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Alfa-Matrix

September 03, 2006, 01:05am

Tell me about how your label was started and what it was like in the beginning.

Well, Benoit Blanchart and myself – Seba Dolimont, have been signed to some German labels in the past and have never been very happy with what they did for us. With a new album ready and several deals from some famous labels on our desk, we thought of launching our own label... "never better served than by yourself"... We had been active on the music scene ourselves for nearly 15 years then and had enough contacts. We then talked about our project to Bernard Van Isacker who accepted joining us in this adventure. We were also aware that to start a label we needed more bands. So we talked about our Alfa Matrix project to friends around us and all were enthusiast with our artist management concept based on communication and honesty. The rest is history... But in summary, we run the label from an artist point of view and we run it in mutual respect and care with our artists. ALFA = spelled with a "F", "alfa" stands for a communications code word for alpha, the first letter of the alphabet. (music is communication, and communication is also one of the guiding lines of the label – so we use the spelling ALFA) It stands for something that is FIRST, a beginning. It's also the name given to the brightest star of a constellation. Socially, the alfa-group is also the dominant, with the most qualities. MATRIX = refers of course first to the womb, something within which something else originates or develops. It's also an electroformed impression of a phonograph record used for mass-production. And of course a multidimensional arrangement of interconnected elements (referring to diversity & technique). This is the way we work with our artists, they grow with us, in the matrix...

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What is a typical day like for you?

Well, for this question, I can only answer for my part... We are actually 3 persons in the label : Benoit Blanchart (design & concept manager), Bernard Van Isacker (Promotion manager & webmaster) and myself – Seba Dolimont (label & artists manager). I usually wake up quite early, work a good hour – checking e-mails and such. Then when my kids wake up (I have 2 sons : 4,5 and 2,5 years old), I switch to my father tasks (laugh !), go to work (cos yes each of us still has a full time job next to our musical activities!!), then collect the kids at nursery and school and then back home. During the evening I will spend another good 4 hours working for the label (and most of my week-ends and holiday time!). My personal tasks for the label consist on talking with our bands, preparing the marketing strategies and release planning, listening to their new tracks, etc. I also handle all contacts & coordination with our wholesale distributors. I care for the whole boring paperwork and bookkeeping stuff. But we cannot only have pleasant tasks, can we ? (laugh) I already have the chance and honour to be in constant contact with so many great artists... And then last but not least, I listen to all these demo's we get 😊

How many demos do you receive in an average week?

We get round 20 to 30 per week! It is totally crazy! We use the first in/first out rule, so sometimes it takes us several weeks before we can play a demo and send any e-mail to the artist in question. Listening to demo's is also something I cannot always do when I am preparing new releases, hearing new tracks from our bands, etc. But I do play every demo we get and send an e-mail to each band on due time. It is just too bad too many bands do not often follow the tips & instructions we give on our website for eg. on the matter. Worst at the moment is that I discovered a VERY good band, but there is no mention of any band name or whatever on the disk and I can't put my hand on any cd sleeve or contact or whatever. It is VERY frustrating, cos this is the best demo I heard this year and I just cannot contact this band 8((. Since they are singing in German, I presume they are German speaking, have a female lead singer and sent us a demo in the second quarter of 2006. If you read this and got no e-mail as feedback on your demo, please contact us urgently!!!

What do you think are the best ways for an artist to become successful?

What the bands better have to join the Matrix... Good music, an own concept & vision, a good image, a sense for team work and personalities matching with mine to guarantee an excellent collaboration. Performing live is a plus and having a strong internet presence too. Now to become successful is a question of having an own image and style, believing in your work, and being ready to invest a lot of yourself and time into the project to make things happen, entertain and develop a fanbase, etc. Then there is also a question of being at the right place at the right moment and being above all very patient and persistent.

Why do artists choose alfa-matrix over other record labels?

