The first works in which electronic and instrumental music are combined were premiered in 1958. The idea is to find—beyond contrast, which represents the most rudimentary kind of form—the higher, inherent laws of a bond.

NOTES

2. Now known as First Construction (in Metal)—Trans.
3. The English term for the German technical term Elektronenröhre is “vacuum tubes”—Trans.
I wish those musicians would not allow themselves any repetitions, and would go faster in developing their ideas or their findings, because I don't appreciate at all this permanent repetitive language. It is like someone who is stuttering all the time, and can't get words out of his mouth. I think musicians should have very concise figures and not rely on this fashionable psychology. I don't like psychology whatsoever: using music like a drug is stupid. One shouldn't do that: music is the product of the highest human intelligence, and of the best senses, the listening senses and of imagination and intuition. And as soon as it becomes just a means for ambiance, as we say, environment, or for being used for certain purposes, then music becomes a whore, and one should not allow that really; one should not serve any existing demands or in particular not commercial values. That would be terrible: that is selling out the music.

I heard the piece Aphex Twin of Richard James carefully: I think it would be very helpful if he listens to my work Song Of The Youth [Gesang der Jünglinge], which is electronic music, and a young boy's voice singing with himself. Because he would then immediately stop with all these post-African repetitions, and he would look for changing tempi and changing rhythms, and he would not allow to repeat any rhythm if it were not varied to some extent and if it did not have a direction in its sequence of variations.

And the other composer—musician, I don't know if they call themselves composers...

They're sometimes called "sound artists"...

No, "Technocrats," you called them. He's called Plastikman, and in public, Richie Hawtin. It starts with 30 or 40—I don't know, I haven't counted them—fifths in parallel, always the same perfect fifths, you see, changing from one to the next, and then comes in hundreds of repetitions of one small section of an African rhythm: duh-duh-dum, etc. And I think it would be helpful if he listened to Cycle [Zykli] for percussion, which is only a 15 minute long piece of mine for a percussionist, but there he will have a hell to understand the rhythms, and I think he will get a taste for very interesting non-metric and non-periodic rhythms. I know that he wants to have a special effect in dancing bars, or wherever it is, on the public who like to dream away with such repetitions, but he should be very careful, because the public will sell him out immediately for something else, it a new kind of musical drug is on the market. So he should be very careful and separate as soon as possible from the belief in this kind of public.

The other is Robin Rimbaud, Scanner, I've heard, with radio noises. He is very experimental, because he is searching in a realm of sound which is not usually used for music. But I think he should transform more what he finds. He leaves it too much in a raw state. He has a good sense of atmosphere, but he is too repetitive again. So let him listen to my work Hymnen. There are found objects—a lot like he finds with his scanner, you see. But I think he should learn from the art of transformation, so that what you find sounds completely new, as I sometimes say, like an apple on the moon.

Then there's another one: Daniel Pemberton. His work which I heard has noise loops: he likes loops, a loop effect, like in musique concrète, where I worked in 1952, and Pierre Henry and Schaeffer himself, they found some sounds, like the sounds of a casserole, they made a loop, and then they transposed this loop. So I think he should give up this loop; it is too old fashioned. Really. He likes train rhythms, and I think when he comes to a soft spot, a quiet, his harmony sounds to my ears like ice cream harmony. It is so kitsch; he should stay away from these ninths and sevenths and tenths in parallel: so, look for a harmony that sounds new and sounds like Pemberton and not like anything else. He should listen to Kontakt, which has among my works the largest scale of harmonic, unusual and very demanding harmonic relationships. I like to tell the musicians that they should learn from works which have already gone through a lot of temptations and have refused to give in to these stylistic or to these fashionable temptations...

II. Advice from Clever Children: The "Technocrats" on Stockhausen

Aphex Twin on Song Of The Youth

Mental! I've heard that song before; I like it. I didn't agree with him. I thought he should listen to a couple of tracks of mine: "Didgeridoo," then he'd stop making abstract, random patterns you can't dance to. Do you reckon he can dance? You could dance to Song of the Youth, but it hasn't got a groove in it, there's no bass-line. I know it was probably made in the 50s, but I've got plenty of wicked percussion records made in the 50s that are awesome to dance to. And they've got basslines. I could remix it: I don't know about making it better; I wouldn't want to make it into a dance version, but I could probably make it a bit more analytically technical. But I'm sure he could do this, because tape is really slow. I used to do things like that with tape, but it does take forever. And I'd never do anything like that again with tape. Once you've got your computer sorted out, it pisses all over stuff like that, you can do stuff so fast. It has a different sound, but a bit more anal.

