

Flatline - Interview (English)

1. When and why did you become a musician?

It all started when I was a kid, walking around in the backyard with my Fisher Price tape recorder machine. I sung songs to our dogs and recorded those. Why I did that? It was not really a manner of self-expression, but more a thing of not wanting to lose the melodies I had in my head.

Music owns a deep, primal power, which deeply affects me. So did some of the songs my parents played, or particular songs I heard on the radio as a kid. Mostly emotional, melodic tracks with great melodies.

A bit later, I became a nine-year old boy with a big guitar on his back, that was forced to go to musical class, because it was part of my parents' "educational plan". I have never regretted the fact that they did so, because it helped me a lot with creating my own music. It's also the reason the Spanish guitar is very prominent in AOE's music.

So AOE started with the guitar strums I collected on tape, of which I made songs, short after my studies. It was the early 2000's. A great time to be a DIY musician, because the internet was booming and Myspace helped with connecting to people from all over the world.

2. What are your characteristics? What makes you special?

Fans say that there is a typical and recognizable AOE sound. I think I may confirm that, because that was my aim. By the start from this project, I didn't know the existence of the genre neofolk. I listened to the darkwave from for instance Dargaard and also to the nature inspired folk tracks from a band like Empyrium. My goal was to combine those characteristics into a new, unique sound.

After the first release, it was a big surprise for me that there existed a scene with a lot of dark, acoustic sounding music. The neofolk scene an sich had not a big influence on the AOE sound and concept, because I don't feel that much of a connection with the themes (political, sexual, nostalgic) that are often presented. On the other hand, must I say that the martial side of the scene, encouraged me to go further in the use of solid percussion and orchestration.

So, both sound wise and thematically, AOE is quite unique in the dark music scene.

3. Who and what inspired you?

Musically, if you know the work from the goth-metal band Type O Negative, you will see many similarities with AOE's music. It is my all time favorite band, not only because of the great sound and melodies, but also because they managed to create a nice balance between 'proggy' and 'poppy' songwriting.

Then, soundwise, I mentioned the bands Dargaard and Empyrium, to create the unique AOE sound. I combine those sounds with the use of many samples, which I learned from several hardcore bands who started/ended their tracks with samples to evoke a specific atmosphere.

Thematically, it starts with personal, daily experiences and stories from other people, which inspire my for writing lyrics. If you listen and observe well enough, you start seeing connections between the dots you see. Luckily there are some smart people, walking this earth, who are able to connect a lot more of those dots. They write books about it, just like the ancient philosophers did, and which also affect AOE's lyrics.

4. Who are your most important role models and why?

The people I admire most, are often modest, authentic people who radiate a certain peace and wisdom. Or people who don't take themselves or life too serious, because: isn't life a joke after all?

So the first one that comes in mind is the Type O Negative frontman, Peter Steele (R.I.P.), for his musical skills, wisdom, authenticity and humor. I also like a guy like Devin Townsend, for the same reason.

Of course, there are some 'thinkers' I admire a lot, for their research, conclusions and insights. In Belgium you have Paul Verhaege and Dirk Dewachter. In Holland there is Rutger Bregman. Than there is Yuval Hariri from Israël. I also admire Eckhart Tolle for making some basic principles from the eastern philosophy more accessible.

In the fictional world, I like Agent Cooper (from Twin Peaks), for his modesty, kindness and appreciation of the simple, good things in life. Also very inspirational form me are Spongebob (for his principles, kindness, humor and positive attitude) and Phil Dunphy from the series 'Modern Family'.

5. How do you imagine listening to your music? Where do you like to listen?

I think, the best way to fully dive into a piece of music is in the dark, with a decent pair of headphones on. This way, you can get totally absorbed by the feeling and ambience that the musician tended to evoke.

I must admit, that these moments got a bit scarce for me and I guess the oversaturation from great video content on the internet Youtube, Netflix, ... pushed music also for me a bit aside. This started since the internet speed increased for streaming.

So I also listen and discover new music while driving, working or doing odd jobs around the house.

6. What role do social media play in your career? How important is YouTube or Instagram for you?

I consider those as a necessity, but one in which I don't like to invest too much. I told you already that about 10 years ago, I really loved the exchange and interaction on Myspace, but since the platform got ruined, there came no good alternative.

So today, I put my stuff on the most common platforms and don't take a lot of action after that. Maybe I should, but I cannot afford the time investment. The only thing I which I absolutely make time for is direct interaction with fans, who contact me, for instance on Facebook.

7. Do you actually do anything besides the music?

At the time, I considered working as an (independent) artist, but when I realized what that meant (touring, schedules, deadlines, pressure, ...) I chose to consider AOE as a hobby. I could never offer a big amount of 'family' time on touring and playing live during the weekends. Certainly in a musical genre that's quite obscure and unpopular.

So yes, I combined a lot of jobs with my hobby as a musician. For the moment I work as a teacher, which is well combinable with raising my two daughters.

8. What has been the best performance you've seen so far?

A very intriguing and special performance I witnessed was a Low concert in a formal church. Low call themselves 'chairkickers', because everybody was sitting on the floor during the concert. That combined with the great music resulted in a very intimate atmosphere.

The same type of atmosphere Dead Can Dance could evoke in Brussels, on one of their concerts, for 8000 people. All connected through music. All surfing the same vibe.

So what makes a great concert? Well, when the crowd and performers are all connected through music. And that can also happen with loud music, like the Life Of Agony show or the Omnium Gatherum show I recently attended.

Hopefully these things can happen again, after COVID-19 has disappeared.

9. Who should play you when your life is filmed?

Maybe both of my daughters? One has the same frame of mind as me, while the other has my looks. ;-)

10. Last question: What do you want for the next 10 years, what do you need for it?

I'd like to have a healthy family and a good health myself. Everything starts with that.

So I will play the cards that I have on hand (healthy food, exercising, ...) and hope for the world that people will transcend the 'posthuman decadent' way of living and find connectivity. Connectivity with each other, other species walking this earth, and mother earth in general. Because we do not transcend them, but are all part of the same organism. Denying this, is of the greatest stupidity.

That is also the main theme of the new album 'End Of I'. And yeah, who knows, there will be room for a new album with an even more positive vibe, in the future. We'll see!

Thank you very much!

Thanks a lot, Chris, for the opportunity. Keep up the great work, stay healthy and cheers from Belgium, land of the thousands of beers.

Chris - [FlatlinesRadio](#)