

Ben Harder Show: Interview with Mute.

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Ben Harder:

We have a very exclusive interview with Mute. Don't panic; we're going to alter his voice a bit, because he doesn't want to be recognized... Hello Mute!

Mute:

Hello. Here I am.

Ben Harder:

Why do you want to stay incognito?

Mute:

Yeah, that's the first fable I want to get rid of right away, hahaha. Because that's really not true... It's just that I don't want to be recognized.

It's not that I want to be incognito per se, it's just that I don't really have anything with attention, and all kinds of image-related stuff around the music. For me, it's all about the music itself. At the time when I started with this project, I just thought "If I don't link my name to it, I hope the people won't really make a problem out of it"... but when the first EP came out, it turned out the opposite way; people began to create a hype around it etc etc. That wasn't my intention at all. Like I said before; it's not that I want to be incognito per se. I just chose not to be in the picture, like "hey, look at me being all cool!"... My opinion is: just check out my music, and if you really like it you'll eventually learn who I am, if you do some proper research.

And when anyone comes to me and asks me about it; I'll just admit that it's me.

Ben Harder:

Okay.

Mute:

Yeah, it's just like... Why does there always have to be a name and a person behind everything? Just listen to the music and nothing more.

Ben Harder:

Okay, okay. You're labelmanager of Symp.tom. How did Symp.tom come into existence?

Mute:

Hmm, let me think... I think it all started when Lody Koehorst (Mental Wreckage) made some harder tracks, he had been busy with some darker stuff for a while. And, Jeroen (Neophyte) heard some of the tracks and liked them, but it was too dark for Neophyte Records and all the other labels. Mid-Town used to have a label called "Darkside", which was a sort of darker spin-off from Forze Records, and originally they wanted to resurrect that label because of those tracks.

And that's where I came in... I had also been experimenting for a while, made a few darker tracks, but I didn't really know what to do with it... nothing really serious. And I already knew Lody for a while, and things started to fall in place. We started wondering if we really should continue with the Darkside label, because it was too "hardcore-only". So we felt it was best if we just started a whole new label. And that's how Symp.tom began at first.

Ben Harder:

Okay. Why did you pick "Mute" as an artistname? Where does it stand for?

Mute:

Well, I can refer to the first question I answered; about not wanting to be recognized. Without letting it sound too weird; it just all fell into place. I think I had already used that name before, for some vague techno-like project. And when I began making those newer tracks, I started thinking about that image-related stuff around being an artist and NOT feeling the need for all that (music has to speak for itself and not the artist behind it)... and well, I felt that the name "Mute" fitted that mood perfectly. Mute = Silent -> Nothing to hear, nothing to see. It just fell into place in a cool way.

[short interruption for "15 Years Of Nightmare" Price Contest]

Ben Harder:

And now we're going to listen to a track from your new project. Which one are we going to listen to, and can you tell something about it?

Mute:

If I'm correct we're now going to listen to "Rebuild the Void with Flowers". That's the A-track, a more playable track... well, till a certain height anyway, haha. A bit

more hardcore-orientated, heavy kicks, faster. Furthermore it's just a pile of fucking noise... like everything else. And at the end, something funny happens. In my opinion.

[plays "Rebuild the Void with Flowers"]

Ben Harder:

Mute, can you tell us anything about your upcoming project on Symp.tom?

Mute:

Uhm yeah, the new vinyl... Symp.tom 11. Four tracks plus two small intros. I won't tell everything about them yet, haha... otherwise it will spoil the fun about what's in it.

It took me a while to finish it all, which is a bit of a shame... but it's just the way it is. It varies from (damn, how do I describe my own music) hardcore-orientated things to some more complex industrial things that don't have a 4/4 measure... well, it does have a 4/4 measure, but it's more difficult to dance to... Or even not all at dancable.

Besides that I also made something additional... a little bonus. 100 mini-CDs, containing a track of 17,5 minutes. As I said; limited to 100 copies. If I'm correct, the first few people who order SMPT011 at Midtownshop.nl will get them included for free (as long as they're available). After a while, the full release (because there's also an additional intro-track added there) can also be downloaded at the Symp.tom website - www.symp-tom.nl. We did that because otherwise I think it's not really fair for the other 2 people.

Zanthrax:

So you just killed your own gimmick, haha.

Mute:

Hahaha, yeah. But I mean, what if you're the 101st person and you bought the vinyl especially for that limited thingy, and you don't really like it anyway and just want to put it on eBay for 100 euros, that would be fucked, right? ;)

Zanthrax:

Yeah, true.