This is more a question you should ask to bands themselves who signed to us or did not 😊 All I can tell you is what do we offer to our bands?! Well, our belief in Alfa Matrix and our artists, a strict budget management, a strong communication and team work with our artists, a mutual respect & care between the artists and the label, the intention to always move forward while keeping both feet on the ground, a

strong focus on direct contact with our fanbase and last but not least passion remaining the main trigger behind the label, not money! Since day one, our artist management concept is more based from an artist perspective rather than a pure economical/business point of view. We communicate a lot with our artists in full transparency. We do not only show them the top of the iceberg. They get all good but also all the bad news. They are informed and involved in the whole production and promotional process of their releases. We explain them how things are happening and tell them what we do and do not do. We show flexibility as much as possible and give our artists total artistic freedom. Last but not least, we do issue sale statements and pay our bands on time, which seems to be quite "unusual" on the music business...? We never make vague promises we cannot hold just to sign a band. Before signing a new artist to the label we also always make sure all 3 of us like the music (so all bands are signed to the unanimity and we never release music we do not like ourselves – which is not the case at other labels who only see bands as potential milk cows) and that our personalities match to guarantee an efficient team work. We also have a decent distribution network and promotional activity to offer. And above all a strong family spirit inside the Matrix 😊

Some bands have releases on a European record label as well as on a US label. But I believe Alfa-Matrix bands aren't usually released domestically in the US, are there any particular reasons behind this?

Well... We had some bands with releases on some US labels too, like F242, PNE, GLIS, REGENERATOR, HUNGRY LUCY, etc. But we have always focussed on having ourselves a domestic distribution and this is how we got distributed by Studio Distribution and now KGD Media. Our products are available there at a decent price and not the usual crazy export prices, and we now have a New York office who cares for promotion in North America for us (NewYork@alfa-matrix.com) Nowadays, the market has become so special and complex that it is much more convenient covering a worldwide distribution by ourselves rather than struggling with territory bands and running after sale statements from licensees and so on. The size of our label also allowed us getting direct domestic distribution allowing us to compete with US labels like Metropolis, Cleopatra, Projekt, etc. Also internet nowadays allow us doing a decent distribution & promo work from here...

In your opinion, how does the industrial music scene today compare to the scene 5 years ago?

Just like the music business in general. Sale figures keep going down and down. In 10 years sale figures have been cut by at least 50% and things are not improving... The recent bankruptcy of Tower Records for eg. is no good sign of improvement neither. This is the new trend – looks like the young generation no longer buy records like we used to when we were teenagers. Now you grab it from the net and burn it. On the other side, there has been a proliferation of releases on the market which quickly reached its saturation cos today it is much less costly to self-release your album or start an amateur record company. Nevertheless, thanks to internet, the fans have the chance to easily discover new musics, make friends with other people from across the world, share ideas and opinions about music & fashion with them. So this is the great part of the scene's evolution. The industrial music scene also remains a sort of niche which is still quite protective with its artists and all. So all I can tell everyone is : please keep buying music from time to time and when artists you like play your town, do attend the concert —otherwise you are undermining your musical future... So I am so glad each time I visit your website, seeing this whole community on-line there!

How do you see the scene progressing in the future and what are your future business plans?

Like I said, if things do not change, more and more record stores will close business, getting more & more replaced by e-shops, while the portion of digital sales will grow more and more. In a way it is sad, cos for me an album is still a full product with artwork and other goodies. There is a great part for visual effect that we are to loose there on the long run... The same problem affects clubs, event organisers, etc. All I hope is that at some point, and hopefully before it is too late, authorities will do something and fight against piracy and illegal download through measures allowing artists and publishers to receive a part of the lost income. What are our future plans? Well, continue where we started : giving a lot of attention to direct sales to our fans, this allows us being in direct contact with them, hearing their requests and comments. We also release most of our albums as special limited boxes for them to thank them for still buying music and supporting our scene. Meanwhile we continue exploring the new techniques and evolutions and adapt our strategy in consequence.

