

Music | Bittles' Magazine: The music column from the end of the world

This week we have a special Valentine's Day treat, an interview with dub techno icons **Salz**. Since 1997 the duo of **Axel Erbstößer** and **Emanuel Geller** have been producing melodic and trippy bass-infused music which stimulates mind, feet and soul. Tracks like *1000A*, *5B1*, *Stainless Dub* and *O-59* revel within deep low-end pulses, jagged bass eruptions and mid-paced grooves. By **JOHN BITTLES**



The best of their output contains a rare sense of humanity and musicality which helps it move straight from ear to heart. In a world of repetitive loops and strained samples, listening to a **Salz** track can be like sitting beside a nice fire on a cold winter's day. In a world of 'faceless techno' and genre limitations each song the duo release somehow manages to be easily discernible as the work of **Salz**.

This February the duo release the fifth volume in their long-running *Telrae* mix series (*Telrae Mix by Salz Vol. 5*). In what has become a yearly event, the band have compiled and mixed highlights from the previous years' release schedule of Cologne label *Telrae*. Needless to say, if you are a fan of mid-paced techno, dub-infused grooves, ambient, or great music then these collections are a must! With tracks by the likes of **Stefan Gubatz**, **Cio D'Or**, **Van Bonn** and **Freund der Familie**, together with a few exclusive remixes from **Salz** themselves the new volume is a lush, hypnotic journey which never fails to seduce. Highlights are aplenty, yet the ambient breaths of openers *Cologne* by **Stefan Gubatz** and *Sortavala* by **OVC**, the atmospheric groove of *Dubbin' At The Strobe* Feat. **Michael Zerang** by **Upwellings** and the deep throb of the **Salz** remix of *Silk Dub* by **Ivanov** all stand out. With this type of music though, it's best not to think about individual tracks, but simply close your eyes and just allow the album to take you where it will.

In the following interview with the duo we discuss the new LP, the art of remixing, *Telrae*, what dub techno means to them, and lots more. And, if you're looking for a soundtrack to accompany your reading then head over to the [Salz Soundcloud](#) page for snippets, tracks, podcasts and more.

[By way of introduction, can you tell us a bit about who you are and what you do?](#)

Hi, we are **Axel Erbstößer** and **Emanuel Geller**. Axel is a Cologne based musician and works also for *Traum Schallplatten*. Emanuel runs the **Salz Mastering Studio** and also lives in Cologne.

The fifth volume of your Telrae mix series is out on the 15th of February. How would you sum up the label to those who have never heard of Telrae before

Telrae is a label for all modern versions of Dub Techno and Dub House. As it was once written about *Telrae*: Timeless dub music for connoisseurs. Music for the gay moments in life.

What was the idea behind the mix?

The original idea was, to have a good evening, drinking beer and mixing some cool vinyl. That was, how the first mix was done...



If you had to pick one track from the album to introduce someone to the Telrae sound, which track would it be and why?

There is no way to pick just ONE single track. All are so different, like the dark deep atmosphere **Cio D'Or** is spinning in her track, or the swingy *Reshape* of *MASH UP* by **Freund der Familie**... or just think of the jazzy attitudes of **Upwellings** with **Michael Zerang**, a great Jazz Drummer, on *Dubbin' At The Strobe in Full Effect*... The Chicago sound of **OVC**, or the oldschool approach of **Salz**.

As hard as it is to pick THE *Telrae* sound in just one track, the melange of the mix and the different styles that we present is our recommendation to buy this album. Especially: The mix is pretty cool AND you receive the single tracks in ONE package. Isn't that awesome!

The album opens with the gorgeously spacious *Cologne* by **Stefan Gubatz** which, for me, is the perfect way to begin any mix. Was it an easy decision to make this the opening track?

Stefan invented the new Dub Style named: Ambient Dub. The coolness of the Tracks from his Album *Distanz* are perfect as Intros and also as Outros... or just to play in between to calm down. Real Wicked stuff. We love **Stefan Gubatz** and hope, he finds some time besides his other projects to please us with new dub stuff for *Telrae*.