I haven't heard anything new by him; the last thing was a vocal record, Stimmung, and I didn't really like that. Would I take his comments to heart? The ideal thing would be to meet him in a room and have a wicked discussion. For all I know, he could be taking the piss. It's a bit hard to have a discussion with someone via other people.

I don't think I care about what he thinks. It is interesting, but it's disappointing, because you'd imagine he'd say that anyway. It wasn't anything surprising. I don't know anything about the guy, but I expected him to have that sort of attitude. Loops are good to dance to...

He should hang out with me and my mates: that would be a laugh. I'd be quite into having him around.

Scanner on Hymnen

It's interesting that I've not heard this before, and maybe Thomas Köner hasn't and so on, but you can relate it to our work. I don't know whether it's conscious or not. I was two years old when this was written! Stockhausen says he doesn't like repetitions: what I like about repetition is it can draw the listener and lull you into a false sense of security, but when it gets too abstract—this is cut-ups—I find it very difficult to digest over a long period of time. He's a lapsed Catholic, and there's the sense that it's meant to be a religious experience passing through these records, like a purging of the system. Whether you like it or not, you're affected in one way or another. I'd like to hear this live.

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I prefer the gentler passages. I do find myself irritated by that barrage of sound against sound over a long period of time: an alternative kind of repetition. That's why I like Jim O'Rourke's work, because it works over long periods.

I wonder about him putting himself into the recording; is it a vanity thing, or part of the process? With the scanner, it's like live editing, which is like this as well. When you scan, if you don't like something you flick between frequencies, whereas if you DJ you cut between records, and it is an art form as a form of live editing...

Reminds me of the Holger Czukay LP Der Osten Ist Rot, cutting between national anthems, like tuning through a radio: I don't know whether this is actually happening or not. This is very good actually—better than expected. At the end there's a recording of him breathing. It's quite uncomfortable—like being inside his head.

I take some of what he said about my music to heart. Part of what I'm interested in is transforming material. Lots of the sounds I use are off the scanner or the shortwave radio. Lots of people wouldn't realise that sometimes a bass sound isn't a keyboard bass sound: it's a little blip on the phone. So I do try and transform the material as much as possible. I disagree about repetition: I think, as John Cage said, repetition is a form of change, and it's a concept you either agree or disagree with. I like repetitions; I like Richie Hawtin's work for that very aspect. In a way it is like a religious experience: if his work is about spirituality, then this is a kind of alternative, non-religious spirituality, where you're drawn in by this block of rhythm, it's an incredible feeling, the way it moves you physically, and moves you in a dancefloor as well.

Things like this are designed to be listened to over long periods of time, and sometimes I think it could do with some editing. Most contemporary sound artists are working within a four- to ten-minute time scale, basically. And to be honest, for most people that's enough.

Daniel Pemberton on Kontakte

At first I expected someone hitting a piano randomly, but there were happenings in there, with stereo panning and effects. I was very impressed considering the time it was done: the 1960s. He was going on about how everyone's stuff was repetitive, but his stuff is the complete opposite: so unrepetitive that it never really got anywhere. Not necessarily a bad thing, but it didn't have any development in it: sounded like an Old School FSOL. When he recommends Kontakte for its "very demanding harmonic relationships," it sounds a bit suspect to me: the whole piece seems to be dealing far more with timbre than with harmonic relationship. It's obviously based around sound, and any harmonics on there, to the non-musical ear, sound like a piano hit randomly. It would be very good to put some HipHop breaks under, actually.

What he said about me was quite funny: he accuses me of old hat... I was born in 1977, 25 years after [Kontakte], a longer time than I've lived. I'm still learning musical history. If my whole career goes down the pan, at least I've got a future with Mr. Whippy! And for him to call eighths, ninths and tenths "kitsch!". The scales I commonly use aren't too adventurous, but that's because they're the ones that sound nice. The stuff I've done which is unlistenable, I haven't released because no one would enjoy it.

It's good to have other people's views. I ignore them in the sense that I know what I want to do: his criticisms won't make me throw everything away and start working with bizarre new scales and fantastic new instruments. I know what he means about loops though; that's because I haven't got much equipment.

Get a chew, mate! I think he should develop his music a bit more. Try and repeat some of the ideas, work on them, build them up; you can still change them. He should listen to a track off my forthcoming album, Homemade. Stockhausen should experiment more with standard melodies, try and subvert them; he should stop being so afraid of the normal: by being so afraid of the normal he's being normal himself by being the complete opposite. He should try to blend the two together: that would be new and interesting. To me, anyway.