Mute:

So those people can download it anyway, and the die-hard fanbase who really want to have it fast will also have the extra nice package.

Zanthrax:

But you said mini-CD... do you really mean those small ones?

Mute:

Yes yes, 8 centimeters. 220 MB fits on there, so it was just enough.

Ben Harder:

Why did it take that long to finish your project?

Mute:

I don't really know. I think it's because I mostly start with something until it's only half finished... and after 5 months I think it's total crap. And after another while when I listen to it again, I realize I still like it anyway and then finish it. So yeah, it can sometimes take quite a while. In fact, I already started with one of these new tracks even before my second release (2005). And after 3 years it sounds a bit outdated, so it needs some more changes and edits etc.

I hope the next one takes less longer to finish, hahaha. Because 3 years is way too long.

Ben Harder:

But about the track that takes 17 minutes. Why make a track that takes 17 minutes?! That's very long.

Mute:

Uh yeah, that's very long indeed... and that's also the reason why I decided to give it away for free, because I doubt there will be people who want to spend a lot of money to buy such a thing. I listen to post-rock a lot, and other more difficult IDM-like stuff. And I'm always very impressed by tracks that really tell a certain "story", where you start in, and travel all the way into it... and after a while you suddenly wake up, and realize that you're still on earth, in a matter of speaking. So yeah, I wanted to try to make something like that too... but within the harder industrial sound. So I just began with it and see how far I would come. I didn't want to make the track 17 minutes just because of the 17 minutes, I wanted to see how far I would come, and if I didn't succeed, well... too bad. But eventually it turned out pretty well, in my opinion.

And after that, the CD-thing occurred to me, because 17 minutes wouldn't be possible to press on vinyl. And if it were possible, people wouldn't want to pay 8 euros for it anyway.

Zanthrax:

Well, it could be handy if you are a DJ and you suddenly have to go to the toilet.

[laughs]

Mute:

Hahaha, you've got a point there, I haven't even thought of that. Only I think everybody would have walked away if you play that track.

Ben Harder:

Okay, and I have to give away a spoiler anyway; some of the intro's contain fragments of the Ben Harder Show... I can't say more. Do you listen to the Ben Harder Show a lot?

Mute:

Uh yeah, every now and then I tune in when I think there's something in the show that interests me... colleague Symp.tom artists for example ;)

Gives me a great chance to sample stuff again, hahaha!

Ben Harder:

While producing music, what is your method of working?

Mute:

I suspect that I work in strange way... at least I think so, judging from having seen how some others work. I make things eh....

Zanthrax:

You start at the end, and work backwards?

Mute:

I think my whole way of working doesn't make any sense at all hahaha.

Ben Harder:

You work from somewhere in the bushes.

Mute:

No, I'd say not... Well actually, last year I bought a very cool little device, a recorder thingy, which allowed me to record stuff outside. So I wanted to do all kinds of cool, whatever... and I also indeed had been sitting in the bushes, hahaha. Vague shit, but it delivered me a few pretty cool sounds.

But yeah, I mostly do all of the editing beforehand. And afterwards, I put it all together in one piece. Somehow that's the only way it works for me.

When I switched on a synth, I only fool around with one little sound for 3 hours instead of working on a track. Which made me realize that wasn't really a good working method for me, and that's also why this release took so damn long... gives me a good excuse, haha. But yeah, I work best when making all the edits beforehand, that way it also gives me the proper inspiration to make a whole track out of it.

Zanthrax:

But I work in exactly the same way, so I don't know if it's really strange.

Mute:

Oh okay, well I've never seen you work. But I also don't use any soft-synths etc.

Zanthrax:

Me neither.

Mute:

Ah, very good! Someone from my kind. We should do something together.

Ben Harder:

You've been talking about equipment, and soft-synths etc. What do you use, certain equipment?

Mute:

Actually I got rid of all my equipment; I got really fed up with it. All those shitty cables and MIDI-crap... there was always something that didn't work properly when I started up my computer. And after 3 years I grew tired of that, so it was

bye-bye. In the beginning, the software wasn't really good enough to achieve anything good, there weren't many possibilities. And for the last few years the software has improved and developed so much, that you can do everything with a computer these days. So I got rid of all of my equipment, bought one good computer, as well as some basic software apps which allow me to do everything that I want... in my opinion.

Ben Harder:

And how long have you been producing now?

Mute:

Damn, that goes way back! If my Amiga-period also counts (well, if you can really count that as producing anyway), I think I have been busy since 1996. But if you can really call that producing... I was doing something that involved sound and computers anyway, hahaha.

