

TRIPLE INTERVIEW TO KFACTOR, ASTMA AND SERPENTS

Astma, **kFactor** and **Serpents** are the characters of the "Old school triplet", labeled by **Electro Aggression Records**, three very different artists from three different countries who have accompanied us for the whole summer with their old school EBM and electro industrial sounds. Their watchword is "old school", a well recognizable approach in their formula. Today we have the pleasure to talk with them in a very particular interview: all of them have the same questions, in order to better understand the different approaches they have – and occasionally what they have in common - and the importance that the EAR's operation has had.

1) Hi guys! The preparation of your albums has been very long, but finally they've been published, and now we can listen to them. Tell the readers about their genesis.

kFactor - It's a very simple question, the kFactor's genesis is basically a common start. I buy a keyboard in the middle of 90's and started my experience. And this release, the kFactor 2CD, is the result of years of this experiences.

Serpents - The first ideas for the album are from 2012. The idea was to create an album with lyrics of birth and death and everything in between. But because of the protests in Istanbul/Turkey, the wars in Syria, Ukraine,... the direction of the lyrics and music changed.

Astma - We have had plans for a release of an Astma album since 2006 when we had our first contact with Nader M. and the waiting for the release has been delayed several times. Mainly because of the size of this huge release with 42 tracks in total and with about 20 different remixing bands. The tracks on the album are from between 2003 – 2014 though.

2) Astma, kFactor and Serpents are three acts characterized by quite different approaches, but there's an element that links them: the old school approach, even if every project has created something fresh, even maintaining the linkage with the past. In particular, **Nader Mounneh** has put your albums under the "Old school trilogy" label. What do you think that links your projects, even making such different music?

kFactor - Yes, definitely we are different. Serpents is powerful, strong and brings (ever) a perfect mix between rhythm and ambience, just in perfect time! And we talk about a guy who was doing this for more than 20 years. Serpents is like wine. Astma, wow, powerful, simply powerful. This guys are like a heavy machine, you can't stop. Their rhythm, their bass, you'll be knocked. So, I think kFactor is dark and cold. Sometimes I try to break it, but it's engraved so strong in my personality, and I can't escape. All the process, the creation.. bring me here. Well, definitely, we are very different. But we have the old school essence.. I can't describe this, it's a feeling.. it's a sensation. Just listen any track in this 3 albums, this sensation is there. The essence.

Serpents - I can only speak for SERPENTS: SERPENTS began in 1988, long time ago. I think we haven't changed so much in our style. The style of the music depends on the time and the mood with which the songs are created.

Astma – All the three bands have traces of the music from the past, but we represent three different branches of the EBM and of the dark ambient scene.

3) Sweden, Germany and Brazil. What air is breathable in three so different countries in terms of electro and EBM music, and how these countries perceive the old school approach of this music? How much the country in which you live influences your sound?

kFactor - Brazil is a case of study, we have an identity crisis. We speak portuguese, and all our neighbours speak spanish, so we are alone here. Maybe this makes us different and we look for different influences. But, at the same time, we don't have a scene, or the scene basically doesn't exist. Just DJs, parties and bands from other countries, the brazilian bands have no space. Of course, if you are friend of the "right" people, you don't need to do good music, just need to be friend of the "right" people. Maybe all these things make my form.. you know. Don't look outside, look inside.

Serpents - I think not only the country influences the music, everything around you influences the music you make. Your life, your friends, your family and everything around you influences you and also your music. Germany is the country where a lot of electronic bands were born. Like **Kraftwerk, Tangerine Dream, Neu!, Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft, Liaisons Dangereuses**, influencing electronic musicians until today.

Astma - Hard to say. Maybe we have a cold and harsh sound, just like the Swedish temper.

4) How much the lyrics are important in music genres in which the instrumental aspect is very important? Do you think that are there some topics which suit better than others to some music genres (such as EBM and electro)? Even if the meaning of your lyrics is quite understandable, which topics they specifically face?

kFactor - I think the lyrics are a key point to shape the form and finish the process. When I start a new sound, I immediately start thinking about the lyrics. They're just words in the wind, connections between me and the feelings behind the music. Humanity against nature, degeneration, society, and, why not, hate and love... in this way.

Serpents - It is important that the audience should think about the songs and the lyrics. It's more like looking at a picture and think about it. No one should be directed or said what to think about a special song. Most of the songs are about feelings, politics, life, work, death: a personal reflection of the current time.

Astma - The lyrics are very important for us. Most of our songs are about bad things, but we try to present them in a humorous way with lots of irony. Without the lyrics there is no fun. About the common themes in EBM music, of course lots of bands have lyrics about hard work, war, factories and machines and our lyrics maybe make no exception.

5) Let's talk about cinematographic influences. The music that you make is surely linked to the use of sampling, and often, in particular we, as italians, don't know the original dubbing of a movie, so it's a bit difficult to understand what movie has been cited. In the samples of your albums, what

movies have you wanted to pay an homage to? Could you make a list and tell us why sampling is so widespread?

kFactor - Well, I use many samples. Some I use the most are from **Alien, Doom** (movie and game), **Enslaved** (fantastic game), and some classics like **Frankenstein (Boris Karloff)**. Sometimes I've caught speech from documentaries.

Serpents - In the SERPENTS songs there are not so much samples in the songs. But yes, some of the songs are inspired by splatter, horror and science fiction movies, like **Bad Taste, Brain Dead, Dune...** As an Italian, think about the great movies of **Dario Argento** ;-)

Astma - We have had no influences from a specific movie so far, but you can say that the horror, sci-fi and war genre may have had some effect on both our sound and the lyrics. The use of vocal samples from movies is a way to introduce the listener to the theme of the song and to enhance the message.

