

LUCKY KITCHEN

<http://www.luckykitchen.com>



Lucky Kitchen is a label based in Spain, done by Aeron Bergman and Alejandra Underwood, who replied to our questions on August 29th, 2002.

I'd like to know a little biographical information about you, such as how old you are, where you grew up, your schooling... Any sort of information that could help readers to understand how you got to be who you are today.

Aeron was born and raised in Detroit and it's metropolitan area 30 years ago. He studied Art History, Art Criticism and Fine Art at Michigan State University, University of Toronto, and then New York University.

Alejandra was born and raised in Logrono, Spain 25 years ago. She studied fine art at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto, School of Visual Art in New York, and Guildhall in London.

We met in Toronto, married in New York, lived one year in Detroit, one year in London, and now going on our third year in Spain.

It is difficult to determine how we got where we are today...

Which friendly piece of advice would you give to someone who wants to start his label? What used to be tape-only labels are now CDR-only labels. Do you think it makes it easier for people to start their label and run less risks ?

It is equal parts fun and work, just take your time and do the right thing. Try to make cheap yet nice packages so the financial risk isnt so great. Money and its related problems of distribution is the worst part about a label. Be careful of distributors and record shops, they are best friends when things are smooth, but have no loyalty, and actually act as unofficial censors... It is not easy to start a label, but it is easier now than before. It is difficult to give advice, because every situation is different.

To me the role of a label should be to discover new acts, help them get promotion, distribution, spread the word on their creativity. Could that be the motto behind your label?

Communication and warmth are important for us. Spotlight is not so important, but respectful presentation is.

I have noticed in your list of distributors that some of the companies are mailorder rather than proper distributors, or better say mailorder-lists that have extended their activities and sell to some very specialised Indie record stores. But they do not sell to chain stores. So do you think that it would be useless for your records to reach those music supermarkets ?

Not at all. We have seen our work in HMV London, Tower Tokyo and more... the problem is that these super stores are not interested in work like ours because they know they cannot shift units.

Do you wish to keep your music within a certain circle of specialized connoisseurs ? Or did you chose to keep things, prices under control and thus avoid mass-distribution in certain countries ?

We do not avoid mass-distribution, rather, mass-distribution avoids us. Since we do not play by their rules, they automatically exclude our activities as margin. We sell to whoever will buy. We feel that everyone and anyone is capable of appreciating our work, it is simply a matter of promotion/education. Since we do not have money to spend on large ad campaigns, and our hype is minimal to say the least, our exposure is limited to people who actually take the time out to look and listen.

Today, there are more and more chain stores and less and less passionate/smaller record shops. Are you affected by that (de)evolution, or did you deliberately chose to stay away from that "market" ?

We find that there is less and less passion in both the larger and the smaller shops. Most shops (there are few exceptions) are interested in the bottom line: unit shifting, rule following and trend jumping. They must be fashionable, or they will go out of business. We do not deliberately choose to stay away from any market: we will sell to anyone who is interested. However, we are not going to bang our head against their walls in the hope that they will throw us some spare change. We have at one point or another approached at least 40 distributors around the world. We have been screwed by many of them, and ignored by most. The few that remain with us today is because we have built an acceptable trust and they have shown us the basic respect necessary for any human interaction. For the rest: go to hell.

What gave you the reason, or motivation to start your label ? Weren't you satisfied with other labels'music?

*Actually, no we were not. No one would support us in the beginning *, so we had to do it ourself. But our real reason to do everything ourself is because we love to do it from the music to the design to the package, from the ground to the moon...You also compose music,*

Alejandra & Aeron have been among the lucky prized by Ars Electronica. Has it helped the label or you to get more attention ?

A little bit so far, but it is too early to tell. So far it has helped our own work more than our label. We are very thankful that they chose this year to support artists that are culturally marginalized, but whose ideas/techniques/spirits are very advanced. There was a very necessary backlash against the dusty academics, but it went too far: pop music has its own awards. It seems that this year there has been more consideration and deliberation to highlight the gaps.

Looks like you are self-releasing most of your albums, whereas you have been collaborating with labels like FatCat, TomLab... why ?