Zanthrax:

Because your Mute-project has not been your first project, right...

Mute:

Shhh!

Zanthrax:

Yeah well, they wouldn't know where to search anyway ;)

Mute:

Yeah, you're right. Yes, that's absolutely true. I did all kinds of stuff before that, a variety of projects.

Ben Harder:

Also in the bushes.

Mute:

Yeah, also in the bushes, hahaha.

Ben Harder:

Okay, now we're going to listen to another new track from your project... Which one are we going to hear now?

Mute:

Uhm, now we're going to listen to "The Dirt Outside". It's funny to return to the stuff I said before about inspiration etc; this is one of those tracks... I think I made this track right after I saw a movie called "Inside", a french horror movie. I recommend that one, it's pretty brutal and bizarre, one of this year's top-movies. And so I saw the movie and got so impressed by it, it had all of these kinds of cool sounds and I wanted to process that atmosphere/mood in a track.

Zanthrax:

And you also sampled those sounds from that movie?

Mute:

Shhh. *cough*

[laughs]

Well, it contains some distorted feedback-sounds, and I used some of those indeed.

[plays "The Dirt Outside"]

Ben Harder:

We're still here with Mute in the Ben Harder Show and Mute is labelmanager of the Symp.tom label.

Mute, what's your opinion about the hardcore scene of today?

Mute:

Tough question... Hmm, what can I say about it. Well, it's not really my thing anymore. I think that describes it best.

Ofcourse I grew up with it... the beginning of the 90s, the end of the 90s, 2000... I was there. So in a matter of speaking it will always have a special place in my heart. But it's not really my kind of music anymore. I mean, I still hang out at parties sometimes and I still have a good time there... but it's not that I come there especially for the music and the good atmosphere or anything.

Zanthrax:

But do you think everything used to be better in the early days, or do you have more options / alternatives compared to the early days?

Mute:

I think I have (kind of) "grown" out of the scene. Ofcourse everything used to be wider and newer back then, but throughout the years you also start listening to other genres and... no, it's not the kind of music anymore that I would listen 'just for fun', in a way of "yeah, now I'm going to relax and play some hardcore"... I would choose other music instead. But yeah, I still hear a track every once in a while, and then I still like it. But I wouldn't go there for the party itself anymore, I mean I can still have a good time with friends etc. But yeah, I guess I kind of grew out of it.

Ben Harder:

Okay, but which genres do you listen to?

Mute:

Uhm yeah, everything. I think that's the only suitable description. Really everything, from hip-hop to very complex underground breakcore stuff to "Scooter", you name it... I can even stand hitlist music, if it's not too often.

Ben Harder:

But do you also get your inspiration from all those genres?

Mute:

Yeah sure, sure. From everything that I hear.

It's not that I think "hey, that's a cool thing to steal / sample", but everything has a certain influence. A certain mood that I can get from music, that could be a reason for me to work on a track. It happens to me often, when I watch a movie that contains a certain atmosphere... it triggers me to build a track with that atmosphere. It happens a lot. In fact, I think it happened in every new track of my upcoming release.

Ben Harder:

Okay, so you don't always get your inspiration from other music only.

Mute:

No, just about everything; music, movies... well yeah ofcourse, because that's

also sound. You name it, also even artworks, paintings.... if I can really "see" something, I try to process it in a track. I always try to have a "story" in my track, that's also why they mostly have an intro & outro... which is kind of difficult for pressing it on vinyl (not "DJ-friendly").

Ben Harder:

Okay, and now we have another new track of yours to hear. Which one is it now?

Mute:

Now we're going to hear the last track of the A-side, "Victim by Design". It's more techno-like. I think this is the first track I made for this release, somewhere in 1999 or so... Nah, but it has been a while ago anyway. I've changed and edited it many many times, and eventually it became the track it is today.

[plays "Victim by Design"]

Ben Harder:

You're still listening to Ben from Ben, here at Drechtstad FM. And we're here with Mute, from the Symp.tom label.

Mute, do you have any future plans involving live-performing / DJ-ing / or have you ever been DJ-ing before?

Mute:

Yeah, I used to play hardcore in all sorts of small clubs in the neighbourhood, but that was a very long time ago. Had a great time, but DJ-ing wasn't really anything for me. Ofcourse it was fun, but I haven't done it for so long now... I think I can't even do it anymore. And given the music that I like today, I think I would have a pretty hard time making a decent performance out of that.

