

# CHAIN D.L.K.



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Atom™

Interviews

Posted by Vito Camarretta



After he developed the concept of "pop artificielle" over his previous releases, Uwe Schmidt aka **Atom™** squeezed his constitutive elements (mainly a concoction between pop, electronic abstraction and catchy grooves) on his brand new album "**HD**", a work which he considers spiritual, musical and scientific. "HD", which includes contributions by some of Uwe's friends and colleagues such as **Alva Noto** (additional programmings on "Ich bin meine Maschine"), **Jean-Charles Vandermynsbrugge** (main vocals on "Pop HD"), **Jamie Lidell** (main vocals on "I love U"), **Marc Behrens** (additional programming on "Strom" and "My Generation"), **Dominique Depret** (guitars) and Chilean pop star **Jorge Gonzales** (backing vocals, guitar and bass raw material) comes out on [Raster-Noton](#).

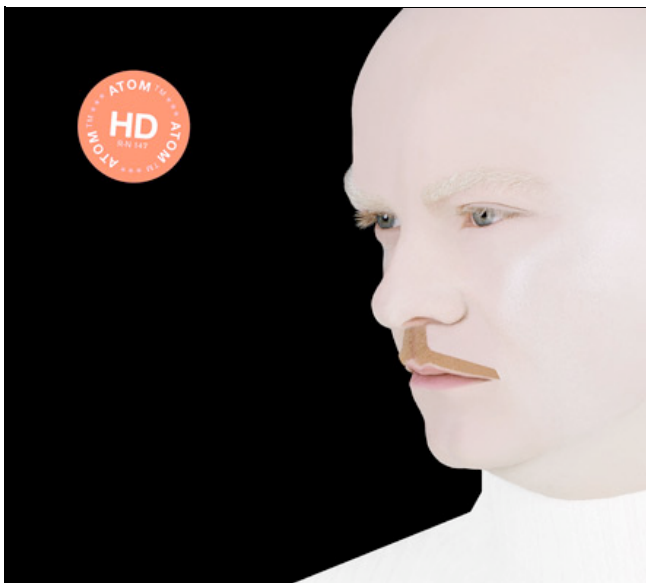
**Chain D.L.K.:** Welcome back, Uwe. How are you?

**Atom™:** Excellent, thanks!

**Chain D.L.K.:** Your last release in the guise of Atom™ is really stunning. You said "HD" is a spiritual, musical and scientific work. Could you explain these properties of "HD" in your own words?

**Atom™:** Those three elements have been the driving force behind

"HD" and actually behind most of the music I've been working on for the last couple of years. There had been a strong shift in how I see things and above all, music, which happened around 5 years ago or so. Everything has changed since that moment. I left the "aliases" behind for example (as you may have noticed...) and re-focused on musical elements, such as "electricity" and other scientific components. It is "spiritual" in that sense as I consider music mysterious and, yes, coming "from somewhere else". It's a very powerful medium, which has



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**Crowdkontrol:** The North Carolina Electro/Industrial scene recently grows and receives international exposure thanks to the signing of Crowdkontrol to the Arkansas-based label BLC Productions. Crowdkontrol have recently released their new album "The War On Error" and the reactions are quite amazin...



**Atrium Carceri:** Chain D.L.K.: Thank you for making this interview with Chain D.L.K. Please introduce yourself and your main projects. Are there any new projects that you have coming down the line that you'd like to mention? Atrium Carceri: I guess the only projects I dare...



**Noise Process:** The return of the US-based duo of Noise Process with their current CD "Groundzer0" out in March was for sure one of the most outstanding

been transformed into something very “banal” and boring. The connection between the mysterious power of electricity and music is something I suddenly rediscovered. In a way, because “spiritual” may easily be misunderstood, yet has nothing to do with “religion”, I like to consider electricity a direct divine emission. When shaping music out of electricity, it’s like moulding something very “concrete” out of something very “abstract”. Electricity as something like a divine “aura”... sound waves, which are both physical and metaphysical, as they transport more than just air. All those topics I find very inspiring and they produce visionary connections. In my opinion, electronic music has lost its connection to “electricity” over the last two decades or so. It was turned into a silly, pink surface for beach parties. I would like to change that.

