

The artwork for your recent album I_CON is very striking. Where did the idea come from?

In the case of our third studio album, I_CON, the artwork came before the record. Torre found the image made by Ben Newman while he was surfing the web for inspiration for new songs. From this picture Torre stirred up the concept of the new record. We all kept that image in our heads while we were shaping the songs into their final form.

Is there truth in the rumour that the band name is taken from the famous composition 'De Staat' ('The State') by Dutch composer Louis Andriessen? If so, why did you choose this title as your band name? If not, where did the name come from then?

De Staat is indeed a composition by Dutch modern composer Louis Andriessen. There is not so much a connection between the actual composition and our band name. It had more to do with the power of those words: 'De' and 'Staat'. The fact that we didn't just translate it to English was also important to us. We imagined how funny it would be if we ever got to play abroad and then hear people struggle whilst trying to pronounce our band name. Plus we figured a Dutch band name is, especially abroad but also in the Netherlands, more noticeable and would get people a bit confused and make them want to check us out even more.

All your three albums are available on CD and also vinyl. I even have your first album as a vinyl+CD edition. What is your relation to vinyl? Do you have any preference for vinyl, CD or digital formats when you listen to music?

I myself only own a record player and therefore only buy music on vinyl. I like the whole ritual that comes with putting on a vinyl record. Also I love to 'read' the sleeve while I listen to that particular record, even when I know the sleeve by heart. I don't have a very big record collection, but I think it covers a wide range of styles and genres. There are some old records from the 60s and 70s I 'borrowed' from my father, who does have an enormous record collection, some jazz, hip-hop, electronic music like techno and trap and some recent releases. This way I can always find a record to play that suits any given mood I'm in at any given moment during the day or night.

What is the first record you bought? And what is the most recent record you bought? Even if the answers are embarrassing I think we'd all be interested to know ;-)

The first record I bought was 'You've Come A Long Way Baby' by Fatboy Slim. I think I was about 10 or 11 years old then and I remember that moment very well. I think I knew his song 'Rockefeller Skank' from a videogame or something like that. I went to this big chain record store and sang it to one of the employees. He gave it to me and I listened to check if this was in fact the song I was talking about. Then I went to this small record store in my hometown of Nijmegen and bought it there. The last record I bought is The Moneystore by Death Grips. Lately I've been listening to a lot of hip-hop records. Death Grips are wild and very loud. Their records sound like nothing I've heard before. To listen to the whole record in one go is almost impossible, it is truly exhausting but beautiful

in its own way.

The track 'Down Town' from I_CON features on the soundtrack of the new FIFA game, one of the best-sold videogames in the world.

How did this come about? How we got in the FIFA game is not really a juicy and interesting story. The people who made that game were looking for songs to put in the game. Our publisher proposed our song 'Down Town' and they apparently liked it. We got the news when everything was all taken care of. It's kind of weird and funny that we are featured in the game because we all more or less grew up playing this game and still remember certain songs from the different editions of the game like Blur's 'Song 2' in FIFA 98.

End of September you also played live during the timeout of your local premiere league football team, N.E.C. Is it safe to draw the conclusion that you are big football fans?

I myself grew up playing football and following the Dutch league every week. As a youngster my father used to take me to a lot of matches, these days I will always remember. Even now I am still playing in a team with friends whom I have played with all my life at my football club Orion. Even though the third half sometimes feels or seems more important these days, I am still head over heels with the actual game. When the weather starts to get better and the days get longer we also play some football with the band and a bunch of friends, guys and girls, of the band. We've played some truly high level and exhilarating football matches!

You always seem to have one particular music instrument on stage which is striking and unusual. The first time I saw you play live in 2009 you were touring your first album, Wait for Evolution. One of the things that impressed me most was Rocco's alien-like instrument, the theremin. When you toured your second album, Machinery, you had a huge industrial looking 'noise' machine on stage. During your current shows Rocco's carhorn steals the show. Do you consciously choose to have a prominent visual instrument on stage? And by the way where IS the noise machine these days?

The Machine (the guy who made the machine, Geert Jonkers, named her Mathilda, after the Tom Waits song 'Waltzing Mathilda') was indeed visually as important as it was sonically. It was kind of a metaphor for the way we seemed to develop ourselves as a band soundwise. As we were playing more often during the Wait for Evolution period, people were telling us they thought we sounded like a machine. Torre wanted to emphasise this aspect of our sound, not only in the songs for the Machinery album, but also in a physical sense. That's when the idea arose to basically build an abnormally large drum machine that we would play along with at gigs. It was interesting and fun to play along with Mathilda because you had to listen very carefully to each other to keep up with the irregular regularity of Mathilda's rhythm pattern. Right now she is enjoying her well-deserved rest somewhere in Nijmegen, probably drinking oil, messing around and dancing with the other retired machines.

You went on your first UK tour in 2008 just after the release of your debut album. You were then the support act of Belgian band dEUS. How was that adventure?

