

Mauri, producer, DJ and performance creator, interviews Pedro Peñas Robles, who he regards as a musical activist to bear in mind in the current musical outlook.

40 YEARS IN MUSIC GO A LONG WAY

In the music world I have met many world-renowned bands, artists and DJs from different fields. I have seen many artists' biopics and I am convinced that a really interesting documentary -beyond those depicting the mere fact of a certain musician or band rise to fame- would be one showing how they have contributed to music.

That is why I think Pedro Peñas Robles is one of those persons who deserves a biopic - and as I do not think any Director or documentary creator are thinking of this at the moment- I have taken the liberty to make this interview to find out unknown aspects that I'm sure will be interesting.



ABOUT YOU

01. Your daily activity seems to be so hectic in all aspects that my first question is: Have you been diagnosed with hyperactivity?

Hahaha, not that I know. Let's just say that I do not sleep much and I'm passionate for music since I was 15.

02. I met you in 1998 and since then I do not think I have found anybody who has done so much for music as you have. What do you think are the most important things you have done in life (apart from raising your two daughters on your own)?

The thing that satisfied me the most was a Publishing House called Camion Blanc (that is very well known in France) contacting me in 2018 to write a book about Joy Division, considering I am a specialist in the matter. That first book sold very well and in May a second one I have recently finished writing about Nick Cave will be released. At the beginning of 2020 the last one will be published, about Nitzer Ebb. It is an important form of recognition for someone who has devoted his whole life to underground music.

03. Tell us a bit about your routines. What do you do on a normal day?

Every day, after finishing my work as prison officer for the French Justice Ministry (which is what allows me to earn a salary to live decently), I start a second working day taking care of my recording companies "Unknown Pleasure records" and "+Closer2", or of my personal music projects (HIV+, Adan & Ilse). Every night from 18 to midnight, all year round nonstop, and without holidays.

04. Apart from the new talents emerging from your recording companies, what other artists did you promote in the 90s that are now internationally recognized?

In those years I organized first concerts of Empusae, Millimetric, Mimetic, Mlada Fronta, Sulphuric Saliva or Lukas Zpira perform before they were known. Currently some bands like Antipole, Japan Suicide, Kill Shelter, European Ghost, Blind Delon, Ono Scream, Vogue Noir or Black Egg are emerging powerfully from my label. And also, some female projects like Hausfrau, Wendy Bevan or None.

05. What artist or musician are you fan of?

I am a fan of Fad Gadget, Joy Division, The Cure (until 1982 only), Nitzer Ebb, Front 242, Nick Cave, Throbbing Gristle, Coil, Suicide, Taxi Girl, Esplendor Geometrico, Dive, Sonar, Lustmord, Kraftwerk, Plastikman, Skinny Puppy (up to 1992), Front Line Assembly (until 1995) or Bauhaus.

06. Why did you decide to help Genesis P-Orridge? Did you previously talk to him?

When I knew that G.P.O. had leukemia and he was facing economic difficulties to pay hospital costs, I decided to put together a compilation with important people from the French and International stage and give him the money obtained from its sale. We made two editions, as the first 500 copies were sold out in one week. I sent him 3500 € to help him because I deeply respect him for being the inventor Industrial Music in the 70s with Throbbing Gristle. When he received the money, G.P.O. contacted me several times to thank me for that help.

07. In the book about Joy Division, as a novelty, you explain that Ian Curtis called Genesis P-Orridge before his death. Do you know what they talked about?

Ian called Genesis and he said: "I don't want to go on the American tour. I'd rather be dead." He sang Throbbing Gristle's song called Weeping – about suicide – down the phone. Genesis were ringing people in Manchester, and he said: "You've got to go round to Ian's because he's going to try and kill himself. The people we got through to

went, "Oh, he's always being dramatic" and the other people were out. Even now it really upsets me".

ABOUT YOUR MUSIC

08. During these years France has gone through sweet moments in Electronic Music (electronic artists that have become world known , as well as the creation of many recording companies). In the 90s you invested a lot of time and money in the promotion of many artists. Is that reason why your project H.I.V.+ took longer to succeed and your international recognition as an artist was not achieved until 2000?

As you said, in the 90s I spent a lot of time promoting other artists, organizing parties, playing as resident DJ in two of the most famous discotheques in the South of France. When I decided to quit my job as DJ in 2000 I started promoting my own music like HIV+. In 2004, 2006 and 2008 I performed in several concerts in South America, Mexico, United States and Canada.

09. Once I had the chance to play as supporting artist for Bjork in a spectacular venue and finally that could no go ahead for reasons beyond my control. By contrast, many times, HIV+ refuses to play with internationally known bands or artists. What are the reasons?

I am not interested in the current scene, I find it full of egos and posing. If I get a decent budget to perform at a good venue with a good sound, I will be ready to go on stage, but if it is in a small club, having to pay part of the trip from my pocket, I prefer to stay home and continue working for the label. The stage and the parties are ephemeral, I focused a lot on that in the 80s, 90s and 2000! Today, I prefer to take care of the things that will still remain sometime after my death.

10. You have been releasing records for charities for some years: the disaster in Haiti, Japan, Genesis P-Orridge's illness, etc.... what has this led to?

Everybody can, in their own way, help charities. If every human being realized that together and united we would get further than alone or divided, I think the planet would be a nicer place to live.

ABOUT YOUR RECORDING COMPANIES

11. Why did you decide to create two labels (UPR and +Closer2)?

Because I was fed up of bad and low-quality music in the electronic current scene and I thought the best way to change things was creating my own label and sign unknown artists. In life, there are moments when, instead of complaining and criticizing, it is better to move an act to provide a different view of the musical genres I have liked for 35 years.

12. Why have you named your labels after Joy Division's albums?

Because I am a fan of the sound that the producer Martin Hannett created for the two records of Joy Division. They allowed the Punk scene to carry out a metamorphose towards the Cold Wave which resulted in Post Punk, Gothic, New Wave music ,etc...Without them things would have been different.

13. Which countries have better accepted the music produced by Unknown Pleasure Records?

Germany, United States, Belgium, Sweden, France and England.

14. As far as I know most of the references in your catalogue are sold out. This is something unthinkable and laudable for any recording company nowadays. Is that true?

Yes, it is. Half of our physical production is gone. We have sold around 15.000 CD records and vinyls in only 5 years, and that's why I know I am on the right track, which is the one of exigence and integrity. You can see how things are going in our bandcamp site.

15. All this work is admirable. How could you make it?

Love for music, art and culture. Without art, music and culture life has no interest whatsoever. This passion is my drug, and I will stop when I die.

Mauri

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