



Curatorial > PARASOL ELEKTRONICZNY.  
RUMOURS FROM THE EASTERN  
UNDERGROUND

With this section, RWM continues a line of programmes devoted to exploring the complex map of sound art from different points of view organised in curatorial series.

PARASOL ELEKTRONICZNY. RUMOURS FROM THE EASTERN UNDERGROUND presents a comprehensive but very personal map of sound art and experimental pop in Eastern Europe. This six-part series is a playful mix of documentary and game-like commissioned works that explore the artistic, political, economic and psychological survival tactics used in the region. This rather unusual and highly imaginative survey is built up with the help of our "umbrella agents", key figures in each region being explored, who introduce us to their artistic radius and network of friends, focusing on their ways of constructing and deconstructing reality. They become our voice and our ears, and help us to create a context of like-minded artists that is regional and at the same time more international.

Curated by Felix Kubin.

PDF Contents:

- 01. Summary
- 02. Umbrella agent in Estonia
- 03. Featured artists
- 04. Commissions
- 05. Credits
- 06. Acknowledgments
- 07. Copyright note

Felix Kubin (b. 1969) lives and works against gravitation. His activities span futurist pop, electroacoustic and chamber orchestra music, radio plays, performance projects and workshops. In 1998 he founded his own record label Gagarin Records. Over the last two decades, he has released numerous albums and played at many international electronic contemporary music festivals. Along with composing and performing, Kubin's main interest is radio art. He has written and produced several feature-length radio plays for German National broadcasters (WDR, BR, Deutschlandradio) and performed live shows for London's Resonance FM and Vienna's ORF Kunstradio. His plays are often based on a mix of documentary, fiction and sound art.

# PARASOL ELEKTRONICZNY. RUMOURS FROM THE EASTERN UNDERGROUND

## #1

### Estonia

Isolated by its remote geography and unusual Finno-Ugric language, Estonia is a borderland between the East and the West. It resembles the surreal zone in Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Stalker*, a place full of secrets, where nature meets science fiction.

### 01. Summary

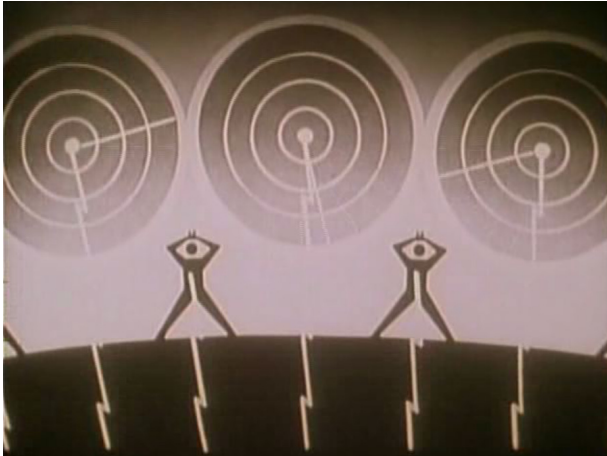
The first episode of the PARASOL ELEKTRONICZNY. RUMOURS FROM THE EASTERN UNDERGROUND series is an exception in two regards. Firstly, as I happened to be on a journey to Tallinn at that time, I conducted the interviews with the artists myself. This task is usually carried out by our umbrella agents. The second unusual feature is its duration. At over 80 minutes, it could almost be considered a double feature. However, television pilot programs are often longer than their follow-ups, and I don't see any reason why this should not apply to audio features too. Also, the Estonian episode is a good introduction to the vibrancy and variety of the Eastern European underground scene.

Aivar Tõnso, our contact in Estonia, had armed me with a list of artists and prepared a schedule for the interviews. The first time I met him was in 2002, when he represented his home town Tallinn at the ArtGenda Festival in Hamburg. As one of the festival's curators, I soon realized that this guy was a music fanatic. As a teenager, he used to stay up all night in order to listen to John Peel's programs on shortwave radio. Today, Aivar curates the music programme "Tallinn 2011 – cultural capital of Europe" and runs a record label called Ulmeplaadid that releases only Estonian artists.

