Dokumentation des Interviews mit Dark Sky, 170715-1725[1]

1   J: My first question is about the different musical roles in the field of electronic dance music. How would you define yourself in this context? Are you a DJ, a live act, a performer, a producer, a composer, a musician, an artist?

2   T: I guess we are more producers, aren't we? Producers, performers and DJs.

3   M: So, we are product-producers, coming of a production background and we are not trained classical musicians. I mean, I had some lessons as a kid but not like grade A, like classical / I wish we did do that, that would be amazing. So, kind of just working out in our own way. Sometimes that can lead to like cool things, unexpected things. Sometimes you are left feeling frustrated because you feel like you could push things forward a bit if you listen to classical music. It's the melodies, the chords. So, I mean, it is definitely striving to get better, to learn and teach myself. I wanna do some courses /

4   J: Will you later perform as a DJ or as a live act?

5   T: As DJs. We play a DJ set.

6   M: It was supposed to be it, um, a live thing today, but changed. Normally, right now, we did all live, to support our album. So, yeah, / there's been two different live shows. The first live show was completely different to this one. [...] like how we gonna approach this track and how we gonna break it down so that it's interesting for the viewer and fun for us at the same time. It is so like murky, right now, like, what is live and stuff, so /

7   J: What does it mean to you to play live?

8   T: I guess, essentially, it's all about we're creating the tracks and start choosing musical instruments rather than just play them from backing tracks. So, we are performing live on instruments and samplers, yeah, re-creating the tracks from the originals.

9   J: When you play live, do you play your own tracks?

10   T: Yeah, all are / from past few albums and a couple of singles.

11   J: Ok, then you only play your own tracks and /

12   T: In our live show, yeah. Currently.

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[1] Der Zahlen-Code bezieht sich auf das Datum, an dem das Interview geführt wurde. Hierbei wurde folgende Reihenfolge verwendet: Jahr, Monat, Tag sowie Uhrzeit (JahrMonatTag-Uhrzeit).

13   M: And I suppose the live show is also a come-ups about mistakes, and like expanding on what is really there. Taking an idea and just bringing it to a new / taking it somewhere else in that environment in an own way which makes it special for the listener. Whereas before it would just be like only the original record, nothing changes if you're just playing them in a DJ set. Whereas the live thing you can try and create this third track by mixing one track with this next track. In the middle is where all the magic starts to happen. It's really exciting for us.

14   J: Which criteria are important for you when you decide which equipment to use? How do you approach that?

15   T: Um, well, I guess it's a few things. One is the portability: „Can we transport some of the equipment with us?".

16   J: On the airplane /

17   T: Yeah, reliability as well.

18   M: Because of the *MPCs* / we used that *MPCs* that crashed, even /

19   T: That's why we kind of avoided using laptops, we are not entirely against it, just we've had past experiences where laptops are crashed.

20   M: And the soundcards /

21   T: So, there is a couple of criteria. It's also trying to use the equipment we use while writing the last album bringing up with us.

22   M: Finally, you got to know like the *octatrack* is the backbone of the live show because it is just designed to do music and nothing else.

23   J: Are you referring to the sequencer from *Elektron*?

24   M: Yes.

25   J: The black one /

26   M: Yeah. The *octatrack.* (…) You can do MIDI sequences. You have eight MIDI tracks and eight audio tracks. So, we bring our outboard gear and we send / we program all the MIDI from the tracks and then send it out to the stuff that is impossible to play live. [...] stuff that we can play live, we try to play, that's the rule we set us, so / we learn the hard way, that we don't have enough hands for our music is quite complex / so many layers, that we spend time in the studio. So, this is some backing elements, ambience, that kind of runs as a one shot trigger in the back. But, I think, the only goal is to get to that point where we're kinda just composing on the fly, building

tracks. We are very conscious of why is that gonna be boring for the viewer, or is that gonna be like: „What are they doing?"/