We have a growing group of supportive and energetic individuals, and we love to collaborate with them. It is nice to have a community of people. We have self released about half of our work, and the rest have been projects with the above labels, and: Diskono, Bottrop-Boy, Softl, Mixer, Bip-Hop, and we shall see who else...

Did you start with a certain idea, concept ?

Narrative sound. Literate sound. Music and thinking. Anti formalism. Soft and sweet.

How would you describe a typical Lucky Kitchen act ?

There is no typical LK act. So far we have been surprising ourselves with what we release.

You work closely with Diskono, don't you ?

We have worked closely with Diskono with several specific projects, (Love Album, Shed Album, europe tour, (Re)visionland installation) but currently we are doing our separate things.

Any label you could say was an influence on you ? Any label that you think has been influenced by yours ?

we all influence each other dont we!

It seems like some american lables have been influenced by early Lucky Kitchen, especially our Blip, Bleep compilation, but we have nothing in common now.

You pay a lot of attention to packaging and your website is good-looking. Could you give us details on the person in charge of the design ?

We both do the design. Often we work in collaboration with the artist. We have sometimes accepted great advice from the family printer we work with here in Spain.

What is according to you the most beautiful record/art-object you ever issued ?

It depends on our mood...

Often people do not consider "microsounds" to be rich and believe that very few is happening... Often associating it with the theory of "less is more", whereas a lot of things and ideas can be noticed in the music of many so-called "microsound" artists.

Would you say that this is because many listeners :

- a) do not listen**
- b) do not care**
- c) can't understand the subtelties**

Well, honestly, once a term like "microsound" begins to stick, the rules and obligations of said musicians/artists are firmly in place, to the detriment of the work. It takes on an air of a folk tradition, which is both good and bad. It is true: most microsound work is very boring. But like any genre, there are striking and mediocre examples, and this depends on personal taste and education equally.

We cannot speak for all the listeners of course, but it is true that most people do not like music where they are required to contribute something. That is, people prefer to sit and listen passively, rather than interpret or translate an open work.

Could you give us some precisions on the actual scene in Spain ?

It is difficult to say. Mostly Spain is stuck in a dance music dark ages: all party all the time. (It seems like Spain has been partying since Franco died, but they really should stop and see that their postal system does not work, their train system is pitiful, the bus system is dangerous, the phone company is a national joke, internet reliability is a national dream: in short, nothing here works. There is the same block head beurocracy as when Franco was alive, but now there is the eternal fiesta too, like hell on earth: dark, loud, smoky, red lights, everything...) There is alot of heavy metal and some fluffy hip hop in the urban capitals. Barcelona is the new music center, but it is sadly, hopelessly behind... There are, of course, the old school academics, the slightly less old school noise heads like Lopez, and then a very very small group of newer explorers like Alku, Oozebap, and Spark in Barcelona, Ertz festival in Navarra (Xabi Erkizia), and a few really young kids making glitch noise at their parents house in some small places like Vitoria, Bera, and Bilbao. Of course there is nothing, absolutely nothing of a "scene" in our hometown, and there will never be, but there is some great folk music here...

Any other label, activists that you feel close to?

oh, boy there are too many, dont want to leave anyone out...

Aeron also has some roots in NY, so please give some precisions on the actual scene there?

Actually we both lived in New York at the same time for three years. NY is huge, and its only norm is that it is in constant flux. There are only very few people who have been constantly active, and there is really no need to mention them. (John Zorn plays 2x or more a week...)

But, to speak generally again... NY is really a city that appreciates but does not create itself, especially when you are talking about music. It is too expensive for any musician except Bjork to really live there and work on music, and the venues are very very limited, despite the hype. Since rents is so high, venues need to generate large amounts of money to stay open. Otherwise, there are always things going on in Brooklyn and Queens that are more underground, but they are frequently just cheaper imitations of the above ground entertainments going on in Manhattan. There are some sound art galleries like Diapason, and it seems like there are more visual art curators willing to look at sound, but perhaps we are just speaking to Stephen Vitiello too often...

Always recordshops, the best ones are collection freaks like Kim's who try to have everything, instead of selection freaks like Etheria who only buy what their questionable taste dictates...

