



Heiko Maile

Demo Tapes 1984-86



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LEARNING BY DOING

The beginnings of Camouflage represent a personal voyage of discovery in so many ways. Ideas, compositions, arrangements, sound and not least the technical question of the recording process – this was all completely new ground for me. Getting to grips with songwriting and studio engineering without any form of training or professional guidance involves a great deal of trial and error and, above all, plenty of time. Any spare minutes I had were spent with our synthesizers and recording equipment. Every demo, every attempt to imitate the sound of a favourite record or device rang true to the mantra of “learning by doing”... equipment with no memory function (*please do not touch!!!*), the constant humming of cheap wires and cables (*soldering is a must-have skill!*), rotten-sounding cassettes (*which had been recorded over several times, of course*), a healthy degree of overconfidence (*who needs a Fairlight CMI?*) or the frequently unpredictable vagaries of analog technology on a home studio budget – there were many lessons to be learned.

Most of the tracks on this album were recorded with a basic stereo (2-track) cassette recorder. The studio set-up looked more or less like this: a drum computer (no Midi) and a sequencer were connected to each other and synchronized rhythmically. I crafted melodic sequences and rhythms and usually transposed them to the desired pitch manually, using the keyboards. Other live instruments were played over the top. Then everything, the sum of all the sound sources, was put together in a kind of “live recording” with the aid of a mixing desk. Just a single mistake would mean having to start all over again. Reconfiguring many of the sounds once the controls had already been adjusted was a painstaking process. I ended up with heaps of cassettes, often featuring seemingly endless versions and variations of the same track.

From today’s perspective, it proved to be a blessing in disguise as it has enabled me to go beyond merely editing the tracks as now I could try out combinations of different takes. State of the art studio technology and audio restoration algorithms helped me to get these tracks back into listenable shape. Sifting through the archive and unearthing long-forgotten song ideas can create a retrograde vibe. Not in my case, however, far from it! Naive, radical? Is that what I was hearing? Were these the musical musings of someone just beginning, or evidence of a concept well executed? Either way – I had fun with all of it and I hope that the tracks selected will whet the appetite of fresh listeners to explore the early phase of my electronic music and the bizarre sonic worlds I inhabited.

Heiko Maile, December 2020

Tracklisting

- 1) Beat For Ikutaro (Tape 52)
- 2) Vega Drive (Tape 13)
- 3) Heizungskeller (Tape 66)
- 4) Ear Piercer (Tape 48)
- 5) Murky Water (Tape 02)
- 6) Floating Bottles (Tape 04)
- 7) Spoken Letter (Tape 75)
- 8) Wavy RX (Tape 57)
- 9) Nachtspaziergang (Tape 40)
- 10) Grandma's Kitchen (Tape 29)
- 11) Steam Engine (Tape 40)
- 12) Bike Spokes (Tape 02)
- 13) Fernsprecher (Tape 75)
- 14) Submarines in Space (Tape 07)
- 15) Film Drei (Tape 09)



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