But live... maybe I might want to do that someday, but only with an audience where it really matters. Which means not on a standard hardcoreparty, because 95% - 99% wouldn't understand what the fuck is going on. So I'd rather perform for an audience that really likes that kind of sound... otherwise it would be in vein.

Ben Harder:

Ofcourse you would pick the Ben Harder Show to do your very first performance, right?

Mute:

Yeah, could be. But then I wouldn't do it in front of people... yeah, in front of you, but... I'm still not really sure what to make out of you guys. [laughing]

Zanthrax:

But I think a location like "Waterfront" in Rotterdam would give a good audience (breakcore / cybergothic / rhythmic noise events).

Mute:

That would be very cool, for example. What's the name again of those cool parties... doing a commercial advertising again.

Ben Harder:

You're allowed to say it, but it seems more like an invitation for booking you.

Mute:

No, not really. Even if they would book me I have to think it over 3 times first. Because when I would want to perform, I want to make something special of it. Not putting 5 tracks together, and smashing on a keyboard with 3 extra samples... I would really want to do something entirely different than... just playing 6 tracks.

Zanthrax:

Or a CD-player.

Mute:

Or a CD-player, to name something. I don't know what they all use in a "live" act these days. Laptops with 3 audiotracks / waveforms, and "playbacking" etc. So if I were going to do something, I have to prepare a lot for that... so I have to think it all over.

Ben Harder:

Okay, any future plans for Symp.tom, or even future plans for yourself?

Mute:

Yes, we're currently busy with a lot of things right now. For this year SMPT011 ofcourse. We're also busy with a very cool CD, which is also going to be released before the end of the year, a double-CD mixed by my big friends The Relic and

Mental Wreckage. They compiled a CD out of all kinds of Symp.tom tracks, new and old... also lots of new stuff from other labels, that suit their taste. And even some things from outside the hardcore / industrial hardcore genres. They made a pretty cool mix out of that, and it's going to be released before the end of the year. I'm kinda proud of that, because it's cool that we're still able to do that, especially in today's "fabulous" music-industry, because it probably won't be the best-selling CD on earth anyway. But it's cool that we're still given such a chance, which we made use of in a good way I think.

And next year there are going to be a lot of new projects from already known Symp.tom artists, and also a few new ones.

Ben Harder:

Can you already tell us who they are?

Mute:

Uhm, actually I don't know. I'm a labelmanager of Symp.tom, and I don't even know if I'm allowed to say it, hahaha! Anyway, I've already seen some new stuff from The Relic, Mental Wreckage too... a new Dual Mechanism... I think something from Moleculez too, and some other guys and I don't know what kinds of dark stuff... what's undoubtedly coming up.

Ben Harder:

And that new upcoming project of yours, when will it be released?

Mute:

I hope, with a little luck, this week. And if not, next week. Oh, I see somebody shaking his head "no" (Zanthrax), he doesn't really believe in that hahaha. No, if everything goes right it should be here at the end of the week. With a little luck I can also announce it for those 100 people... that is, if there are 100 people who want to buy that release and want to have that CD too. We'll announce it when it will be available, otherwise it would be kinda stupid that after 5 days you suddenly discover that it has already been in the shop for 5 days. So it will be properly announced before that. I think that will be somewhere next week, but yeah since we're also dependant of external factors (pressingplant, artworkpress etc) we can't 100% guarantee that.

Ben Harder:

You can also win that project here on the Ben Harder Show - - that is, the vinyl and the (limited mini-)CD.

Anyway Mute, in the next hour Maurice is going to play a few of your tracks,

because you don't DJ yourself. Thanks for joining us in this episode, super, and you'll probably want to come again another time?

Mute:

Yeah absolutely. We had fun here, right? I hope the people could understand most of it... all those bullshit stories of mine, hahaha. I think so, right?

Ben Harder:

We also have another new track coming up... and which track is that?

Mute:

That will be the longest track of the vinyl, "Until The Darkness Sparkles", that's a track where I just did all the stuff I wanted to do, but it's still pretty normal. It begins a bit IDM-like, and after 3 minutes hell breaks loose and it gets a bit darker. Hahaha, I can just tell a cool story, but you should just listen to it and form your own opinion.

Ben Harder:

You can announce it yourself.

Mute:

Yeah, I just did that already.

Ben Harder:

No, but with a cool voice.

Mute:

Oh, a cool voice... "Until the Darkness Sparkles"

[plays "Until the Darkness Sparkles"]

Ben Harder Show: www.benhardershow.eu

Mute: www.facebook.com/mute.nl

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