Since we have not lived there for many years, perhaps it has all changed...

Why did you move to Spain ?

Cheaper, better quality of life than especially crappy England, but also better than the USA for many things. Peace and space to concentrate on our work. Alejandra's family is here, so it is nice to be close to them.



How does your selection process work? Are they pieces personally requested, or volunteered to you ?

Both, it depends on the situation. We asked Stephen Vitiello to make something for us, and Stephan Mathieu contacted us with a piece he thought would be great for Lucky Kitchen.

Is there anything that you regret or that you'd change if you could ?

no.

Any album or band that you wish you had issued on LK ?

no. (Well, I guess the Rolling Stones, so we could get a little bit of money to pay our credit card...)

What are your goal as a label. Futureplans ?

keep on growing and making work. move to france?? :) fight the good fight, do some yoga to relax a little...

Could you introduce us to some of the acts on your label ? (names, how you met, anecdotes...)

Todd Carter Chicago. (Aerospace Soundwise) We met in highschool in Michigan, usa. We see each other about once a year one way or another.

Andres Krause Cologne. (A.F.R.I. Studios) Tom Steinle of Tomlab introduced us. He thought it was a set up when we said we live in Logrono, because his grandmother also lives here. He comes down to visit us once or twice a year now.

Joshua Abrams. Chicago. (Also plays in Town and Country) Todd Carter played Alejandra's solo record "home tapes" for Josh, and he liked it very much. We met for the first time in Chicago this spring, and got along very well.

Stephen Vitiello. New York. Introduced by Michel Auder, the french video artist (living in new york for 20 years now...)

Toshiya Tsunoda. Yokohama. Franq from Bimbo Tower sold us his Hapna CD and we loved it. We contacted him and got along really well. He sends us pictures of his lovely wild son playing with his electronic equipment.

Toshiyuki Kobayashi. London. He was Aeron's student at an art college in London. We spent the year in the dark cold basement computer lab talking about music.

Upcoming releases ? Please give some details on every band, name of the record, etc...

LK018 Toshiyuki Kobayashi "Drawing Speed, Coloring Time"

LK019 Stephan Mathieu "Die Entdeckung des Wetters"

LK020 Thom Kubli "Labortag"

Discography :

Alejandra and Aeron

(Solo and two person work) :

*LK05 Alejandra and Underwood "The Children's Record"CD Lucky Kitchen. June, 1999

*LK07 Alejandra Salinas "Home Tapes" 10" vinyl, December 1999

*AUDIOVIEW 09 Alejandra and Underwood "Notebook on cities and clothes"CD Audioview Belgium, June 2000

*DISKONO 010 Aeron Bergman "The Shed record". CD Diskono, Scotland. August 2000.

*TOMLab 11 Aeron Bergman "The Tale of the Unhappy American" CD Tomlab, Cologne, Germany January 2001

- *LK09 Alejandra and Aeron "Folklore Volume 1: La Rioja" CD, Lucky Kitchen, Spain, February 2001
- *LK010 Alejandra and Aeron "Haunted Folklore: Ruinas Encantadas" CD, Lucky Kitchen, Spain, February 2001
- *Split Series Number 13 Alejandra and Aeron" Split 12" entitled "Kitchen" Fat Cat, London, UK, July 2001
- *LK014 Alejandra and Aeron "The Tale of Pip" Lucky Kitchen La Rioja, September, 2001
- *EN/OF 005, "Scotch Monsters" 12" vinyl, Bottrop Boy, Germany, July 2002

Lucky Kitchen:

