

## T O M L A B



- **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.**

*Right now I am 31 years old. I grew up in a small town near Heidelberg – a rather boring environment. My studies of Mechanical Engineering were completed part time in France and part time in Germany. Since then I have been working in the automobile industries (for companies such as Renault and Peugeot) and in the New Economy. I have been running the label in parallel to my full time job for many years. In 2001 I reduced to working part time as an engineer and at the end of last year I quit my job because the behavior of the bosses in the New Economy became more and more unbearable.*

- **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 ?**

*Today I think the situation is much different from the one years ago. The networks have been growing and the production tools are much more affordable than before. In my eyes if you are careful enough there is no risk involved. If you have patience and good music to bring to the people all you need is time, dedication and an understanding of the system.*

- **To me the role of a label should be to discover new acts, help them get promotion, distribution, spread the word on their creativity. It seems that could be the motivation behind your label. Right ?**

*Absolutely – I have rarely relied on established artists names in the past. For Tomlab the initial motivation was to release my own music (visor, summer dsp) but then came something that I see more as a task today : helping to bring ahead other people's music. They just can do it so much better than I ever will be able to...*

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

*There are so many stories and anecdotes that it is impossible to give a short resume. There is the funny story of Yoshio Machida from Tokyo who really urged me to try that Japanese toilet robot where you don't need toilet paper anymore, instead the machine is doing all the cleansing... well you might imagine... and Yoshio was standing outside, his face in a smile and waiting for me and I just felt a little bit embarrassed.*

*Most of the artists I am working with today I discovered through demos. I have met with almost all of them and with some of them I share a special type of friendship.*



- **I have noticed in your list of distributors that you also use some mailorder-lists 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 ?**

*Well – our network has been very much independent in the past and it is only now that I am working with distributors who can reach chain stores. The limitation was not by will but by chance.*

- **Do you wish to keep your music within a certain circle of specialized connoisseurs ? Or learning from the unfortunate experience with Dutch-East India try to avoid being ripped-off by some big distros ?**

*I certainly do not want to try keeping Tomlab releases within a special circle. I love music and if people love the music I release they should by it whatever their background is – in my eyes this is something out of my control. My control is only on the product side of things, i.e. I try to do high quality work as best as I can at a steady pace.*

- **Or did you chose to keep things, prices under control and thus avoid mass-distribution in certain countries ?**

*I have full control on every parameter right now. For fall 2002 we will have important changes in our distribution network in Japan and the US which will help stepping closer to a situation where mass-distribution seems possible. The thing is that I have always been very very careful in the past. The experience with Dutch East India was*

certainly a bad one and there have been other stories in the same range, even on a rather private level where people still owe me money. When I do business with Tomlab I need more than trust – these days I follow through a very pragmatic approach on business terms.

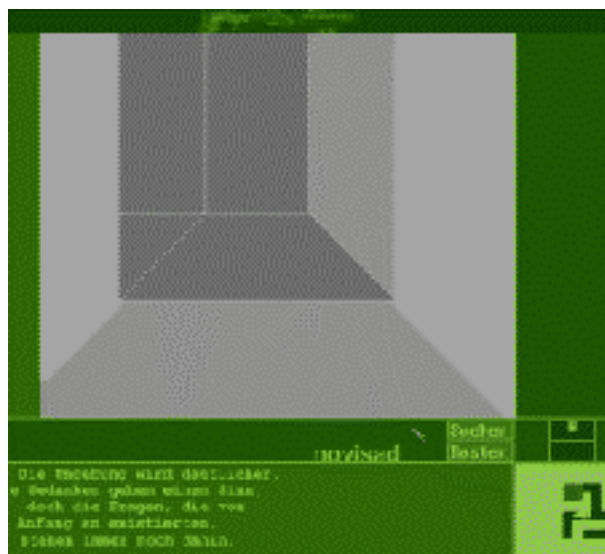
Re mass distribution : growth always needs money and with Tomlab growing every year I need to invest more every year. My approach has always been to not rely on credits whatsoever and to only spend what I have available. Therefore my steps towards a bigger market are slow and careful.

- **Today, there are more and more chain stores and less and less passionate/smaller record shops. How are you affected by that (de)evolution ?**

I would rather say that the passionate / smaller distributors are affected by this situation but not Tomlab as a label. We are growing every year by more than 100%.

- **Did you start with a certain idea, concept ?**

The idea was simple : releasing my own music. And after that it was all about music I really liked without focusing on style, genre or anything like that.



- **How would you describe a typical TomLab act ? How did you chose the name of the label ? Why ?**

There is no description for a typical Tomlab act – it is a constant evolution process. The reason for the name Tomlab is really simple, too. The label started out as TOM – people might yell at me that I am egocentric but in fact it was Joerg Follert (Wunder, Wechsel Garland) who convinced me that I should use this name to keep things more personal. After years passing by the problem was that I always talked of myself in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, saying TOM is doing this and doing that but in fact I always was just talking about the label... so in a way I needed a name that allowed for a separation between my person and the work I am doing. Using Tomlab as the new name was kind of a natural progression in his aspect.

