

Staubgold Label Profile  
Jodi Rose, Berlin 2008

'Music out of Place' is the philosophy of Berlin based independent record label Staubgold. This concept of music beyond borders is reflected in a diverse range of artists and styles over eighty releases. Originally from Cologne, Markus Detmer started the label as a mail order service when he was sixteen, launching the current version in 1998, and celebrating ten years of passionate risk-taking music this year.

Markus says: 'I think Staubgold reflects my idea of music... I have a very open taste in music, it's more important for me to see the profile of the artist and their originality. It's not always possible to re-invent music history and I don't expect that, but I want to see that the artist is working for his/her own expression. This can happen in free jazz the same as minimal techno, low-fi experimental pop music, or ethno-world music. There is a red line of a certain aesthetic or thinking about music, which somehow holds everything together.'

The label has grown from origins in minimal electronica, to embrace a wide range of styles and genres. Markus has the freedom to explore changes in his own taste in music, as well as staying with the artists as they develop and evolve. 'It's important that Staubgold doesn't just reflect my personal taste in music, but there's a social aspect. The label catalogue reflects my surroundings and network of people that has built up over the years.'

A quick run through some of the artists on Staubgold shows the quality and range of the label, where Kammerflimmer Kollektief, Thilges, To Rococo Rot, Dean Roberts, Ekkehard Ehlers, Leafcutter John, Sack und Blumm, Hassle Hound and Alejandro Franov find a home beside Rafael Toral, Andrew Pekler, Reuber, Mapstation, AGF, Torben Tilly (Minit, Organ Eye) and Faust.

The compilation series is equally impressive, with four releases in collaboration with Ars Electronica Center 'Klangpark'; 'Haunted Weather', accompanying David Toop's book; Ekkehard Ehlers' project 'Childish Music', and FM3 Buddha Machine. This year sees a new approach to the existing catalogue, with DJ's invited to 'remix' the label, starting with 'Peter Grummich Plays Staubgold - Dinner Music for Clubbers.' Grummich chose music from all ten years of Staubgold, creating a dreamy, chilled-out soundscape one might not expect from a minimal techno DJ.

I first meet Markus in Torben's kitchen, when he delivers a box of vinyl & cd's, for Torben to take to the 'All Tomorrow's Parties' festival in London. This neighborhood feel and personal touch characterises the Berlin local music scene, with small labels finding a niche, and since 'there is so little money involved, everyone is happy to exchange information, which is the best pressing plant or share experiences with different distributors', Markus says. 'There is no competition or suspicion between the labels, because we're all friends, we meet each other going out and it's important to feel relaxed and have a good time'.

The way in which this informal network functions is also a defining factor in some of the music that happens here. It's a world away from the commercial end of the industry, and although hitting the charts is possible, it's definitely not the aim. The music is intriguing, beautiful, sometimes challenging, always intelligent, and the

passion for musical adventure is tangible, running through all the releases. I ask Markus what excites him the most about music?

'The ability of music to touch me, to trigger emotions. Also the aspect of communication, you can be in a room with people you can't communicate with through language, but you have the same feeling through listening to music, even if you are from totally different cultures. Music has a very communicative quality – music itself is a language with no boundaries.'

*What was happening in Cologne in 1997-98, and why did you decide to start your own label?*

'In 95-96 in Cologne, I had the feeling for the first time, that it's possible to make your living running a record label. I was at university, organising gigs, and saw people in front of me, working with the same strange music, developing distribution structures and exploring this successfully. When I started the label in '98, I was very much influenced by the music scene in Cologne at that time. It was the heyday of electronica, with artists like Mouse on Mars, or Schlampeitziger or Marcus Schmickler, who ran a record shop, with their own distribution service – A-Musik, and their own label Sonig records. It had become possible to record your own music at home, to produce and release music with a comparatively low budget, and with the internet, the world had become smaller, communication was easier, also the interest of people in that kind of music.'

*You have quite a lot of Australians on your label. How did that happen?*

'It took several years; my first Australian contact was Oren Ambarchi. I had become aware of him through Norbert Schilling (Plate Lunch), and coincidentally I found an email from Oren in my mailbox, saying, "Hey I'm Oren, I have these releases on my own label, maybe you want to swap some stuff?" I said sure, and asked him, "Hey do you want to release on Staubgold?" This was the Reconnaissance album with Martin Ng. Through this connection I was in Australia for the first time for "What is Music?" Festival 2002, and met people like Scott Horscroft, then revisited Australia in 2004, released a Sun album, more releases with Oren, got to know Anthony Pateras and Robin Fox, released the Beta Erko album, was in touch with Brett Thompson, resulting in the Rand and Holland release, and the Loop Orchestra, resulting in one release.'

I had already met Minit in Cologne, and saw them playing live for the first time at the Sigma Editions night. I kept asking for five years, "Do you want to release on my label?" We all moved to Berlin in 2004, they were here two weeks before I was and helped me move. They recorded their album "Now Right Here", in Berlin, that was the first Staubgold Minit release.'

*Is there something special about the way people are exploring music in Australia?*

'What I like about Australian experimental music and the people behind it is that it's very open, the whole idea of no boundaries and the possibility of being an improv musician and listening to the Beach Boys at the same time. What I found typically Australian at "What is Music?" is to go to a serious improv show at 8pm, then go to a bar and get crazy, listen to some straight rock'n'roll and get drunk like hell! I find this

very human and intuitive approach also shines through in the music.

I'm very excited to be releasing the first solo album by Jasmina Maschina on the 24<sup>th</sup> April with a launch party at Schokoladen. Jasmine Guffond is one half of Minit, with Torben also playing on the album. It's very minimal folk pop, fragile, sparse arrangements, quite melancholic, beautiful music.'

This year also sees the release of new albums by Heaven And (Tony Buck, Steve Heather, Martin Siewert and zeitblom); the Autistic Daughters, (Dean Roberts, Werner Dafeldecker, Martin Brandlmayer); 'Pedal', improvisations for two pianos by Chris Abrahams of The Necks and Simon James Phillips; Klangwart (Markus Detmer & Timo Reuber); and Rafael Toral, 'Space Elements, Volume One'.

*I'm looking forward to hearing the next ten years of Staubgold and friends, in Berlin and around the world. Happy Birthday!*

End