**Chain D.L.K.:** Would you say that “High Definition” has become sort of a spiritual cypher?

**Atom™:** You may read “HD” as you wish, actually. To me it always stood for “Hard Disc”. When digging an old pack of “floppy discs” out of a storage box, I realized that at some stage “HD” stood for “High Density”... then I saw a commercial in which they used it for “Heavy Duty”. Since the “HD” title was derived from “Hard Disc Rock”, which used to be the working title when I started to record the first version of the album in 2005, the “Hard Disc” is what I always had in mind when thinking of “HD”. The hard disk is where I make my music, so it seems to be an appropriate translation. However, I like the title “HD”, not because it has a meaning, but because it is “bold”... it sounds “big” and “forward”... plus, it’s multilingual and looks good with any typography! 😊

**Chain D.L.K.:** “I Love U” seems to be a parody of glamouresque hip-hopping poppy tunes, doesn’t it? Does U stand for Uwe? 😊

**Atom™:** Most importantly, “HD” does not contain a single grain of parody, nowhere! I’m rather interested in “reference points” or “associations”, when it comes to making music. The musical code itself, its elements and historic appearances, amongst other aspects, is what represents my universe in a way. A “parody” is almost always a waste of energy and time, in my modest opinion and I wouldn’t want to spend a single minute working on something I can’t take seriously. As for the second part of your question “U” is a reference to Prince, who used to replace the word “you” with just that single letter. In terms of musical code “i love u (like i love my drum machine)” has got a lot of references to Prince, so I found that title appropriate.

**Chain D.L.K.:** What about the amazing idea to sample Martin Luther King? Is it a reference to the common process of phagocytosis of political issues and ideas by pop predators?

**Atom™:** Actually, I don’t remember in which moment that sample appeared! I think it rather had something to do with the rhyme itself. In the beginning I didn’t want to use the sample, but just the words themselves, then played around with the sample and thought it worked pretty well. Frankly, I cannot tell you the meaning of the sample’s appearance, since my process of creating music is based on intuition and association, not on logic. In that sense, the music isn’t “telling” you a specific message or meaning, but rather the meaning is created in the process of transmitting and (you) listening to the music. That’s the process in which music “works” and it’s effect or “meaning” is not determined by the composer alone.



**Chain D.L.K.:** Even “The Sound of Decay” could sound like a parody of some Depeche Mode-type stuff and bluesy crooning, couldn’t it?

**Atom™:** Nope. No parody there either!

**Chain D.L.K.:** Do you think that the lack of meaning in pop music is part of an economical or political strategy?

**Atom™:** Interesting you mention the word “strategy”. The more I am dealing with that topic, the more I come to the conclusion, that there is no “strategy” behind anything human beings do. There is a fascinating book by Jean Baudrillard, called “The Fatal Strategies” in which he talks about the theory that the only real strategy is being

releases for the Electro/Industrial genre of this year. It has taken almost 5 years in mostly unclear contractual s...



**Embryonik:** I have never met George 'Embryonik' in real life, I only spoke to him about a couple of times on the telephone after a whole year of communication only via e-mails (literally... hundreds!). He lives in Thessaloniki, about 550 km away from Athens (where i live). However I can guarantee th...



**Lisfrank:** Chain D.L.K.: When you started, back in 1980 electronic music in Italy was represented mainly by Franco Battiato who from his first experimental albums evolved his music to the electronic proto-pop of “L’era del cinghiale bianco”. The only influence you could have had th...

executed by the objects, not by (us) subjects. I find that theory more true every day. In that sense, the economic system itself has a strategy, but not we, who "created" it and think we are controlling it. If I am following that thought, then the stupidity of the mainstream is not a strategy applied by someone (politicians or economists), but a phenomenological fact, a reflection of the inner logic of the system of objects itself. You may call that system "capitalism" or anything else, fact is, and you can see, that when "us" subjects are trying to solve the current crisis, we are unable to control, not even to understand the system itself. A silly song, another stupid tv program, all those are products of a chain of decisions. The subjects are mere parts of that chain, each single segment just following the overall algorithm, implied by the system. The current crisis therefore has to be called "system crisis". Meaningless mainstream is just its surface and texture... like what sweaty skin is to a fat person.

**Chain D.L.K.:** Why did you leave MACOS?

**Atom™:** The story goes: MACOS was initially founded by Victor Sol. I joined it, since we were working on projects together at that point, in which we applied the MACOS idea. That idea was very simple: we made a logo, which communicated the fact that portions of the compositions which were labelled with the logo, could be sampled, without having to ask permission. This system of course requires the artist being the owner of said composition, etc. In itself this was a very simple and mainly practical idea, created to simplify the process of asking for permission to sample. It would have been a direct "creator-creator" system of communicating the idea of "being o.k." with being sampled... nothing more and nothing less. Immediately, from the start though, the entire concept of MACOS was misunderstood and partly misused to attach alien ideas to it. All of a sudden it was perceived as an "anti copyright" movement (which clearly it wasn't!), or people wrote to me asking for legal counsel on the new copyright laws, and stuff like that. In a "viral" way, just like a flu, MACOS had gotten out of hand. Victor Sol, for other reasons I never fully understood, stopped working on the project, and I remained the only one "running" it. As time went by, I got really, really annoyed by the course MACOS had taken. On top of it all, it remained one of the top "hits" in search engines for years, given the fact that badly quoted and cross-referenced articles were published. It continued to re-surface for many years and every time it was more re-contextualized in more and more absurd manners up to the point that I had to justify myself for allegedly being an "anti copyright" activist. ODD to say at least! I abandoned MACOS relatively quickly, when I realized on which fatal autopilot it was. In the years following MACOS, independently from it, I declared the entire idea of "sampling", to which MACOS was solely referring to, as obsolete in itself, being replaced by higher systems (hard disc recording, etc.). The "sampling" era was over some time in the early '90s and the system which MACOS had proposed became obsolete with it. I still find it astonishing that it seems to still be around and appearing, even in interviews like this one, almost 20 years after its invention and sudden death. Again, it's like a flu-viral.

