

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.

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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 #3

## Latvia

The situation in Latvia, with numerous small communities and very little institutional support, almost inevitably led to the coexistence of a mix of milieus, artists, disciplines and projects. As a result, many interdisciplinary collaborations have sprung up, and younger generations have been shaping them into the rebirth of a thriving experimental music and art scene.

### 01. Summary

In part three of PARASOL ELEKTRONICZNY. RUMOURS FROM THE EASTERN UNDERGROUND we take a closer look at Latvia's musical underground. Just like its neighbours Lithuania and Estonia, Latvia regained its full independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 as a result of the 'Singing Revolution'. The small country embarked on a new departure from several centuries of constant power shifts. Even today, Latvians are aware of the fragmented nature of their history: our secret umbrella agent in Riga dares to label this awareness an 'identity crisis' that seems to be easily extrapolatable to artistic life in the Republic. 'In a country with a population of just over two million, there's no room for underground movements on a large scale,' he adds. The small but active scene is starting to turn a page and break free of the stigmas that have plagued cultural life in Latvia for almost twenty years.

'Spatial aspects of sound' play an important role in the works of Riga-based artists Martins Rokis and Kaspars Groshevs. For his installation 'Here, There, Nowhere', Groshevs recorded several instruments and other sound sources from various different angles in his flat, thus creating a spatial definition of his personal environment. In his music, Groshevs draws on sculpture, architecture and sound installation, mixing different media and both analogue and digital recording techniques. The focus is always on the content. His friend and colleague Martins Rokis has a similar approach, although his aesthetics and methods of sound creation are anchored in the digital realm. Rokis creates a set-up of sovereign particles that interact with each other, and moves them on the edge between control and de-control. In his compositions, the 'structure is always in motion and has no fixed identity'.

The music of Andris Indans and Rostislav Rekuta is rooted in psychedelic synthesizer pop, early industrial music and nineties electronica. In the late eighties, the two musicians lived through the major political changes and the economic problems that followed. Indans maintains that this crisis was a very creative period for him. While he was still living with his parents, he tried to find a way of channelling his 'teenage energy' and anger into the creation of music using 'non-professional equipment'. While the emphasis on past technologies and aesthetics is apparent in the works of Indans and Rekuta, the music of younger artists like Kaspars Groshevs, Martins Rokis and Phonic Psychomimesis tends to be more conceptual and harder to classify.

Phonic Psychomimesis is a duo of two musicians who studied philosophy. Accordingly, their sonic output is conditioned by a certain set of rules or propositions against a background of humour and the absurd. Their music is often produced live, and recorded with just one microphone. Like most of the other artists in this documentary, Phonic Psychomimesis try to remain 'outside of Capitalism's moralistic dogma' and create music 'only out of an existential need'. In order to survive they rely on friends, family, and collaborations.



[Kaspars Groshevs]

Collaboration seems to be a key word when it comes to bringing ideas to fruition in Latvia. Toms Auninsh, a former singer in metal bands who is now a theatre director, also considers collaborations to be of prime importance. Because of its small size, Latvia seems to make it easy to get in touch with artists working in other disciplines. Kaspars Groshevs has already worked with people who come from different backgrounds such as performance art, architecture, theatre, fashion and jewellery design: 'Because there are not so many people here, you gradually get to know each other. So, you can meet somebody at a bar or concert, for example, and the next day you might have an amazing professional opera singer singing in your living room.'

**Felix Kubin, 2012.03.15**

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

Kaspars Groshevs – Riga (LV)

[kasprsg.com](http://kasprsg.com)

Martins Rokis – Riga (LV)

[www.martinsrokis.com](http://www.martinsrokis.com)

Phonic Psychomimesis – Riga (LV)

[www.last.fm/music/Phonic+Psychomimesis](http://www.last.fm/music/Phonic+Psychomimesis)

Sound Meccano (Rostislavs Rekuta) – Riga (LV)

[www.rx-tx.org/volokno/fibre.html](http://www.rx-tx.org/volokno/fibre.html)

Gas of Latvia (Andris Indāns) – Riga (LV)

[www.myspace.com/gasoflatvia](http://www.myspace.com/gasoflatvia)

Toms Aunins (Toms Auniņš) – Riga (LV)

[soundcloud.com/harold-boija](http://soundcloud.com/harold-boija)

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## 03. Credits

Curated by Felix Kubin. Editing and final production: Felix Kubin. Sound and editing assistance: Felix Raeithel.

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## 04. Acknowledgments

Many thanks to all the participating artists.

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## 05. Copyright note

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