27	T: You could just go off from the time *(?)* and we're having fun, but it could just be like what /
28	M: You've become self-absorbed and lose yourself, if you forget about the whole tightness of the set.
29	J: Yes, I think the audience plays a crucial role in the performance. How do you experience the crowd during your performance? How important are the audience and the interactions with the people?
30	T: Yeah, it's really important. It helps give us a sort of energy and encouragement, if we see that the audience are enjoying it, and we kind of / *may so enjoy it more (?).*
31	M: It's relative.
32	T: Yeah, we have had shows where it had been great audience interaction like cheering and that and then some shows where they had been more reserved. And then, kind of / It's a definite energy you can feel.
33	M: But, yeah, I mean, conscious of some / not making it too easy for the audience, trying to challenge them at some points and not the whole way through playing just great noise / but there might be a part in the set that gets kind of hard, tough and like then when you come out of that section, it kind of makes the next section for them all kind of special. So, playing with that kind of emotion /
34	J: Do you think that the audience understands your interactions with your interface environment? Do they really know what's happening at this particular moment?
35	T: I'm not so sure because, um, generally when we do live we're performing up on a stage and the audience's view might be / so, they can't see exactly what we are doing.
36	M: Which is something I'd like to work on.
37	T: Yeah. It would be great if there were some sort of like cameras and then it is projected on a screen above us so they can see and / it might make it a bit more interesting for them as well.
38	M: Yeah, make some things visible, I mean, using like a two-tier keyboard stand. Things like that, so they can see your hands [...] *to* get involved.

39   J: So, do you want to make your actions more transparent for the audience? Do you want people to see your action with the equipment?

40   M: of response / there is like a function in the response, like kind of adds to the whole experience, I suppose. I mean, nothing beats going to see like a live band when all the musicians are interacting and there is like truly feed, amazing feed whenever you see it, so. It's difficult in the electronic thing to try and capture that, like same experience you are watching a jazz band and live electronic acts. You have to like work with what's special of electronic acts is that the power of the sound, how you can make the delays and like the reverbs and all that is like / that's not in jazz, that's the pushing of that, to the forefront, take the strength out of each, kind of / take out the strength from each scene of music. You can steal bits from jazz and then try to bring them into techno, all crosses over.

41   J: Ok, so, in the end, do you think that it's important for the audience to realize your live doings?

42   T: It's a bit on the fence because some live acts I have seen, *I don't know how many (?)* / like Moderat's own live show, you can never really see any of the equipment and the way the setup was, but /

43   M: makes it special in a way /

44   T: but it's an amazing show, like it's nothing fundamentally, it's about the music.

45   M: It also creates an aura about what is he doing, how's he making that sound, which kind of makes it even more special.

46   T: Um, like, massive like, *compared to like* a jazz band or a rock band, you can clearly see a guitar and a drumkit and that, but some of the stuff they are using is like that big, like it's hard to show /

47   J: I think that this question is interesting because it challenges the common view of electronic dance music as functional. It questions the main purpose of dancing.

48   M: I mean, if you follow our live show / there is so many things I wanna do of it, and there is some kind of constraint somehow / it takes time, yeah, I mean, *we're kind of wanna (?)* get a loop pedal involved, start playing like *NORD drum*, getting loops going live, stuff like that. But we've got a show next weekend, darn times that we'd be messing around, we need to practice the show, get tight. So, it takes time to develop it. But we are thinking, trying to make it more live, I suppose. I feel like I've not really answered your question.

49   J: No worries, I've tried to make the questions not too /

50   T: black and white?

51   J: Yes … let's again focus on your studio environment because I think it determines your live show?

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52   T: Oh, right now in the studio, I mean, it's kind of our setup, as we would have it in our live performance, because we are mainly rehearsing. But, when we do have the time we're trying to create new stuff through that setup.

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53   M: Yeah, it has taken a few years to get our setup how we like it.

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54   J: It's a process /

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55   T: It's constantly evolving, yeah.

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56   M: It's all linked up via the clock. So, *Ableton* is going into the *E-RM*.

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57   J: A MIDI-clock?

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58   M: Yeah, it's like a /

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59   J: Ah /

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60   M: *E-RM* MIDI-clock.

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61   J: Is it a special one?

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62   M: We play on *Ableton* and it sends an audio pulse into the clock, which then sends it off to all your outboard and keeps everything tight. You can swing each one and shift each one and then *(?)* clock / so that's / and we are coming standing up in the studio, on our feet.

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63   J: So, everything is synced.

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64   M: Everything is synced and then we just like jam, maybe like an hour, press record and then once the tracks start we start doing takes on top of the track and start (sicken down) and getting really like, looking into the screen, and then „boring stuff" and then, that's where the pity of the computer stuff that come in. You can't disregard the power of the computer / yeah, you know / brings all to life.

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65   J: Ok. How will live performances develop in the electronic dance music? Can you give a prognosis?

