

Michael Muennich, interviewed by Nicolas Malevitsis for Εμβοές magazine, originally published in Greek at: https://issuu.com/emvoes/docs/emvoes_presque_rien

what or who influenced you to start fragment factory but also to start your own music as well?

I've been making music since my teenage years, at first in bands and later solo. It all started as it probably often does. Shared enthusiasm among like-minded friends, being in a band, having the opportunity of playing gigs and touring, getting to see new places, meeting new people etc. Just to get the things we loved done on our own, full-on DIY. That's what still pushes me to this day. That was an all new and most exciting experience at that time. Starting the label was actually a late consequence of all that. When I felt ready to put out my first solo works I just did it myself. I like the whole process of approaching a release. Its development, from the first ideas to their realization, trying things out, not only music-wise but also possible forms of presentation, artwork, packaging etc., so I started releasing other people's works as well. I still prefer publishing my own music myself, I like being in control of when and how things get done.

if i am not mistaken fragment factory started in 2009. what i fancy on the label is the use of mediums be it tape, cd/r, vinyl. is any of those your personal fave (as medium) or holds the same for any of them?

Yes, the first release was issued in July 2009. The choice of the medium I use depends on different factors. Money is certainly one of them. I only work with a handful of distributors I trust and that's just the right level I can and want to handle. FF is a one-man operation I'm running in my spare time, not a job I'm making money with. Therefore finances are always an issue. Bigger projects are awfully expensive and I just don't want to put out only one LP a year. I need to keep myself busy. Cassettes are a good option to keep things going and to gather money for larger ventures. Then there's the music of course. For some sounds the cassette is the perfect and most suitable format, for others it's not. Briefly speaking, it's always weighing the pros and cons of this or that format for this or that music. Personally, I'm buying music on all imaginable formats. I play and enjoy cassettes as often as vinyl and CDs.

being in digital times we experience a cassette boom the last years (no matter that the tape had never vanished since the 80s or the 90s) for which you can hear various opinions, be it the need for a physical 'analogue' medium be it vinyl or tape or this

time instead of the tape being a medium where music / sound / ideas can be spread free and if you don't like it you simply erase it is also used as an art object. what's your point of view on this?

The cassette is the medium I grew up with. It was my first sound carrier so to speak and I never stopped using it. The possibility of recording music from the radio and copying borrowed records as a kid opened up a new world to me. I used to record fictional radio shows on tape together with my sister when I was maybe six or seven years old, later started compiling my first mixtapes, then recorded our first efforts in the rehearsal room etc. The cassette enabled me to discover and develop my love of music. I have little interest in discussions about analog vs. digital media. Every format has its advantages and disadvantages and makes more or less sense from case to case. The cassette is just the most versatile and economic physical format and has always been with me. I don't see any reason why this would change anytime soon.

about your work, you prefer working solo or collaborating with other people? are you mostly into noise or are you working on other fields of sound as well?

I did and do both and I'm certainly enjoying both. Collaborating can be a bit difficult sometimes though. I can be pretty fussy when it comes to my music and my pedantry can easily collide with other people's approach to collaboration projects. Besides and as a result, I am slow! It can take ages until I'm happy with what I produced, which sometimes puts me a bit under pressure. After all I don't want people to wait months-long until they finally hear back from me.

As to my work, I'm primarily interested in the sound of my environment, in noises that I'm surrounded by in everyday life. Basically I collect sounds that I like and assemble them into something new. It's a bit like doing an audible jigsaw puzzle. In the end I need to have every sound snippet in the right place. I think I can't and don't want to restrict what I'm doing to 'noise' in the sense of a defined musical genre or any other field of sound as you say. I use whatever sonically appeals to me, sometimes noisy and sometimes very calm.

has hamburg's scene played an influence on your work? both musically or as a label? been in a city w/ marc of dekoeder, thomas of wachsender prozess, asmus tietchens, ditterich von euler donnersperg, or the walter ulbricht label makes me wonder?

No, I wouldn't say so. The only one of the above mentioned I meet every now and then is Thomas. I have sort of an ambivalent attitude towards the Hamburg „scene“. Although

there's been a few artists I hold in high regard, I never warmed up to most of its protagonists, be it artists or audience. Probably also because I'm not the most sociable person and don't go out much either. Concerning my music it's not that important to me where I am. I probably would be doing the same when I lived in Berlin or elsewhere.

how about your faves? (be it music, video, writing, whatever)

In everyday life? Phew, that's a wide subject! Music obviously plays an important role. I spend most of my time with music in one form or another, be it listening, making, buying, selling, trading, releasing, reading or talking or thinking about it. Movies have a similar significance to me, even though a bit lagging behind the music. Not solely, but mostly 1950's to 70's European Cinema, lots of Italian, French and German stuff from this period. I don't write much, if at all I read. Art, travelling and food are marvelous too. Most important however are the few people I'm close to. Spending time with my loved ones is on top of my favorites.

any certain fragment factory fave? and what about upcoming releases?

Fragment Factory basically favors artists who it's fun to work with. Honest and reliable people with similar principles in terms of what they're doing. I like working closely together with artists, which is impossible if the chemistry isn't right. Just a similar taste in music doesn't mean a thing.

There's a few things in progress at FF, including releases by long-known friends and also by less known but in no way less promising artists. I don't want to reveal too much at this point, the world will take notice in due course.

anything else to add?

Yes, thanks a lot for letting FF be part of this publication and also for delivering many outstanding releases in the course of the past two and a half decades! Here's to you and the next 25 years!

Michael Muennich, Hamburg in October 2013.

www.fragmentfactory.com/muennich.html