6) As far as your musical but even cultural / literary influences are concerned, what influences and what have influenced you?

kFactor - This is strange, because I think I don't have great influences. I'm hearing many lo-fi, electronic indie, and other strange styles. Of course, part of my day is dedicated to listen things like **Skinny Puppy, IC434, yelworC, Pygmy Children, Batz Without Flesh, Swamp Terrorists, Oneiroid Psychosis, Placebo Effect, Vomito Negro, Borghesia, Fix8:Söd8, Pyrroline, Jihad**, the whole EAR family. And basically my literary diet is based on programming languages, because I'm a web developer. Maybe, that's my beach.

Serpents - Influences are from Germany, where I grew up and from Turkey, where I was born. Influences are from the music I hear, the books I read, movies I watch and also from friends I am with. So everything around you influences you in your life.

Astma - Our musical influences are from different music scenes like old school EBM, synth pop, metal, punk rock and goth rock. Maybe you can hear some traces from all those scenes if you listen to the songs in our album **600 pounds of body**. There are no specific literary influences in our music that we can think of.

7) How much the music that you make can easily be translated into the live dimension? What you want to transmit when you play live?

kFactor - I work on every track to easily play it into the live. But I have some special and exclusive tracks to play on stage. I think that in the live stage, you need to play some more danceable and strong songs, and that's what I'll do in **Dark EBM Souls 2**, in Bratislava, Slovakia, feb 2016. Hey, if someone want, I'll be in Europe for 15 or 20 days, feb/mar, I can play in other events, just call me :D

Serpents - With the live performance we try to transfer the mood of the songs. This is also done by means of visuals, such as video and other visual effects. The intention is that the audience enjoys the show and dives into the songs and the sound.

Astma - Most of our songs are possible to perform live, we think. We bring the energy and the power from the songs to our live shows.

8) If you had to explain to the listener why you've changed the title of your album, how would you explain it?

kFactor - I had some ideas and in brainstorm with Mr EAR (Nader Mounneh) we got to that name. I think that's solid and dark.

Serpents - Normally the planned album should have been more personal, but if you see and hear all the bad news all around the world, the situation of others becomes more important and you think about their situation. This is the reason of changing the direction of the songs.

Astma - If you mean why the name of our album is 600 pounds of body. It's simple. It's the total mass of the members in Astma.

9) An element that identifies the albums released by your label, Electro Aggression Records, is the presence of loads of remixes. How much remixes are important for artists like you? What added value remixes give to the listener and to the artists, and how you've entered in contact with them? How a remix process happens? Is the label that put you in contact with the remixers, or are them that put themselves in contact with you?

kFactor - The remixes are very important. They bring the looks of other fans, bring the experience of these fantastic bands. The label have chosen the bands, have made the contacts and the process has been peaceful. We only exchanged a few e-mails and they did the magic. And in the end I met amazing people.

Serpents - Most of the remixers I know personally, so I ask them directly if they are interested in doing a remix, others are contacted via mail. The idea is how others are interpreting your songs. And I think also it's interesting for the audience and for the musicians to work on different material. If I remix other bands, I sometimes get new ideas for my own songs. So for me remixing is also learning from others.

Astma - Remixes are a way for the bands to help each other to promote the music. The value for the listeners is a possibility to listen to the songs in different styles with the interpretations of each remixing band. In our case we had help from the label to get in contact with most of the remixing bands.

10) What role do you think that the old school approach will have in the future of the music, i would use this term, post-industrial? What's the situation in the market of this music and, listening to what is produced everyday, what conclusion have you reached?

kFactor - Oh I really don't know. I live in a little town, in the middle of nowhere in southeast coast in Brazil, just jungle and sea. From here I can't follow the market. I keep my art, my style and keep on. But I think the market will survive always, against the piracy, against all. Always there will be people like Mr. Nader Moumneh, that keep the scene alive.

Serpents - There are a lot of bands that like music from the past and try to adopt this kind of music and to give a modern touch to their music. For us I wouldn't use the term 'Oldschool', because as we started to make this kind of music, it was new and we tried to create a new danceable and dark style of electronic music. There were only a few in this genre.

Astma - [...]

11) The last question is a ritualistic one: as you've just released your new albums, how will you promote them and have you already thought about what to do in the future with your main projects and with the side projects too? I hope that we will keep in touch!

kFactor - I have a good contact with many djs and webradios in Brazil, Argentina, Australia, France and others countries. These guys are helping very well, but I trust 300% in the EAR's promotion and in your expertise. I even have many new tracks, many, something close to 30 tracks, and I can't stop, my head is still working and working...

Serpents - As far as there are people who like to listen to our music, we'll do our best to create new material.

Astma - To promote the album and the music of Astma we will do some live shows in various countries and radio shows as well. Maybe the coming release of the live DVD from our latest show in Ukraine this year will also help us to promote the album. A release party for the Swedish audience will be held in our hometown Örebro in the beginning of December. We would like to end our testimony above by saying "God bless the EBM:ers and stompers of the Universe", you know who you are, and "God bless Astma of Sweden" :)

12) I thank you for the time you've dedicated us. If you want to, invite our readers to buy your new albums!

kFactor - I thank you for the invite, for the opportunity. I would like to invite everyone to buy and make a reflection about kFactor 2CD, about a new style to do an old school electro music.

Serpents - [...]

Astma - [...]

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