- **Most labels have an example, or a favorite other label which they like, and you ? Any label you could say was an influence on you ?**

*Well – there is LOVELY MUSIC that is long gone... I love their works... and DRAG CITY maybe or THRILL JOCKEY...*

- **Any label that you think has been influenced by yours ?**

*Hmmm, rather not tell or your eyes will pop out ;)*

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

*The website has been designed by myself but there will be a new version soon done by a Cologne based designer. For the design I have been working with several designers in the past, some of them with a very high reputation. My favourite designer is still Frieda Luczak who is also doing all the wonderful work for Oval and Sonig. Now Jan Lankisch is catching up with the new releases for fall 2002 and this guy might become something like an inhouse designer... he is still very young and very talented...*

*The most beautiful designed object was maybe SUMMER DSP and then SACK&BLUMM and THE BOOKS . At the same time I still love the packaging from the Softl Music label a lot that I run with Andres Krause.*

- **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

*You might scream at me but I will say that the reason is all of those. Also myself, many times I do not listen, I do not care and do not understand the subtleties of this type of music, in many ways it seems like a dead end to me. Software in the 1<sup>st</sup> place doesn't help making good music. Of course there are a couple of acts that stand out but as a genre in general my interest has been quite low lately and there are only a few that can go in line with my all time love BASIC CHANNEL which of course is not necessarily part of the « microsound ».*

- **Could you give us some precisions on the actual scene in Germany ? Any other label, activists that you feel close to ?**

*Hard question. In terms of activism I respect a lot what DiskoB/Chicks On Speed are doing right now. In terms of feeling close to I love City Slang but they are far far away...*



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

*For the music world I would close down MTV and VIVA or change their program if I could. All the rest are more things on a private level that should not be part of this interview I guess.*

- **Any album or band that you wish you had issued on Tomlab ?**

*The Bills Wells Trio is wonderful. Curd Duca would be my long time fav, too.*

- **What are your goal as a label. Futureplans ?**

*The goal is clear enough : make Tomlab big enough to not count every euro I spent twice and maybe to become a company where I can work with people I respect.*

*And then : we will go POP but I do not mean Britney Spears. I will try to give a more serious view on pop music.*



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

9 – 2002

Artist : Casiotone For The Painfully Alone

Title : Answering Machine Music

Format : CD/LP 180gr vinyl

10 – 2002

Artist : Mantler

Title : Sadsatisfaction

Format : CD/LP 180gr vinyl

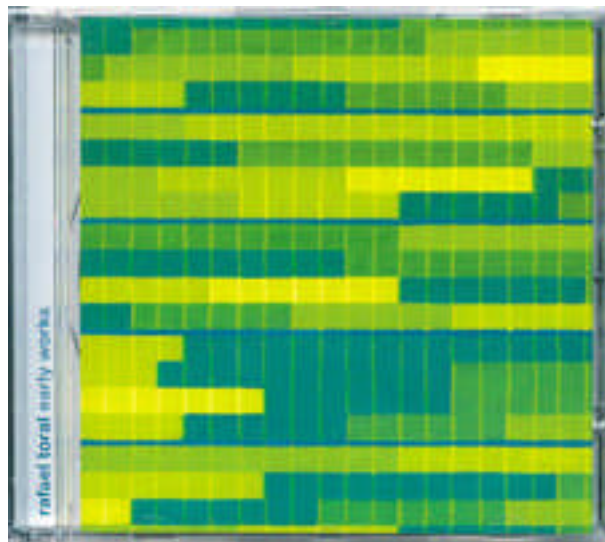
11 – 2002

Artist : The Phenomenological Boys

Title : Melody, Melody, Melody, Melody and More Melody

Format : CD/LP 180gr vinyl

In the 1<sup>st</sup> part of 2003 we are releasing Flim #2, Juergen De Blonde #2, Jon Sheffield #2, Rafael Toral #3, an album by Tujiko Noriko, a new french artist + 1 or 2 records I cannot talk about right now.



The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of 2003 will see the rise of artists such as CFTPA, The Books, Mantler.

Catalogue No.	Format	Artist	Title
tom23	CD/LP	The Phenomenological Boys	Melody, Melody, Melody, Melody and more Melody
tom22	CD/LP	Mantler	Sadsatisfaction
tom21	CD/LP	Casiotone For The Painfully Alone	Answering Machine Music
tom20	CD/LP	The Books	Thought For Fodd

tom19	CD only	Rafael Toral	Early Works
tom18	CD/LP	Flim	Given You Nothing
tom17	CD/LP	Angelika Koehlermann	Care
tom16	CD/LP	Casiotone For The Painfully Alone	Pocket Symphonies For Lonesome Subway Cars
tom15	CD only	For Friends	Tomlab vs. Audiodregs
tom14	CD / 10 inch	Niobe	Radioersatz
tom13	CD/LP	Novisad	Seleya
tom12	CD/LP	Jon Sheffield	It's so long since I've seen the ocean
tom11	CD only	Aeron Bergman	The Tale Of The Unhappy American
tom10	CD only	Juergen De Blonde	Hidden Rabbit
tom9	CD only	Inkblot	The Language Game
tom8	CD only	F.S. Blumm	Bettvanille weiter
tom7	CD only	Rafael Toral	Cyclorama Lift 3
tom6	CD only	For Friends	s/t
tom5	CD only	Sack&Blumm	s/t
tom4	CD only	Ad:lib	s/t
tom3	CD only	Novisad	s/t
tom2	CD only	Summer Dsp	s/t
tom1	CD only	Visor	s/t