, "Captive Honour"/Megadeth. Maybe some of you will be able to realize what I mean..

What are you reading, watching or doing at the moment in order to keep up your creativity and motivation?

Actually I hardly ever have time for reading these days. It isn't easy to keep up creativity, and for this reason it's strongly floating. You have to get inspiration from everything that is surrounding you, no matter if it's music, films or human beings, and once you believe you have an idea, you have to implement it as fast or focusedly as possible, in order to avoid getting stuck in a cul-de-sac, which may often happen. However, I'm somebody who is able to work on songs with a rather great amount of discipline. Therefore I always search for a solution when I'm stuck, at least when I suspect there's still a way out. In a band there are also other musicians who help in such cases - or don't.   I'm always motivated because making music is great fun - especially if it is enjoyable not only for oneself and you get acknowledgment from others.

Your website shows that you are very fond of guitars. Why do you have so many guitars and what's the sense of having so much gear?

Well, that's something my girlfriend always asks me as well.   But guitars have something metaphysical to them: You develop a relationship to every instrument and get to learn the differences in sound and handling. Every guitar has its own character and a distinct musical area of application. You can develop an emotional relationship to certain guitars; after all they generate the sound which you love so much while you're working on them physically until you reach extasy and pain. It sounds a bit like sex, and when both of them are in a good mood (instrument and player) it's a bit like it indeed.   In other words: I'm collecting guitars for the same reasons why other people are unfaithful. Or something like that.

What is a guitar for you?

A musical instrument??   Ok, I've already described it, but now a bit more factually: A guitar is the musical instrument using which I can express myself best. A guitar can simply be universally used, everywhere and in all styles.

What does music mean to you?

Hehe. That's a good question. Maybe it's one of the few reasons to give this life a meaning, apart from the story of love, family and reproduction.

What made you start making music?

As said, it really started when I listened to Commando, Zoids, Last V8, Phantoms of the Asteroid etc. on the C64. This was around '85/'86.

On what occasion did you actually start making music?

On the release of Soundmonitor 1986. Using this program, I started.

What kept you motivated for such a long period of time?

I think two things: First of all it was great fun creating your own pieces. Since technology was changing all the time (first C64, then AMIGA, and after it MIDI songs with synthies etc..) there were always new musical and technological challenges - and thus feelings of achievement. Moreover, I was lucky to get contact to the scene and thus get a platform where to publish my AMIGA mods - demos by Red Sector and TRSI respectively. This increased motivation.

How do you arrange your time and your social life in order to make music?

It's difficult indeed. Unfortunately I don't have as much time for making music as I would like to, but you have to accept that when you also have a family and work at the same time. Moreover, my band and my Romeo Knight productions have to share the remaining time.

What's your philosophy of creating?

If there's one at all: Always try to make a song that is better than the previous one. Work consistently until the end, even if it sometimes hurts. If I'm working on a piece, I must have the feeling that it's the best which I've ever made. (Even if it isn't so objectively, but everybody has a different opinion on that, anyway.)

How long did you need to create your first successful piece of music? And what is it like in this respect with your current piece?

No idea how long it took, it's already 20 years ago after all! I still remember the title: "Sunspots", programmed using Soundmonitor. Ah yes, successful... what does that mean? Maybe the two songs for the RSI Megademo? It took a couple of days. Nowadays I'm usually working on 2 to 3 projects simultaneously, and they take several months.

How does the production phase affect your lifestyle?

I don't know if I understand this question correctly... but when I'm sitting in the studio in the night, there's sometimes not enough time for sleeping. Since this isn't healthy I try to avoid that. Rehearsing twice a week after work can also be very exhausting. But I don't complain; after all, I wanted it.

What are the main sources of your inspiration?

It's simply music of any kind which I consider good. Anything you consider good somehow affects your own work, if you want it or not.

You released a lot of SIDs for C64, and we cannot download it. Do you know where they can be downloaded?

Unfortunately, no. I'm afraid they may be completely lost. In my C64 days I had no scene contacts and I didn't care what happens to the stuff when I went to AMIGA.

In the course of your life, your gear and methods have changed. Please tell us about the development.

Well, the steps from C64 (Soundmonitor) to AMIGA (Protracker) to MIDI synths (Cubase V3.1 on Atari ST) was just natural for the type of music I wanted to make. One thing that was interesting about making music for computers always was the challenge of doing things which apparently exceeded the technical limits of the computer and created a kind of Wow effect with the listener. The limits always

inspired creativity to try new ways in order to reach certain effects in music which might not otherwise be possible. Computer music, no matter if C64 or AMIGA, profited from this, and I believe that this is one of the reasons why nowadays still so many people are fond of this type of music. For me personally this also had the consequence that after my AMIGA days, the unlimited possibilities of a MIDI setup consisting of software sequencer, multi-mode capable synth and hardware sampler made me lose "orientation". Thus I produced rather concept-less instrumental pieces (they can be downloaded from my Internet page) which I nowadays mostly consider rubbish.

