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# 15 Questions to Alexei De Bronhe

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by [Tobias Fischer](#)

*Alexei De Bronhe is something of a 21st Century Renaissance Artist. The Minsk-born filmmaker, musician, sound/video producer, and visual artist is finishing a degree in television and film directing at the Belarusian Academy of Arts, fronts the abrasive electropunk band Energy, and releases tranquil, atmospheric electronic music that walks the line between composed and improvised "ambient" music. It's no surprise, given his extensive work with film that De Bronhe's live performances are multi-media feasts of projections and emotive, hazy electroacoustics as suited for art galleries as they are for clubs and experimental warehouse venues. The multimedia artist discusses the pluses of oversaturation in the digital era of music, the influences of Cage and Stockhausen on his work, and audio-visual presentations as "tangible" art.*



***Hi! How are you? Where are you?***

It will seem strange, but I'm in a cellar in the depressive city of M. where they activate a cutout switch that sucks the energy out of people.

***What's on your schedule right now?***

I am rehearsing with our electropunk band Energy. Going to edit my documentary called STO 24. Create samples for a scratch battle organized by our clan. These tracks will also be included in the rap-musical Romeo and Juliette.

***How would you describe and rate the music scene of the city you are currently living in?***

Let's take a 10 points scale. Then it's 3 - 8 = - 5. Well, there are exceptions, but they are few and far in between.

***When did you start writing/producing music - and what or who were your early passions and influences?***

I was fifteen and I started using an old tape reel recorder and 8-bit toy synthesizer. I was seriously influenced by the distorted music of the super-duper Russian pop-band Ivanushki International on a jammed tape.

***What do you personally consider to be the incisive moments in your artistic work and/or career?***

When I was three, I learned how to put the tape into the tape reel recorder and yelled Modern

Talking songs into the mic.

When I was twelve I was drawing my own money and that influenced our home economy.

I was about eighteen when I first heard Bach and started playing contra bass in the symphony orchestra.

Finally, at the age of nineteen, I shot my first film – it was complete and utter trash!

***What are currently your main compositional- and production-challenges?***

My main problem is my inability to concentrate and oscillate between music and cinema.

Besides, procrastination and a lack of time for music practicing are my chronic diseases. In fact, I'm really far from being a skillful instrumentalist.

***What do you usually start with when working on a new piece?***

Well, it generally comes out by itself. I just sit and blankly tap on the keyboard. Sometimes my mind creates something and my playing fingers interfere. They like imposing some other music line which occasionally destroys the required musical architecture.

***How strictly do you separate improvising and composing?***

Ad-libbing is what your fantasy is capable of. It gives birth to composing. The composite result of these two is aleatory music. Here I agree with Stockhausen and John Cage. This is what goes first. And then one proceeds with mathematics, theoretical knowledge, intuition, the hand of God

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***How do you see the relationship between sound, space and composition?***

Direct.



***Do you feel it important that an audience is able to deduct the processes and ideas behind a work purely on the basis of the music? If so, how do you make them transparent?***

One piece of art will be regarded differently by different people. It's nonsense to hope that your own interpretation of your work will coincide with that of your audience. Works of art are replicas of replicas, their perception is shaped by thousands of interpretations. What the audience can really feel is whether you do it honestly or not. They can say 'I don't like this kind of shit, but this dude knows his way and he does it honestly. That's good'. You can't play tricks on the audience. And even if you manage to somehow, time will show what you are really worth.

***There seem to be two fundamental tendencies in music today: On the one hand, a move towards complete virtualisation, where tracks and albums are merely released as digital files. And, on the other, an even closer union between music, artwork, packaging and physical presentation. Where do you stand between these poles?***

Only creative live act. The fusion of audio-visual 3D tangible art. This is what Scriabin was up to. I feel that soon such kind of live acting will emerge. It even can't be called art to a full extent. But it's going to change our perception of the creative process on the whole.



***The role of an artist is always subject to change. What's your view on the (e.g. political/social/creative) tasks of artists today and how do you try to meet these goals in your work?***