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66   (…)

67   M: I feel like technology has a massive part in shaping the progression of music. I feel like a lot of, like the companies, like aiming their gear towards portability of *(?)* live electronic music. If you look at the big guys that are bringing out amazing synth. But gear doesn't make you a better producer, you know, so / You can have all the gear of the world but no ideas. If you look at technology if look it like the nineties, how the gear influence that, in the eighties, in the seventies, it's all around technology, isn't it? It's fascinate to think what would be going on in 2050, 2100. How live music will be?

68   J: Yes, it's a difficult question; the answer has to be very speculative (…)

69   M: I think like you can imagine like a table, like a glass screen and like (…) and maybe the audience is getting involved somehow /

70   J: How would you locate your musical style?

71   M: I can give you some words, but / it's quite organic, rhythmic and melodic, emotional. Maybe those four things. We combine all that *(?)* / but in one word? Creative Dance Music? CDM? Imaginative. (lacht)

72   T: Dance music, I would say.

73   J: Ok, then it takes place in the context of electronic music / these categories are very artificial, of course. (…) Can you summarize what you do exactly while performing? Like programming, sequencing, mixing /

74   M: I mean, what we have is, we have like four controller over all the sounds on the mixing desk. That's one thing. And then all the levels are all manual. And then all the reverbs and delays is manual and all the EQs is manual. Once that. Then we have got the drum machines. We are like playing stuff on top. Sometimes adding sequences in, on top. Not composing completely from scratch, it's always like a skeleton there. [...] But it needs some practice, practice, practice, to get the confidence. And then we are playing live all bass lines that can be played. T. will play some, I will play some. Then we are playing live chords, opening all that cutoffs, *mod-wheels (?)*

75   J: Would you describe it as improvisation?

76   M: There is like a skeleton for the set list.

77   J: Do you have a track list?

78   M: Yeah. We know what to play. We wouldn't say that we are truly improvising.

79   T: There is room *forever (?)*. I mean, we have a limited time, as well, that we have to perform it, generally like fifty, sixty minutes, so / We are trying to keep it concise *simple (?)* but /

80   M: Right now it's ten tracks in the set. What we wanna do is trying to get down to eight tracks and then *expand (?) like the bits* in between to make it ten minutes worth /

81   J: Are you flexible with your list of your tracks ?

82   M: Again, that's something I have totally wanted to build to do, just to go to: „Ok, tonight, let's do this set list", you know? It's definitely possible but we have worked out the harmonics blends between each tracks.

83   J: Sorry, by the way, for asking something a second time (…) But it's difficult for me as a non-native speaker to understand everything /

84   M: No, it's fine! It would be amazing to be like „What want the crowd right now? Let's go, bang!" (lacht) into that / *when you reach a higher level of working on live music (?)* / I feel like we are taking a lot of risks where a lot people say: „Why don't you make it easier on yourself? Why don't you just get a laptop live?" We are in this interesting stage right now, where / maybe we are making it too hard for ourselves. Maybe we need some really like critical feedback from someone outside, tell us what is sounding good, what could have been stronger. Sometimes you need that. That happened with our first live show, kind of to *(?)* the feedback.

85   J: How do you distribute your roles in your performance?

86   T: […] one track we're might be bringing in the drum elements, in the next track I'll be doing, um, bass.

87   M: We switch places; it's not like solid.

88   J: So, are the changes of roles pre-prepared?

89   M: *(Aufnahme unterbrochen)*

90   We have multiple sound sources on stage. So if one thing dies, if one drum machine crashes, we have the backup. That was the theory behind it, it was like „Let's treat it kind of like a DJ set: We have the drums from one track, one drum machine drums on the other." And we basically exported all the hits from every track and then re-program it in the drum machines. Yeah, just to keep to that extra-flexibility. So that, it's not just like a drum backing track is playing. We re-program the whole.

91   J: I only have two final questions: Why is it important for you to play live? Wouldn't it be the easiest way to DJ and everyone would be happy? I really enjoy live performances of electronic dance music but I wonder what the reasons may be for taking all these risks and restrictions just to play live.

92   T: I feel it's all about how we present the music. We could, yeah, just do it as a DJ set. But with this, what we are doing with the live show, we *offer (?)* us a bit more like creative license and freedom to present the music in a different way to the audience.

93   M: Yeah, I feel like once you have a live show you cannot become a true artist and like [...] you're just playing other people's music. And plus, there are DJs out there, that are like amazing and we can't really compete with them. So why not do what we're good at and bring that to the table? And a good live show is not many out there. It is still got a loads of work to do, but it's definitely inspiring to get, to try crack into that. DJing is very competitive and I love doing DJing as well / it's nice to have both. *(Aufnahme unterbrochen)*

94   J: Ok, thank you very much!