- *LK001 Suetsu and Underwood. "Find and Use the Hits" CDR handpackaged baby jammies. 1997 Sold Out
- *LK002.5 Aeron Bergman "Bostonpopsonreverbformydeadgrandpa" cassette.1998 Sold Out
- *LK003 Blip, Bleep (Soundtracks to Imaginary Video Games). Featuring Daniel Beattie, V/VM, Jake Mandell, Blitter Vs. Hrvatski, Marumari, Flexible Products, Aerospace Soundwise, Stupid Lepton, Wheaton Research, Suetsu and Underwood, and more CD handsewn cover. 1998 Sold Out
- *LK004 Alejandra and Underwood "The Childrens Record" CD, handpackaged. 1999 Sold Out
- *LK005 Family Audio: Featuring V/VM, Daniel Raffel, Todd Carter, Alejandra Salinas, Aeron Bergman, Drew Daniel, Kim Jun Park, and Michael Hartman. 8" lathe cut vinyl 1999 Sold Out
- *LK006 Tourist Record: Featuring Tom Steinle, Jansky Noise, Alejandra and Aeron, Suetsu, and Aerospace Soundwise. 7" red vinyl 1999 Sold Out
- *LK007 Alejandra Salinas "Home Tapes" 10" white vinyl. 2000 Sold Out
- *LK008 Find More Hits Featuring Matmos, Alejandra and Aeron, Suetsu, Pimmon, Sachiko M., To Rococo Rot, Suetsu, Goodiepal and Tordis, Electric Sheep, I-Sound, Nick Birmingham, Jeswa, Hrvatski, Semi-conductor, Jansky Noise, Steven Marcus Taylor, Leo (From Rio), and Pena Ruido. CD 2000 Few Left.
- *LK009 Alejandra and Aeron "Folklore volume One: La Rioja" 2001 sold out
- *LK010 Alejandra and Aeron "Haunted Folklore One: Ruinas Encantadas" 2001 sold out
- *LK011 V/A "I love fantasy" (Aerospace Soundwise, Evol, Felix Kubin, Sachiko M.) 2001. Some left.

Sparkling Composers Series:

- *LK012 A.F.R.I. Studios (Cologne) Goodbye If You Call That Gone
History binds us to the past, along with unquenchable memory. Deep, yet glittering heavy electricity works that fill the room and leave what stays behind.
Release Date: Oct 2001
- *LK013 Aerospace Soundwise (Chicago) Monologue with Accompaniment()
A lonely poet living in big city, USA, making intense multitrack compositions of moving wallpaper. He reflects with humor, sadness, wonder and romance from his DAT tapes recorded over the past ten years of his life.
Release Date Oct 2001

*LK014 Alejandra and Aeron (La Rioja, Spain) The Tale of Pip

One morning Pip was lying on the wet grass, looking at the rain coming. Bright compositions that may or may not be for children, and may or may not be quiet harmonica solos. Hand printed 12 page color artisan book by A&A and Extrapool, NL.
Release Date: Sept 2001

*LK015 Joshua Abrams (Chicago)()

Solo works made in the freezing dead of winter in a warm Chicago attic. Abrams composes and plays each track solo with instruments including double bass, sampler, piano, and field recordings of water, whistling, and finger snapping to create narrative portraits.

Release Date: January 1 2002

*LK016 Toshiya Tsunoda (Yokohama, Japan) Pieces of Air

"Listening to the sound occurring within a certain place, there is a noticeable gap in time from sound sources as they occur and the moment these sounds are heard." - Toshiya said. Intense stable state field recordings of natural noise selected with the ear of a musician.

Release Date March 1 2002

*LK017 Steven Vitiello and Tetsu Inoue with Andrew Deutsch (New York)

Humming Bird Feeder VER0.02

Lovely, delicately sculpted, first-time collaboration between these veteran sound artists. It all started with Vitiello putting a contact mic into a bird feeder.

Release Date April 2002

*LK018 Toshiyuki Kobayashi (Japan/London) Drawing speed, coloring time

Lovely and delicate patterns of melodic timbres that are not actually melodies, but spectral ghosts roaming over a miniature landscape.

Release Date August 2002

*LK019 Stephan Mathieu (Saarbrücken, Germany) Die Entdeckung des Wetters

Calm, gorgeous sounds from this hardworking yet relaxed German musician and dedicated family man. Release Date August 2002

*LK020 Thom Kubli (Cologne) Labortag

"My father was a scientist also, so we probably have similar experiences with the perception of science as human as it is." –Thom told us.

DNA-like twisting and delicate compositions based on recordings from the Fraunhofer-Institut, a well-known German genetic engineering lab.

Release Date October 2002

<http://www.luckykitchen.com>