The "digital matrix" idea with doing digital download distribution sounds pretty cool. Is there a big market for digital downloads or do you think people still like to have an original cd?

Well, digital sales are for the moment much more « in » in North America than in Europe, but things are slowly but surely starting taking off. This is no doubt the future and we better place ourselves correctly on this market today than too late. When we started offering our products for digital distribution we realised that many great labels & artists around us simply ignored the potential of this market or were working with partners who simply did not understand the music they are putting out and don't know how to promote it correctly. Then came the idea of offering a digital distribution service to selected partners and digital matrix was born this Summer. We have started a bunch of cool labels to our roster and we will soon start spreading the word about our activities on due time. Progressing step by step on that field too. Now do I prefer buying an album or a digital download, for me the answer is obvious : I want the real product in hands, I want to hold a booklet and read lyrics and additional info about a band and not be obliged to do so on my computer screen. But maybe I'm from the old nostalgic generation. Nevertheless if digital sales can add a certain income to the artists in question, then why not and it's after all definitely better than illegal downloads through which people simply steal music! But sometimes I wonder why artists spend so

much time I nstudio to deliver the perfec tsound production to eventually get sold as compressed mp3's 😊

Some labels do copyright protection on certain cd's so that you can't play them on your computer or copy them, have you considered doing this?

I think our scene does not need this. When I buy a CD i want to be able to play it anywhere I go, so also on my computer ! So until these technologies are fully operational and uncostly, I don't see the interest of using such things. All we need is to make people aware of their piracy behaviour and that they are cutting the roots of the tree if they continue behaving this way. Some years ago, we starting making people aware of pollution and I personally believe that I thas had an impact on people somehow. Well, let us all fight for our cause 😊

Is there every any rivalry or drama with competing labels?

The day labels on this tiny music scene will be collaborating more rather than focussing on their ego things would go much much much better. You know it is funny, the day we announced that we were launching Alfa Matrix we got hundreds of congratulations mails and phone calls from many many labels. The day we started taking too much place on the market so it seems cos we hadsigned some bigger artists and were achieving some kind of a success I presume, we were suddenly the bad competitors and collaborations were getting more and more difficult which is very sad... Jealousy is a plague on the music industry and not only between labels but also between artists, magazines, clubs, event organisers, etc. Too sad really.

What are the currently best selling bands on Alfa-Matrix?

Well, as you can imagine it, the bigger names are the best-sellers like FRONT 242, LEATHER STRIP or yet BRUDERSCHAFT. We are also very proud that some newcomers have been doing very well on the label like AYRIA, UNTER NUL, TAMTRUM or yet ZOMBIE GIRL to just name the more recent ones.

Sero.Overdose and Nebula-H are a couple of my Alfa Matrix favorites that seem to get overlooked here in the US. Can you give me some more info on these bands?

I'm not sure that these bands are overlooked. SERO.OVERDOSE's last album and ep got very good response and sales in North America. This Berlin based band is now busy completing their 3rd studio album and offer edgy synth pop music with a strong sense for melodies and strong beat patterns. And their lead singer has a unique and highly expressive voice which seems to especially please the girls who keep shouting after him during concerts (laugh). Their new album should come out by end of the year if all goes well. You can already hear one of the new songs on our brand new anniversary label compilation « alfa matrix – re :connected 2.0 ». NEBULA-H who are one of the first signings on the label actually have experienced a very fast ascension and have built a quite strong reputation across the world. Their rmain problem is porbably the time they always need to come out with new material so people tend to too rapidly forget about you when you do not release something new on a frequent tempo. But I have good news for you, Deraned Psyche and Mika have now started working on their 3rd album, now that Mika is more available after having focussed on his THIS MORN' OMINA album and tour.

How did you hook up with Zombie Girl?