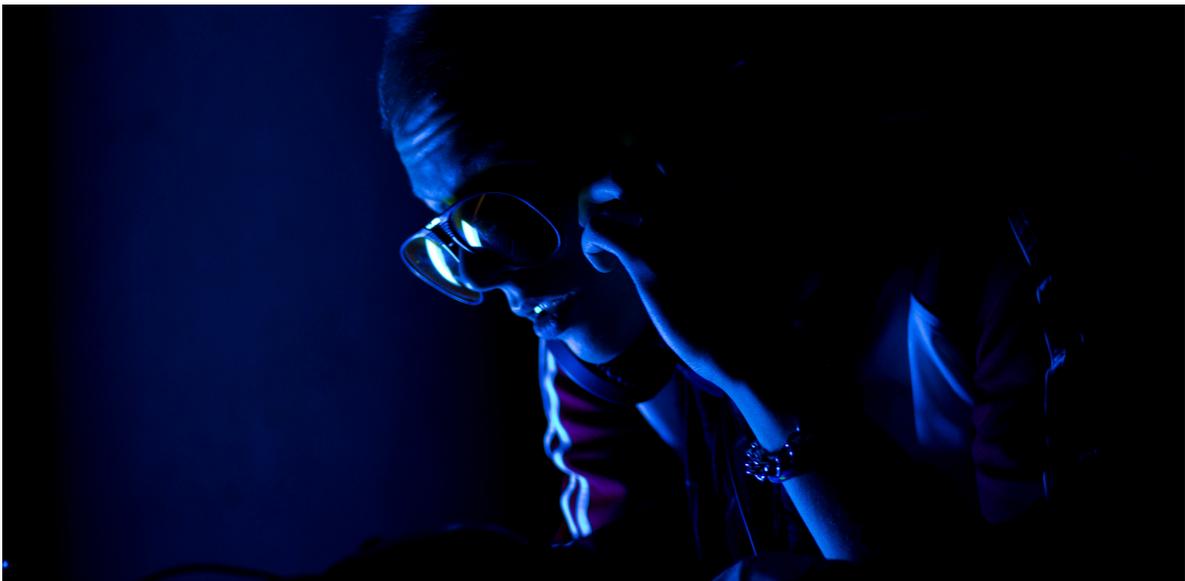
Everyone's different and thus the goals are different. Some of them don't even have their own goals, they fulfill someone else's intentions. For me personally, I am looking farther and further, I'm keen on gaining new knowledge, on constant development and the symbiosis of the knowledge acquired. And I'd like to share it with people of the same mindset. Open the doors and talk to the audience. But first and foremost, I create only for myself, not for the audience, because I regard it as an artistic lie when you do something just for the public. How can you do anything to satisfy the taste of those you don't even know? You can't even know yourself fully but when you do something for yourself, you do it for a real man, and not for some collective image of the audience. One can like or dislike it, but in any case this is honest and you can be sure that these are the thoughts of the personality and not some unconscious mass.

***Music-sharing sites and -blogs as well as a flood of releases in general are presenting both listeners and artists with challenging questions. What's your view on the value of music today?***

Oh, this is real good stuff! Today, I don't need a lot to be happy. Actually I never needed a lot. This is a question of quality, not how many tracks you have on your player. In fact, I'm always very skeptical about any release and when I see there are 24 tracks or even 15, I don't take it. This number scares me, dejects me and pushes me off. I'm not that time-wealthy to listen it all. I've got a habit of getting rid of bad stuff. The fewer the number of tracks on a release, the more time there is for me to check them out. So, my favourite is the single format, the EP or 10-track album. 8 is even better. It's like we got back to the 45-minutes tapes. Haha! Now you can buy a hit without having to listen to dull tracks needed only to fill the space on the disk. It's not a CD where you have to listen to the whole album, cause you simply can't erase what you don't like. This is your own collection where it's up to you to choose what you are going to listen to.

I put a lot of hope in the EP and it proves its worth almost every time. I believe that the author put his soul into these 4 or 5 pieces because he could take his time, compose everything accurately, not trying to create a 10-tracks disc in the same amount of time. Singles and EPs are kind of a prelude to the album. And when the album is released you just erase everything apart from the songs from the single or EP and sometimes one song at the end of the album. It happens very rarely that I like the entire album. You can somehow miraculously feel the time, emotions and energy invested into the creation of this music. Codswallop is easy to feel, no matter how good it can be. This is what killed the DJ industry: The habit to pay more attention to the quality of the design than to the music itself.

That's why it's better to compose one song a month as long as it's one that people will want to listen to for ages. Otherwise, there's no sense in working. We're creating pieces of art, not selling cakes baked on a chained conveyor. And the real art is beyond time span, it's not tied to anything or anyone. The real art is hard to perceive. Today the simplicity of obtaining any film or music kills the desire to actually perceive it. We've pumped, but we're not listening, it's taking space on your hard drive and you feel comfortable, like 'I can listen to it anytime'. And you're saying 'Yes, I've got this album' and your friend will tell you the same. But material possession doesn't mean you have listened to it. These things became identical in the world of terabytes and information gluttony. We want some feeling of expectation, some obstacle and adventure on our way to the piece of art possession. We want to conquer it in order to respect ourselves and respect what we listen to or what we watch. We have forgotten this wonderful experience, this magical adventure and yearning.



***How, would you say, could non-mainstream forms of music reach wider audiences?***

This is a purposefully invented legend or story – “the world” where the listener feels peaceful and interested. You have to create a whole aesthetic world from the covers and music videos and to your stage image. If the idea itself is great, sooner or later it will work. Supported by Internet activity and concerts. Today everything has turned upside down – a performer is seeking an audience and not vice versa. It's like a hunting.

***Please recommend two artists to our readers which you feel deserve their attention.***

J.S. Bach and Sylvester Stallone.

***Many artists dream of a "magnum opus". Do you have a vision of what yours would sound like?***

A masterpiece is impossible to predict. It is created subconsciously and spontaneously. I can't put it into some frames or vision else it will turn into a technology, and a technology is a cycle, it is a derivative. A derivative can't be a masterpiece.