The shows we did with [dEUS](#) were the first real gigs we ever did. In the current line-up we had only done two or three other small gigs in our hometown. We had basically no idea what we were doing, except for the 30 minutes we got to play each night. We quickly had to adjust to the fast pace that comes with touring with a big band like dEUS. We learned some very important things in a short period of time, things that turned out to be very helpful and useful later on. It kind of felt like we had some advantage when we started playing more. These things are seemingly unimportant at first glance, like being able to quickly get our stuff up and off the stage and just simply don't complain when things are not going as you planned, but turn out to make a big difference in the end.

Do you have funny anecdotes about London? Funny to us was the fact that our third gig on the dEUS tour was in fact one of our first ever shows in the fabulous KOKO venue in Camden. I read a lot about KOKO in the NME. This was the place where all the bands I knew and cared about played and where, according to the NME, the most insane parties were held. In the end it's just another venue but I explicitly remember the first time I heard our sound fill up the entire place. It was an exciting and weird experience.

What is your favourite place in London?

We recently did a residency in The Black Heart in Camden. We played there three times in four weeks. Every week the show went better and more people showed up. For some reason most of our London shows were somewhere in Camden. When we had some spare time we wandered around the streets of Camden and we enjoyed that very much. There are a lot of things happening around you, weird and beautiful people walk the streets, there are some very cool shops and nice pubs and restaurants. We also recently recorded a BalconyTV session right across Westminster Abbey. While we were more or less improvising a stripped-down version of our song 'Input Source Select' we were looking at landmarks like Big Ben and the London Eye. These are of course postcard landmarks, but still it felt nice to perform together and see these things on a Tuesday morning

I live near Brick Lane, a famous and trendy street in East London. It's like Camden where you played recently, but with less souvenir shops so in that sense more authentic. It is famous for its amazing street art, tons of curry houses and the great independent record shop Roughtrade East. Have you been to Brick Lane? If so what did you like about it most of all?

I don't think we visited Brick Lane. We've been to the Portobello Road Market, but that was also kind of touristy. Usually we don't have that much spare time when we are on the road. At first that feels kind of weird, being in a big city like London and not going out to see some sights or go shopping or whatever, but gradually we got used to it.

Are there English bands that have inspired you?

We all have different influences that we bring into the band. Of course I still listen to a lot of Beatles and Stones and other British bands from the 60s like The Yardbirds and The Who. In the 00s I was very much into following the new wave of British bands that followed in the footsteps of The Libertines, a band that I adored back then. I can't remember a lot of the groups I was listening to, they all sounded and looked very much alike. But groups like The Horrors and Arctic Monkeys kept developing themselves and made some great records.

What bands/music excite you now? Any guilty pleasures in music?

Perhaps because I'm surrounded by rock music all the time because of the band, I got tired of listening to rock music. So I've been listening and trying to get into jazz and electronic music a lot recently. The sound, the way the music is brought to you and the way a 'song' is constructed, differ so much from the music I used to listen to. I love the fact that I can't predict what I am going to hear next and really get surprised the way I used to get surprised when I started discovering guitar based rock music.

I moved from the Netherlands to London last year. One of the things I miss most are Dutch and Belgian beers. I'm lucky to have found a good Belgian pub in walking distance from me where I indulge in good quality beers. What's your favourite beer?

Right now my favourite beer is most definitely Liberty Ale from San Francisco in the States. They serve it in my favourite pub in Nijmegen called De Deut. Belgian beer is so common in the Netherlands that at one point I got kind of tired drinking the same Tripel or dark and heavy beer and was looking for a different taste. While we were in NYC to play some gigs at the CMJ Festival I started trying out American beers. The taste takes some time to get used to, the beer tastes much fresher and light. I can also recommend Goose Island beer from Chicago. American beers are hard to find but once you know what you are looking for, you can find what you want.

What would you miss if you would live in London?

I can't think of any specific and typical things like pindakaas (peanut butter) or drop (licorice) but after a while I'd probably miss Nijmegen, the greatest town in the world. It's a small town where you can find peace and quiet if you are looking for peace and quiet or, if you are looking for chaos and wildness, you can find chaos and wildness.

If you would have the chance to perform for Queen Elizabeth, what would you play?

We would play our song 'Meet the Devil' of the first album. Nuff' said.

Do you ever read what critics write about you?

We can learn a lot from reading reviews of shows we did or albums we made. This way we can get an idea of how we come across and of the things we do that stand out or stick with someone. In the beginning I could get very angry or sad if someone, in my eyes, totally misinterpreted the thing we were trying to do. Now I know we are really good at what we

do and we are the only ones who do what we do. This mantra strengthens my confidence and makes me able to put the things that are said and written about us in perspective.

What do you boys do outside of music? So many musicians seem to play golf or something but I'm curious to know.

I am right now trying to obtain my Master's degree in Cultural Studies, specifically on the financing of the cultural field in the Netherlands. I'm halfway right now, but it is hard to try to squeeze in some quality study time. I was already studying Cultural Studies when the band started to kick off, so I am used to making time for my studies.

I organise tours in Dutch around Brick Lane. Can I interest you in taking a tour with me on your next visit to London? ;-) But of course. You got me all excited and curious about that Brick lane of yours!