

Research > MEMORABILIA. COLLECTING SOUNDS WITH... Kees Tazelaar

MEMORABILIA. COLLECTING SOUNDS WITH... seeks to break through to unearth and reveal private collections of music and sound *memorabilia*. It is a historiography of sound collecting that reveals the unseen and passionate work of the amateur collector while reconstructing multiple parallel histories such as the evolution of recording formats, archiving issues, the collecting market and the evolution of musical styles beyond the marketplace.

Each episode in the series is accompanied by an additional programme featuring an exclusive music selection by each of the collectors.

PDF Contents:

- 01. Summary
- 02. Playlist
- Part I
- 03. Related links
- 04. Acknowledgments
- 05. Copyright note

Produced by Roc Jiménez de Cisneros and Rubén Patiño.

Kees Tazelaar is a composer and head of the Institute of Sonology in The Hague. His interest in the history of electronic music and the way its media have evolved has led him to work on numerous projects involving the restoration and recovery of key pieces from twentieth century electronica, particularly works by Dutch pioneers such as Dick Raaijmakers, Gottfried Michael Koenig and Jan Boerman. www.keestazelaar.com

Roc Jiménez de Cisneros is an artist. He lives and works in Barcelona. vivapunani.org

Rubén Patiño works in the field of electronic music. Born in Barcelona, he is currently pursuing a Master's degree at the Institute of Sonology in The Hague. www.patooo.net

MEMORABILIA. COLLECTING SOUNDS WITH...

Kees Tazelaar. Part I

Straddling art and documentation, the restoration work that Kees Tazelaar carries out is a crucial but largely unknown stage in the recovery of historical sound material. Tazelaar describes his experiences as head of the magnetic tape archive at the Institute of Sonology in The Hague, in which nostalgia coexists with academic rigor.

01. Summary

For several years, Kees Tazelaar (1962) has been the head of one of Europe's most important electroacoustic music archives, but he shies away from the label collector. As he explains, his interests are informational rather than exclusive, and he has more of an archaeological urge than an urge to completion.

Tazelaar's artistic and academic career is closely linked to the prestigious Institute of Sonology in the Netherlands, one of longest-running research and production hubs on the European electroacoustic music scene. The Institute, which has been based at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague since 1986, was born from the ashes of the studio for electronic music at Philips Research Laboratories in Eindhoven in 1960, and inherited an extensive collection of tapes by electronic music pioneers in the Netherlands. As a result, the archive is an interesting snapshot of the burst of activity and experimentation that took place mid-century – not just in the Netherlands but also in many other studios around the world – under the auspices of universities and private labs (Bell, IBM, Philips), during a fascinating period of transition in which industry research into acoustics mingled with the early milestones of electronic music.

A composer and teacher (lecturer in Sonology since 1993 and Director of the Institute since 2006), Kees is also known for his work on the restoration and conservation of essential works of twentieth century electronic music. He has participated in reconstructions of works by Gottfried Michael Koenig, Jan Boerman (who taught him composition), Iannis Xenakis, György Ligeti and Luctor Ponce, although his star project remains Edgar Varèse's 'Poème Électronique'. As an artist, restorer, administrator of the Sonology archive, and an expert in all things related to the history of the legendary 1958 Philips Pavilion, in this interview Tazelaar discusses the challenges of restoration, the limits of intervention and the concept of artistic responsibility in reconstructions, the importance of the medium and its maintenance, and digitalisation. And although he inevitably ends up circling back to the word collection every now and then, there's no doubt that he uses it in the open rather than restrictive sense. Tazelaar's approach is ultimately pedagogical, closer to the test tube or the microscope than the butterfly net or auction house. As we can see from ambitious restoration projects such as *Popular Electronics: Early Dutch Electronic Music From Philips Research Laboratories (1956–1963)*, his 2004 four-CD project that unearthed forgotten and unreleased works by the pioneers of early Dutch electronic music, Tazelaar does not stop at creation and dissemination, he also sets up links between generations which would otherwise probably remain cut off from each other.

02. Playlist

Part I

Gottfried Michael Koenig, 'Suite "Materialien Zu Einem Ballett"', 1961
 Jaap Spek, 'Impulses', 1959-60
 Ton de Leeuw, 'Study', 1957
 Gottfried Michael Koenig, 'Essay', 1957-58
 György Ligeti, 'Pièce Électronique Nr. 3', 1956-1996



[Tapes. Photo: Roc Jiménez de Cisneros, 2012]

J. S. Bach / Glenn Gould, 'Two & Three Part Inventions No. 1 in C major, BWV 787', rec. 1964
 Edgar Varèse, 'Poème Électronique', 1958
 Iannis Xenakis, 'Interlude Sonore', 1958
 Tom Dissevelt & Kid Baltan, 'The Visitor from Inner Space', 1957
 Konrad Böhmer, 'Aspekt', 1964–66
 Kees Tazelaar, 'Sternflüstern', 2003

03. Related links

Kees Tazelaar's personal web page
www.keestazelaar.com

Institute of Sonology in The Hague
www.sonology.org/UK/frameset-uk.html

Virtual reconstruction of the *Poème Électronique*
www.edu.vrmmp.it/vep/index.html

Images from the Philips Pavilion of 1958
www.google.com/search?q=Philips+Pavilion&hl=en&btnG=Search+Images&biw=1024&bih=543&sei=EOD_UJ_ZHI2zhAeTrIDoCw&tbm=isch

1999 article on magnetic tape preservation
mixonline.com/mag/audio_master_preservation

Resources for conservation professionals
cool.conservation-us.org

A guide to *tape baking*
www.sonicraft.com/Tape_Baking.html

A short history of sound recording media
web.archive.org/web/20040612082709/http://www.tvhandbook.com/History/History_recording.htm

04. Acknowledgements

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05. Copyright note

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