**Chain D.L.K.:** "Stop (Imperialist Pop)" is another hint at what's happening in the music market. In Italy, for instance, someone is speaking about a proper coup d'etat within SIAE, the Italian public performance-rights organization responsible for the protection and exercise of copyright in Italy, since its administrative body is going to represent the interests of the biggest authors and companies through a voting system which is going to assign one vote for each euro gained by royalties and the author's rights. What's the situation in Germany?

**Atom™:** Money has to be pressed out of the system, no matter where you go. Money "naturally" flows from the bottom to the top, this is also true here. Germany, Italy, Japan... it's all the same story.

**Chain D.L.K.:** What are the strategies you would suggest to destroy "imperialist pop"?

**Atom™:** There is no strategy... it will destroy itself, since the inherent logic of the system is faulty. It is, in fact, right in the middle of falling apart. The downfall of post-capitalism seems imminent, if you ask me. "Imperialist pop" is the shiny surface of post-capitalism and a mere reflection of its logic.

**Chain**

**D.L.K.:** You did an amazing cover of The Who's "My Generation" with the palatal C/G of generation a la Jacqueline Taieb. How would you describe a possible generational gap between The Who's generation and yours?



**Atom™:** Technically speaking "The Who's generation is still part of the generation that was born during, or shortly after WWII. The generation I belong to is called "generation x" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation\\_X](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_X)). Rather than being able to tell you which those differences are, to me the title "my generation", even though it was triggered by a purely musical idea, caused me to actually think about how "my" generation could be defined. I am currently producing the video of "my generation" and it deals with conscious/subconscious images that make up my definition of said generation X.

**Chain D.L.K.:** Is the final "Ich bin meine Maschine" the spiritual peak of "HD"?

**Atom™:** I don't know!!!! That particular track came about in a very mysterious, almost automatic manner. It started from a phrase spoken by the philosopher/scientist Heinz Von Foerster. I had him sampled, and this phrase was laying around my hard disc for over 10 years. I tried to use the sample, but decided not to, but rather to speak the words myself. The rest of the lyrics came to mind almost instantly... I don't know why or how. The next day I had to travel somewhere and just decided to record my voice, so I wouldn't forget about the idea when coming back. It was supposed to be a "demo" vocal track. When I came back then, I really liked the recording and kept the entire thing "as is". In a way, yes, this, one may consider as "spiritual" in the sense that it appeared to me as some kind of mysterious "message" almost. The entire feeling of the track too, is almost like a "mantra".

**Chain D.L.K.:** Is there any track you particularly love of in "HD"?

**Atom™:** Actually, no, there isn't! I like all the tracks very much, I have to say.

**Chain D.L.K.:** What about your collaborations for the album? Is there any funny anecdote related to its recording?

**Atom™:** Not necessarily "funny". Most of the collaborations were done remotely, except for Jean-Charles Vandermynsbrugge's performance, which was recorded in my studio. Since all were rather clearly defined participations, they were executed quickly and without any complications.

**Chain D.L.K.:** Any forthcoming project after "HD"?

**Atom™:** I am currently busy preparing the live set for "HD". Performing that set will be my priority for this year. I DO have ideas for future music of course, yet I would like to let those ideas simmer for a while and probably go back into the studio around fall of this year.

**Chain D.L.K.:** You're renowned for your multiple artistic identities. Is there any identity which has been hidden so far?

**Atom™:** That entire "multiple aliases" thing I had left behind, as mentioned earlier, approximately 5 years ago. At some stage it did no longer reflect my interest and, overall, my method. It had all started as a very practical

thing, you know, and never was a "concept", nor did it have a bigger intention or meaning. As time went by, it stopped being useful, apart from the fact that I found it boring having to explain it, since there isn't really much to explain in the first place. Fact is, I have dozens of notebooks full of possible titles or "identities" which will certainly never make it out of those notebooks. They are part of the past.

Photos courtesy of Renato del Valle

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