

ARMAGEDDON

Over the few years of my collaboration with Art Zoyd, the main question was how to be "in & out" at the same time. This rather unusual position was not to my dislike, but unusual it was.

I never played in Art Zoyd - well, actually I played one concert with the group, but the next morning I went to met Gerard Hourbette and when I was telling him I felt I did not fit well with the group on stage, he was telling me that he felt I was not fitting well with the group on stage. After such a nice discussion, realising how much we were thinking along the same lines, we decided to continue such a promising collaboration.

I was already, from the beginning "in & out". In the group. But not playing with it...

So i became an "associated composer" for the group - which is a nice term, but does not mean much: what does it mean to be "associated"? When you compose for an orchestra, or an ensemble, your possibilities and obligations are rather clear: you write your own piece of music, with its own beginning and end, a "whole". But with a group such as Art Zoyd, which does not play separate compositions or "songs" but whose projects are always one long piece of music, made of shorter pieces, how to make a "whole"? So here i had to compose things which had to be parts of some larger composition, which would somehow "fit" in the project, but of course be still mine. And since Art Zoyd asked me for compositions it was only normal to believe that what attracted them was someting which already was in my work, as opposed to writing music "à la" classic Art Zoyd (whatever this could be, from europen prog music, to electric chamber music, from Rock in Opposition to electronic experiments). So here again, in & out, writing for this group i was not playing in, compositions which should stand up for themselves, and be really mine, but still be part of some larger composition. Nice challenge! To spice things a little bit more the main instrument(s) used by Art Zoyd were (and still are) keyboards coupled to samplers. I always hated the keyboards, the piano is probably one of the very very few instruments I never composed for, and I never ever used samples, adding the pedantry to actually write things like "no samples, no sound files" on some of my projects CD covers.

"Associated composer" for this group was clearly a job for me

The Armageddon project certainly was not different for that matter - writing one act of an operetta. Which was to be played by a mix of electronic instruments (yes, including keyboards!), percussions and a brass quintet. And sung by robots. Of course the idea was to make a "light" piece, even funny sometimes - the subject of Armageddon was not to be treated too seriously - and anyhow, since it was not sung by the robots (which certainly were not the best singers i ever had to work with) you could not hope for any seriousness. The mechanical noise of the robots, their really ugly voices, and the fact that the text was so poorly rendred that we had to subtitle what was sung (which actually was the only thing those robots had in common with real opera singers), made it that it had to be rather a comedy - what an operetta is anyhow. Yes, some light music people could easily appreciate, have a good laugh, and remember it as a nice evening.

This is of course why I wrote this extremely static, monotous, heavy and full of microtones sound. It basically was one heavy chord, evolving very slowly during 20 minutes, a dark mass, sometimes enhanced by loud metal percussions, a racket treated by electronic distortion, just to make it harder. Some really low sub-sonic rumble from time to time. And instead of a melodic chant (someting you could hum, maybe?), a looong, sinuous, high pitched, and also microtonal line, which seemed immobile. Just to make things nicer I doubled this melody on the theremin, 2 octaves higher.

Was it in or out, this time?

Kasper T. Toeplitz