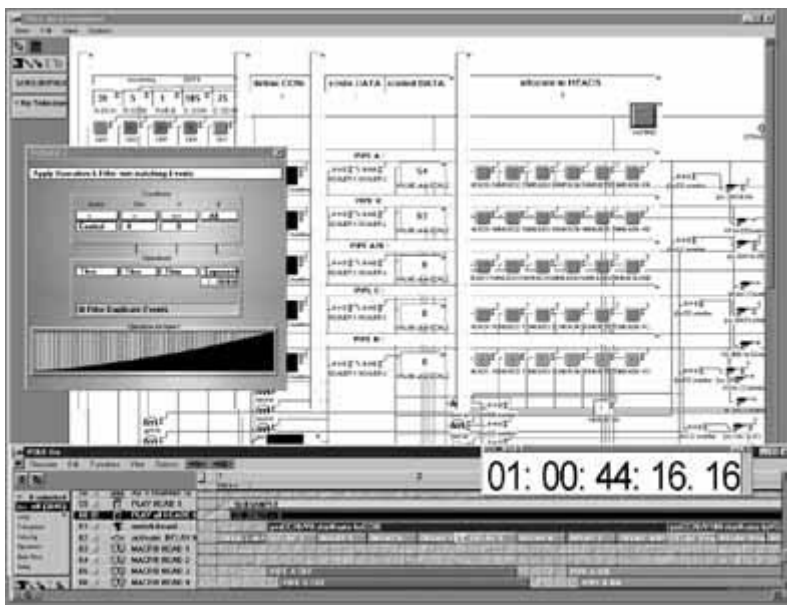
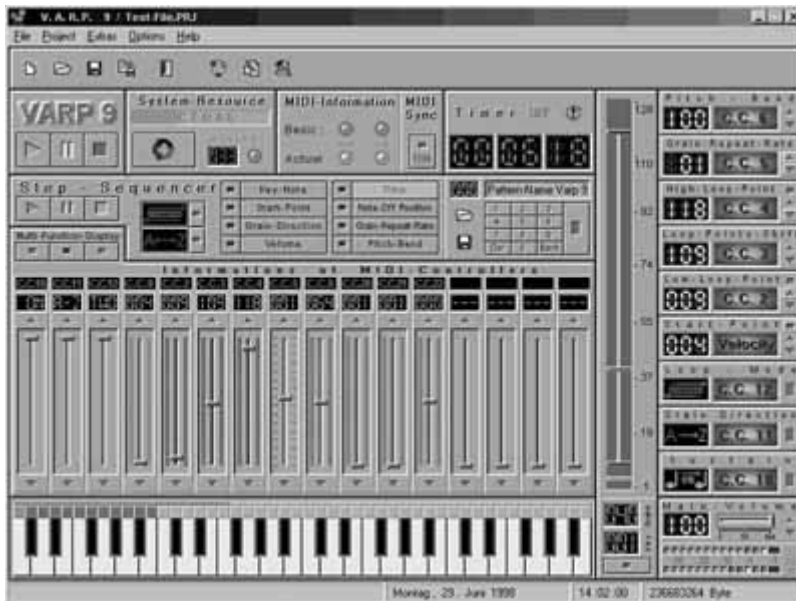


Mike Stubbs Granular And Synthesis



This written information is an attempt to edit further into the hearts and minds of future generations. The information I share will be personal and reflective. My relationship with Kurt Hentschlager and Ulf Langheinrich and to GRANULAR-SYNTHESIS has become close. Their phrase "we have a serious problem" as the hard drive crashed a week before the premiere of Modell 5 back in 1994 could never have been more of an understatement, as since then the three of us have all experienced personal catastrophes, invariably in the middle of production.

The language they use to describe their work is formal. We share a joke between us; "Granular & Synthesis" a duo, Kurt on guitar and Ulf on bongo! They both have a disdain for acoustic music and "the expressive arts". They are obsessed with specific technology to produce and perform the work, for example their insistence on having 30kw of -40DHZ sub-bass for the new performance projection POL is not formalist or macho, but it is necessary

because they know what this sound technology can do. The object in using this volume is not merely to be loud, but because specific tones, pitches and shifts trigger physiological effects on the body and subsequently evoke deep psychological resonance. Despite being hard, loud, technological art work, the work of GRANULAR-SYNTHESIS is effectively some of the most "human" contemporary art.

Their attention to formal detail, working with single frame or within the single frame in long sequences of audio and video is an acute process which leads to maximum effect. The audience are subjected to a heavy onslaught of stimuli; — bombarded with light, video and audio projection — attempts to intellectualise or understand give way to the sheer physicality of the work, the audience are both affronted and seduced. Fascinated, overwhelmed and suffering in that overload gives rise to the state of mind which allows a submerging into the work — attempts to rationalise or understand defeated. Letting go of self consciousness — letting go of oneself. Disturbing, frightening, seductive and erotic.

