

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

Dutch producer **Boris Bunnik** is a man of many aliases. Over the years he has been responsible for a series of stunning genre defying tracks as **Conforce**, **Versalife**, **Hexagon**, **Vernon Felicity** and **Silent Harbour**. Someone who understands the importance of patience and space, releases on labels such as *Delsin*, *Clone*, *Rush Hour*, *Frustrated Funk* and *Echocord* have cemented his reputation as a producer able to inject a vivid sense of personality into the music he creates. Disregarding the restrictions of BPM count or style, all of his productions are masterfully constructed, precise and shockingly good. By **JOHN BITTLES**

Boris makes a welcome return to his **Conforce Pres. Silent Harbour** moniker this month with the atmospheric soundscapes and low end bass-quakes of his fantastic new mini LP. *Noctiluca* sees the techno explorer in peak form, with six spacious tracks of deep ambiance and warm machine soul. Opener, *Riparian* is the perfect introduction to the album, the song's beatless drones setting an ominous, yet welcoming tone perfect for these ears. Next, the title track ups the pace somewhat, its eerie bass rumble and ever evolving groove a beautiful thing to behold. From here, *Dwelling* is an exquisite marriage of evocative synths and driving beats, *Peridinum* sounds like a lost **Basic Channel** track, while *Pelagia* is a woozy, bedtime tale which doesn't necessarily have a happy end.



With the album teasing my imagination like few others have managed recently, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to find out more about the creator of these deep, expansive tracks. In the following interview Boris discusses the **Conforce Pres. Silent Harbour** project, the new mini album *Noctiluca*, his love of photography, working with **Kenneth Christiansen** and *Echocord*, discovering electronic music, and lots more.

So, make yourself comfy, and let us begin...

By way of introduction, can you tell us a bit about who you are and what you do?

I'm **Boris Bunnik** aka **Conforce** and **Versalife**, 32 years old, living in the city of Rotterdam and I'm an audiovisual creator. I graduated from the *Academy of Pop Culture* in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. My direction was audiovisual design (documentaries). My main focus has always been the production of electronic music under different monikers, I have done this since I was 22 and my first ever vinyl record was released in 2007 on *Rush Hour Records* from Amsterdam. What happened after that is already history. My discography kept growing from there and I became one of the main recording artists for *Delsin Records*.

Apart from my music I'm a photo enthusiast, and a big fan of raw and straightforward street photography; I do this in my free time (*you can check out the pics at borisbunnik.com*). Also I'm a big wine enthusiast and I've obtained a few professional certificates for analytical tasting. Wine is slowly becoming the main interest here. "Laughs" I keep learning and have a lot of fun doing it.

You release music under various aliases including Conforce and Versalife. What is it that sets the music you release as Silent Harbour apart from your other output?

It leans more towards evolving ambient atmospheres in combination with metallic chord percussion and groovy low end. The musical themes are usually absent and generally it's more about a harmonized audio

spheres driven by nuanced beats. But I can say after many years that most influences from my various monikers tend to come together in the **Conforce** stuff as well.

Your new mini-album as **Conforce Pres. Silent Harbour**, *Noctiluca*, comes out on the 17th of August. For those who haven't heard it yet, what can they expect?

Atmospheric dub infused techno music with traces from the past and tweaks from the recent future.

If someone only had time to listen to one song from the record, which should it be and why?

Noctiluca, because of its ever evolving, groovy whirling, and organic sub aquatic atmosphere. Plus it has balls and likes to challenge your concrete walls.

The glorious dub techno rhythm of *Peridinum* is one of the highlights for me. Can you talk us through the creative process for this track?

I was in the middle of installing a new effects unit in my studio, the *Eventide H3000*. While I was doing this I realized that I hadn't used my *PPG Wave* for quite some time because I had used it on so many records in the past. There was a specific type of chord sound I wanted to achieve in combination with this effect unit. I thought it was a good idea to use it again as it's perfect for steely chords and sub aquatic sounds and it has a certain German posts industrial harshness to it.

By stacking multiple chords and notes I was able to get a type of richness in the chords that I wanted to make. I always like to use side chaining in a subtle way now to give things a slight bit of extra energy and also work with this on my send channels to let the mix breathe a bit more up and down. The additional sounds come from the *Alpha Juno*, a synth I don't really like so much, as it's more of a bread and butter machine. It will probably leave the studio after a few months but until then I try to get useful things out of it. I gave it some processing through the similar *H3000*, and the reverbs gave it a bit more darkness.