The mix contains some of your own remixes of artists such as **Van Bonn**, **Ivanov** and **Taster Peter**. Were these created specially for the album?

After four mixes we wanted to make something different this time. Also the fact is, that *Telrae* now exists for 5 years, so the 5th Mix should be a special one.

We had some projects running and asked the other dudes, if they also have something cool that could be part of that special mix. **OVC** and **Van Bonn** had really good tracks and we couldn't involve everything the two gave us... Maybe we hear something from that creativity later on this year.

How do you approach a remix?

First we ask a Zen Master, how to approach. But he always puts a sandal on his head and departs in a wall of smoke....

Then we sort out the sounds that were given by the artists. We are looking for the stuff that means something to us and that are cool sounds to dub.

Rule number one is: A Dub can't hardly be dubbed.

Rule number two: Dubbing is a must.

You have been working together as **Salz** for quite a while now. Is there any sign of a debut LP?

We had one once... it was more a compilation of our EP's. We designed it via computer as a continuous mix and it took us 3 months to realize. Computers got so much faster in the meantime... and we are happy about this. We are no Singer Songwriters, just plain Dubbers, so no-one knows if we get enough inspiration for a whole new Album.

Salz has been going since the 90s. But how did you two first meet?

We met long before we decided to make music. We both have a great passion for music although we came from different corners of the music world. Emanuel always was a great fan of Disco music and Axel was a big fan of late 70s to mid 80s UK Indie, Electronica and Synth Pop. Techno was the melting pot for both of us, that we enjoyed together since the beginning of the 90s. Later Axel bought a Juno6 and a TR505 of Roland, Emanuel a mixing desk, a Roland TR606 and several other expensive items and we began to construct something that was called ELECTRO with some Newcleus Oldschool Feeling.

In 1997 we started the **Salz** project, deeply impressed by records like *Ploy* and all the **Basic Channel** stuff, **Maurizio, M, Burial Mix**...

What made you decide to start your own band?

The bad programs in our national Radio stations (including television... Call me Mister Vain).



Your label *Telrae* is renowned for its ten inch releases. What made you decide to concentrate on releasing records in ten inch rather than the more widely used twelve inch format?

Well... *Telrae* is not really ,our' Label. It is more like we inspired the right people with all our digital dub house remixes we once made for *Traum Schallplatten* and *Trapez*, to create a label, that only releases 10" Vinyls... We never did a 10" vinyl before so we were pretty excited. And the best: We didn't need to pay for the first pressing :D

10" is the real and proper Dub Format, all real cool Jamaican Dubplates were cut onto 10" vinyl, so which format could be better to transport the dizzy feeling of a Ganja Master than that!?

What is your favourite *Telrae* release so far?

Our favourite release is the *Archive 02 Box* made with Mahogany faceplates and clear blue 10 inches with the best content of *Telrae* evah!

The imprint's output is often described as ›Dub Techno‹. What does this label mean to you?

As we started in 1997 with our label *Salz* our output was described as ›Dub House‹. In the meantime, *Discogs* went to tell us we were composing ›Minimal‹ and finding us back in 2005 doing the first remixes for *Traum* again, which developed to be ›Dub Techno‹ over the past 10 years.

This Label means nothing to us, This Label means all to us.

What three tracks are currently working for you in the clubs?

Infiniti *Game One (Metroplex)*

Severed Heads *Dead Eyes Open (INK)*

Alfredo De La Fé *Hot to Trot (Criollo Records)*

What does the future hold for **Salz**?

A marvellous party in Cologne this April. Join us at *TRAUM IM GAUL* (Heinz Gaul - Cologne, DE) on the 16th April.

We are also working on several remixes at the moment.

What then? We really don't know...

Do you have any final words for our readers?

Yes: Buy yourself two Technics record players, a good Rotary Mixer and some good records... and then: Have Fun

Anyone looking to find out more about the band should take a look at [Salz Homepage](#), while a short trip to *Telrae* <http://www.telrae.com/> could even make a **One Direction** fan fall in love with the glories of dub.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)