Well, I have always been in touch with Sebastian Komor and I actually knew Renee's work even before she got married with him. When they started the project, Seb let me hear his first song and I really enjoyed it! A few months later, I was working on the Cyber!@b 5.0 compilation and I asked him taking part to this sampler to let ZOMBIE GIRL infiltrate the clubs and the response they got was quite amazing. Then it kind of became sort of natural to be working together and the duo joined the family. Their album is now almost ready ! Expect it round Halloween 😊

It seems majority of industrial bands have day jobs due to the fact that the scene simply isn't big enough for them to make a living on it. How hard is it for an industrial band to make a living off making music?

Only a handful of bands on this scene are living from their music you know ! You know today the world is totally upside down. In the past, bands were touring to promote an album. Today they make a new record to get more live dates. Cos indeed today it's through performance fees that established artists start making some money, no longer from CD sales! But as long as we are all having fun doing what we do and enjoy the music we love, this scene still remains the best place to be 😊

With the popular Endzeit Bunkertracks compilations, and Alfa Matrix artists such as Unter Null and Virtual Embrace, you seem to be on top of the terror-ebm scene. Terror-ebm seems to have been gaining popularity in the scene, yet some people believe it is too harsh. What are your thoughts on this?

I think the return to harsh elektro is simply a cycle and a sort of reaction of that future pop hype we enjoyed a couple of years ago. Combichrist is probably the good incarnation of it all. It is true that we have a bunch of bands fitting this genre and UNTER NULL, TAMTRUM, GLIS, TAMTRUM, VIRTUAL EMBRACE, INURE, etc. have been all doing quite well in their style. But Alfa Matrix is more of an

electronic label that a terror label like there are some only putting out one single type of music and sometimes giving the impression of having too many bands with similar sound. We have bands from various sub-genres and I think it's a lot more interesting and can also help fans widening their music tastes and exploring new electronic music genres. We are nevertheless very happy that our Endzeit Bunkertracks compilation series has received such amazing response on the scene. You know as a label it is so frustrating not being able to release all good bands that we heard and discover. And our intention is still to share good music with our fans. So having a 4-CD compilation concept was so it seems a very good way and I know that a bunch of bands got record deals through their appearance on our comp, so for us it is mission accomplished. It is actually this way that TAMTRUM ended up signing to Alfa Matrix!

Tell me about i:scintilla , their new ep is really good.

They are for me definitely one of our best recent discoveries and it came also as a big surprise for the media and fans that Alfa Matrix was signing a band mixing electronics with guitars. But we don't want signing two bands with the same sound, it'd make no sense ! We just released their « Havestar » ep while they are still in studio recording the new album and the feedback is simply astounding ! They get big interviews in all magazines, appear on a bunch of magazine compilations. Several big acts wanted to work with them and that's how we got remixes for them from COMBICHRIST, Claus Larsen (LEATHER STRIP/ KLUTAE), MORTIIS, CLAN OF XYMOX, etc. It's very rewarding to see that people still react positively when they hear quality. Now we just need to get them heard around, but their music has the great force that it can appeal to a quite varied audience : electro fans, goth/metal, indie pop... You know, they have been compared to bands like CURVE, THE GATHERING , EVANESCENCE , BIRTHDAY MASSACRE, etc. but with a straighter electronic approach. All I can recommend to your readers is to check them out, hear them on myspace you will love what you hear ! Brittany has such kind of voice that you cannot resist to her spell...

Check out the following Alfa Matrix Bands on VF:

[Ayria](#)
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Alfa-Matrix

September 03, 2006, 11:40:am

great interview and lots of good things coming from alfa matrix it seems 😊 I just checked out i:scintilla, great stuff.

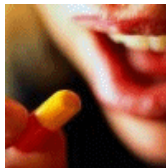


Alfa-Matrix Administrator

Alfa-Matrix

September 03, 2006, 04:15:pm

Aweoms interview. <3



[Techno X Poison](#)

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Alfa-Matrix

September 04, 2006, 12:28:am

Yes awesome interview. I wonder who the mystery german band is 😊

I always enjoyed their bands. Especially Dunkelwerk his troops album was amazing.