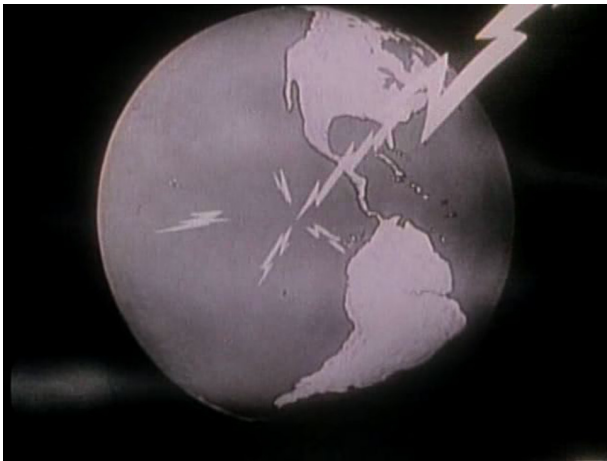
Each episode of the series features some recurring topics and sections: a new national anthem composed by one of the featured artists, introductions to instruments and favorite sounds, miniature audio diaries offering "a day in the life" impressions, spoken word in the local language, descriptions of some local psychological and economic survival tactics and discussions around the "symptoms of the East".

"We don't know if we are East or West. We want to be more like a Scandinavian country", says post-punk diva Kiwa, one of Estonia's most famous underground artists, who still survives on a bare minimum. Indeed, with its small Protestant population and outlandish language, Estonia has much in common with Finland. Still, there is a strong connection to other Eastern European countries, particularly in terms of their shared political history. Artists and musicians like Kiwa, Taavi Tulev and Aivar Tõnso have lived through the intense political changes that shook their country: from Russian occupation to independence, democracy, capitalism and a right-wing government. Other artists were too young to witness these changes.

The political and economic uncertainties have also led to the emergence of a rich artistic resistance. In their brutal propaganda satire "Choose order", the radical film group ESTO TV comments on the growing nationalism in Estonia. The members of the group weren't afraid to infiltrate political gatherings of the right-wing party, pretending to be their truest and most radical followers.



[Image from *The Atomic Café*, 1982]



[Image from *The Atomic Café*, 1982]

Although artists like Andres Lõo and Kiwa laconically assert that there is "no market for contemporary art", Estonia has a blossoming music scene that is full of optimism. As most of the musicians don't have a job, issues concerning crisis and security become irrelevant. Or, as the musician Rainer Jancis put it: "We can lose our lives but we can't lose our jobs."

Felix Kubin, 2010.11.09

## 02. Umbrella agent in Estonia

Aivar Tõnso has been a key figure in the Estonian electronic music scene since the early 1990s. A producer, DJ and event organiser, he has also participated in collaborative projects such as Hüpnosaurus and Kismabande. Tõnso runs his own record label, Ulmeplaadid, aimed at promoting cultural dialogue and innovative approaches to modern music, and he describes the label's attitude as "open-minded but perfectionist."

## 03. Featured artists (in order of appearance)

Aivar Tõnso  
 Katrin Essenson  
 Raul Keller  
 Kiwa  
 Sequoia (Lotte Jürjendal & Katrin Rätte)  
 Taavi Tulev  
 Andres Lõo  
 Tencu (Andres Tenusaar)  
 Rainer Jancis

## 04. Commissions: Estonia's new national anthem

**Estonia's new national anthem** has been composed by Taavi Tulev. Taavi sent me the following explanation along with the sound file: "As I'm more the forest kind of guy, I don't like the existence of different countries. This anthem is made for the area where I live. I can imagine being out there in a countryside and if there's a special or a historical event happening, it could be played loudly so that everyone hears it over the fields. No one doesn't have to go anywhere or think of himself as a being part of some group of people. Just people and this anthem meant for some random spot."

## 05. Credits

Curated by Felix Kubin. Interviews, editing and final production: Felix Kubin. Announcement voice: Patrycia Ziolkowska. Umbrella agent in Estonia: Aivar Tõnso. The new anthem of Estonia: Taavi Tulev.

## 06. Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Patrycia, Aivar and all the participating artists

## 07. Copyright note

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