My first exposure to the work of GRANULAR-SYNTHESIS at the AVE Festival in Arnhem, Netherlands (Modell 3) reminded me of one of my earliest childhood TV experiences. Watching the 1939 version of the Wizard of Oz (Fleming), I was scared by the wizard at the end of the yellow brick road. Dorothy, played by Judy Garland, learns at the end of this tale that the wizard is, in fact, the projection of an insecure, ordinary man. I now know this was a live video projection. This maybe leads back to the motivation of why we make Art. It is also in the context of science fiction that I have always associated Modell 5 and the Japanese face of Akemi Takeya, with one of the most resonant moments in any film for me, that in "Blade Runner" at night time when the air ship cruises overhead with an apparently embedded media projection hoarding of a Japanese woman's face.

Artists image ideas, manifest the conceptual and realise fiction. Artists are good at simulating what scientists work at and they make up stories that may be true and in so doing make things real. Stelarc's performance Body I Ping has always reminded me of dressing up and fetishising the body, however Stelarc has provided an early manifestation of a real working cyborg. GRANULAR-SYNTHESIS have made real a series of virtual beings. Wanting to escape from using images of the single head they used the torso in We want god now, Xtended Thrill and Areal A, however the attraction of the face seems too compelling and again they are working with the face, this time that of Diamanda Galas. It is implicit that the face will be re-processed and as much trace of her original expressive qualities removed as possible. Noisegate was originally titled Deep Sea. The effect initially required was one of the aquarium or zoo, with virtual beings caged behind glass or screen. The need to create characters expressive and existential in existence has been drawn upon before, and yes, the effect of the slowed down and blurred "roar" in Modell 5 does give the appearance of a moving Francis Bacon painting; this for me is the paradox.

There are these characters who are caged and their images digitally stripped naked; somehow the fetish of the pixel and the frozen electronic image of the human form are symbolic of the era in which we were brought up, the seventies and eighties. Our ability to invent technologies that can see finer and finer details in time and space can only mean that human's abilities to notice difference will become more sensitive. The processes of deconstruction and analysis in the histories of video and Media Art are apparent. Digital video has taken this further with the deconstruction of each frame into the units which make the image, the pixels. GRANULAR-SYNTHESIS work is about the process of reconstruction.

They have outstripped software and in order to develop their work through live audio-visual sampling have had to devise new software.

"There was and still is nothing on the market that would fit our needs. In 1996 we sat down and started to layout an audiovisual machine that would merge our experiences from working with Nonlinear videoediting systems as well as from audiosampling. The goal was to access video and synchronised audio from such a device single framewise in realtime. The trigger and control protocol was definitely to be MIDI, as we wanted this instrument to easily fit into the rest of our setup. It was furthermore essential to be able to load different (audiovideo) samples into RAM, to switch between them and to read them out dynamically. Also we wanted the software to run on PC, as we need independent machines for each image/sound projection. Developing the software was exciting and because of our excellent software-designer and programmer, Dirk Langheinrich, the program does exactly what we always wanted: VARP 9 (the name of the baby) runs stable ... last time we'd had that feeling with ATARI. Before we accomplished our goal (by the end of 1997) Dirk and us found ourselves completely exhausted by almost 100 Betaversions, "fascinating" hard/software incompatibilities and so forth. Amazingly the software itself (naturally) represents so much of our aesthetic knowledge that a big compositional part of recent work is embedded in the software. Most rewarding was to find out about aesthetic possibilities that we knew and dreamed about but simply were out of reach to edit "by hand". Things like applying flickerframes in an adjustable frequency within a series of other frames or modulating one visual sample (series of frames) with another, or (superexciting) visual floating — timewise mirroring of movement within a series of frames." — GRANULAR-SYNTHESIS

They are very detailed in their approach to time and data. The fascination with deconstructing narratives and real time movement has much in common with the tradition of scratch video and cut-up movies, the difference being that the found-footage movie appropriates, re-processes, re-structures appropriated material, whereas GRANULAR-SYNTHESIS go to great pains to capture their own images working within very strict conditions — constructing machines (or seating modules) to hold their subjects in. In the recently recorded raw material of Diamanda Galas, pre-processed she appears as a pinned butterfly exhaling its last disharmonic chant, a multiphonic guttural noise.

Presented during Ars Electronica 98 in co-operation with Posthof, Linz.

Production Credits

POL by Granular Synthesis (Kurt Hentschläger / Ulf Langheinrich)

original voice and performance by Diamanda Galas

Realtime Audio+Video-Software "VARP 9" Dirk Langheinrich

Director of Photography: Wolfgang Lehner

Productionmanagement Videorecording: Florian Michel

Organisation: Cai Mosich

Keeping the books: Karl Grünböck

WebDesign: Leo Schatzl

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