Another of my faves is *Dwelling*, with its melancholic melodies and deep bass thump. How important is emotion and melody to the music that you make?

Depending on the track I say it's not always the most important thing, I look for an interesting hook and certain unpredictability, certain randomness but a structure at the same time. This track is quite intense in the sense of melodies and pad sounds. To me it feels like a warm bath of frequencies. I don't miss the lack of drum sounds on this because it already has quite a full spectrum. This track has a strong subconscious emotion in it and isn't technical. It is technical in the sense of mixing but the plain idea and intention was made very quickly. These are usually the most emotional tracks, those that come from within.

Fusiformis is a driving minimal groove, which does strange yet wonderful things to your head. What's more important when creating a track: putting things in, or taking them out?

In this case it's certainly the last one! Hah. At first I tried to fill it with a lot more drums. But that didn't work well in my opinion and destroyed the vibe. It sounds like a very classic track, but I just love the harsh and metallic character of the wavetable stabs from my *PPG Wave*. If you listen closely on a proper sound system you can tell that the chord patterns evolve and have plenty of velocity and modulation variety. But at the same time some people will tell you this is utterly boring and repetitive. The groove keeps things going, what happens on top is very nuanced and unpredictably sophisticated.

The album is coming out on Copenhagen label **Echocord**. How did you first hook up with them?

Kenneth Christiansen the owner used to book me in the notorious club called *Culture Box* in Copenhagen. It was a few years later that I pitched the first **Silent Harbour** album to him for his label and he was quite

impressed and decided to give it a go. It was the birth of the project and it was quite a dark sound for *Echocord*. Nevertheless he wanted to release it. So he did. I had the opportunity to do the artwork as well, so it's been a total concept and artistic freedom.

How well do you think *Noctiluca* sits within the traditional *Echocord* sound?

Half half. I think it's leaning on ambient techno more than it leans on the typical post **Basic Channel** sound. There is too much variety on the record to simply state it as a dub techno album. For me it's too linear to strictly do this type of sound, and besides that, it has been done so well in the past that it's incredibly hard to push it any further. Sometimes I cannot prevent myself from using these influences and trying to give my own twist on it. In general though, it sits quite well.

What was your first introduction to electronic music?

Two cassette tapes, one by my nephew from the urban city, filled with early house stuff from the 90s. He used to do mix tapes and send them to me via mail when I was living on the island of Terschelling. The other was a cassette tape my father found during one of his patrols as a forester, it was filled with weird acid stuff and trippy minimal house from the 90s as well. I used to listen to this as a little kid at the age of 9. I was in shock at first with this tape; I didn't know what to do with this type of music. Soon after I did. After that came the Dutch Gabber and early hardcore music, my former neighbours can tell you all about that. (Laughs)

And what was the catalyst that led you to create your own sounds?

Curiosity, subconscious need, and most of all, a hunger to create my own timbres. These usually spark the start of a production, I look for things that trigger my creativity and help me to set a moody musical basis for a track in the first place. Beats are secondary.

If people could learn one thing from your music, what would it be, and why?



I don't have the illusion that I can teach people something with my music, but I think that compared with most electronic music nowadays (which is mostly flooded with obtrusiveness and peaks) my music can tell you that with subtle changes and details you can have just as much impact if you keep things slightly unpredictable. Electronic music doesn't always have to work on your nerves and be forcefully pushing you in and around. If the groove is tight and present, this is what keeps people moving.

Which three records should everybody in the world hear at least once in their lives?

1. **Carl Craig** - *More Songs About Food And Revolutionary Art*.
2. **Newworldaquarium** - *The Dead Bears*.

3. **The Other People Place** - *Lifestyles Of The Laptop Café*.

As well as *Noctiluca*, what else do you have planned for 2018?

A new release as **Conforce**, *Terra Modis EP* on *Delsin Records*. And two releases as *Versalife: Vortices EP* on *Shipwrec* and *Nova Propekt EP* on the much respected label *TRUST*.

Do you have any final words for our readers?

Thanks for your time and stay focused.

Noctiluca by **Conforce Pres. Silent Harbour** is out on 17th of August on Copenhagen label [Echocord](#). Do your speakers a favour and get a copy from your local record emporium today.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)