A great change came when I started listening to metal at the beginning of the 1990s and some time later decided to learn e-guitar. Then I started playing in various bands and was no longer interested in producing my own pieces like in the AMIGA days. This lasted until 2004 when I discovered the Remix64 community on the Internet and started producing C64 remixes. Since in the meantime I had gained 10 years of professional experience working as a sound technician and also owned my own studio, the "comeback" was not difficult for me. On the contrary, I finally had a chance to make use of my experiences as guitarist, technician and composer in order to produce my remixes, which I've been doing until today, having great fun. Moreover, I make soundtracks for PC demos if time allows it. The pieces exist, only the demos have to be made...

Nowadays I use a Nuendo 3.2.1 system, Native Instruments Kore and Komplete as the basis of music production.

You've worked for the video gaming industry, often unpaid. What have you learned from these bad experiences?

Nothing. Well, I'm older and I'd have a different approach nowadays. That I didn't get any money for some of these projects was also my own fault since I didn't really care. I simply wanted to make music and never considered this work in the actual sense. Some people will say I've been silly, and I say: you're right! But I was young and didn't need that money.

What would you recommend to musicians who want to be paid the real prize for their works?

Since I don't work for the video gaming industry at the moment, I cannot say much. But everybody ought to know themselves how much their work is worth. And never do anything without a written order or contract.

How did you get to know the other members of TRSI?

If I still remembered... The only thing I remember is that I got to know Skyhawk/Prime Evil, a less known graphician from the AMIGA scene, who, by the way, nowadays also makes C64 remixes using the name X-Klang. He handed my AMIGA mods to the Red Sector core and thus I came into contact with IRATA, Flynn and the others.

How was the group organized?

Don't ask me. Although I was a part of the scene I was never interested in what happened in the background. I was also seldomly at parties. I just wanted to make music all the time.

Are you still in contact with other members of your former groups?

Partly. There's a regular scene meeting by old Red Sector oldskoolers. I was there once, it was a lot of fun. I also have contact with Skyhawk, but unfortunately only from time to time. Most of the other members I didn't even get to know back then!

As a real musician, you are part of a band. What's it like there?

That's a completely different story. It can be very complicated. It's like having a relationship with 3 (or more) people at the same time. A lot of things must be right so that it works: You must fit together on a humane level, be fond of about the same type of music, and the instrumental skills should be at about the same level, otherwise it may happen that somebody becomes dissatified soon. It's necessary to talk a lot about the songs and exchange opinions, explain what you want on a musical level or what you don't want, so that you can write songs together and make progess with the band. Stagnation is the end of a band. But that's a very complex topic and too much for this interview.

What are the differences between all of these groups?

Well, the people with whom you make music. What are the differences between various girlfriends you've had?   Some relationships are short and rather superficial, and others are more intensive. That's something that can be compared rather well. And as regards to music: Download and listen!

How are you living today? What are you doing by profession?

I have a family, have been a sound technician in the advertising industry since 1995 and have been running my own studio together with partners since 2001, mostly in order to make the sound accompanying TV spots and to produce radio spots. So by profession I don't have much to do with music production.

Do you still deal with demos or have you already stopped watching demos years ago?

I rarely watch demos. I think it's not possible to make really new and amazing things as everything has already been done in some way. But in my opinion demos have become a real type of art.

Could you inform us about your current guitar music?

Yes. The band is called Drown Inc. It's metal similar to Pantera or Machine Head. There's even a CD for sale (e.g. at Amazon), which, however, was recorded before I joined. Unfortunately we are playing live far too seldom, but after all it has become very difficult to organize decent gigs. www.drowninc.de

What may we expect from you in the close future?

C64 remixes and contributions to demos which will probably be released by Brainstorm.

What are your long-time plans regarding your musical activity?

Make music as long as the body wants. In whatever way.

What's your philosophy, your "way of life"?

I don't have such a thing. (...) When making a decision, always make use of heart AND brain, but never think too much about it.

In what do you believe, what are your values?

The categorial imperative.   No idea. The proportionality of any thinking and doing must fit. Whatever that means.

What is the aim of your life?

1. See my children grow up happily

2. Musically, maybe to create something which will exist even after my death. I admit this will be difficult.

Wow, how philosophical we are today. Good interview, I've never been asked such a thing before....

What's your greatest fear concerning future?

Not to see my children grow up happily.

What do you expect from tomorrow?

Good coffee and not too much stress at work.

Is there a book, a ressorce, a website,... which you would recommend to other musicians?

No way. Every musician needs idols (mine can be found in the link section of my website) but everybody should find his own, the ones that move him/her emotionally. And then you need to know when the time is to come off.

What would you recommend to somebody who wants to make music?

If you want to learn guitar as an autodidact: simply listen to a lot, train your hearing and study videos of your favourite guitarists in order to learn the technique - and everything else is 1.: practice, 2.: practice, 3.: practice. And 4.: practice. A bit of music theory won't hurt either in case one doesn't have any previous knowledge. Generally, you shouldn't give up too early, you should continue and especially try to teach your hearing since if you don't hear that you're producing shit, you'll always make shit and never improve.

Romeo Knight's homepage can be found at romeoknight.net. Much of his more recent music is located at remix64.com.

Romeo Knight, EP & Adok