Oscar van Dillen

DRONE SCAPE 12

the unbearable formlessness of chaos

Dronescape 12

Dronescape 12: The Unbearable Formlessness of Chaos
is sixteenth in the series of Dronescape albums created by
composer Oscar van Dillen using the latest technology.

The work on this album was conceived of, composed,
created, recorded, post-produced and mastered from
October 2023 – January 2024.

Music and cover art were created by Oscar van Dillen.

(Post-)Production and mastering by Oscar van Dillen.

Photo Oscar van Dillen by Elise van Rosmalen
www.elisevanrosmalen.nl

additional images from Wikimedia Commons

Tracks

Dronescape 12:

        The Unbearable Formlessness of Chaos
                (a single movement work)

1.	Section 1	1:17:53
2.	Section 2	1:25:21
3.	Section 3	1:50:10
4.	Section 4	1:26:36

Total duration   **6:00:00**

The Unbearable Formlessness of Chaos

Chaos theory today is described by Wikipedia as follows:

"Chaos theory is an interdisciplinary area of scientific study and branch of mathematics focused on underlying patterns and deterministic laws of dynamical systems that are highly sensitive to initial conditions and were once thought to have completely random states of disorder and irregularities. Chaos theory states that within the apparent randomness of chaotic complex systems, there are underlying patterns, interconnection, constant feedback loops, repetition, self-similarity, fractals, and self-organization. The butterfly effect, an underlying principle of chaos, describes how a small change in one state of a deterministic nonlinear system can result in large differences in a later state (meaning that there is sensitive dependence on initial conditions). A metaphor for this behavior is that a butterfly flapping its wings in Texas can cause a tornado in Brazil."

Clearly chaos is not the same as disorder, and by that argument chaos is not the opposite of order.

The inspiration for this work on the one hand came from a fascination with how to compose really long works; this single movement 6-hour work is the next step in duration after the earlier four part 4-hour long Dronescape 8: The Four Pillars of Reason. The inspiration on the other hand came from the urgency felt to compose a work on chaos as a sign of our times: today there are increasingly forces at work and coming to the forefront of our attention, that are contributing more and more chaotic elements to what seemed to use to be a reasonably ordered human world, at least since World War II. One does not need to be labeled as *woke* to know at least some of these agents and forces, both natural and human, by name.

The Unbearable Formlessness of Chaos attempts to reflect states and structures within chaos and offer the listener an attempt at personal orientation within, but it contains no manual, no route map. At its inception lies the Orpheus Institute 2005 book *Cahier M – morphology of the electric sound* by Dutch composer Dick Raaijmakers, in which he discusses some of Piet Mondrian's Neo-Plasticist ideas on music as published in *De Stijl* 1921 – 1922 (issues 4 and 5).

Raaijmakers quotes Mondrian writing: *"The new (the neo-plasticist) view demands mutually cancelling opposites: this means the destruction of repetition."*
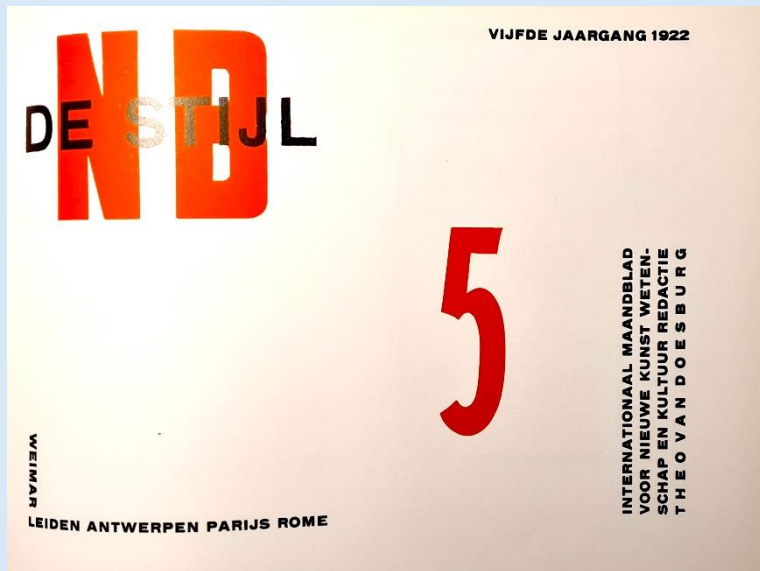
front cover of De Stijl 5 (1922) – collection of the composer

Furthermore Mondrian wrote:

"In the new music the tone must be contrasted with the non-tone. The non-tone should be 'sound' but not 'tone'. She should be feasible from that sound (noise) which does not lead to tone but leads by its way of production to the deepest purity, innerness, and determinacy."

"Over a century ago Mondrian proposes a new music cleansed of 19th century Romanticism: sounds should be presented without 'curviness', without 'swells', and without 'reverberations'. They should meet our ear as a 'coup', an impulse. No melodies, but successions of what Mondrian imagines as 'red, yellow and blue' tones, opposed by noise-like sounds as the achromatic black, gray, and white. These six tones form contrasting 'coups' with an open and 'free rhythm'."

<div style="text-align: right">Raaijmakers' summary. (M - page 23)</div>

Mondrian obviously advocated a new order, not chaos. Yet today his ideas sparked the structures, the *underlying patterns, interconnections, feedback loops, repetitions, self-similarities, fractals, and self-organization* of chaos.

Thus it is in response to these ideas that the composition of Dronescape 12 was initiated, starting off literally with red, yellow and blue groups in the modular DAW Bitwig, the red group composed of sounds created in Madronalabs' Kaivo virtual modeling instrument, one instance of which is shown here (note the name of the original setting):
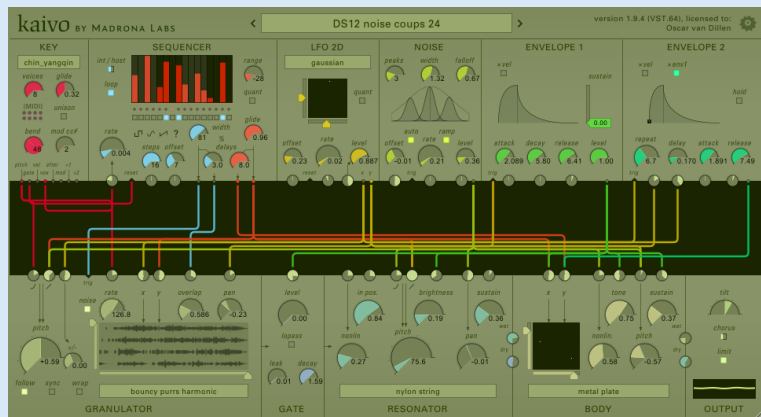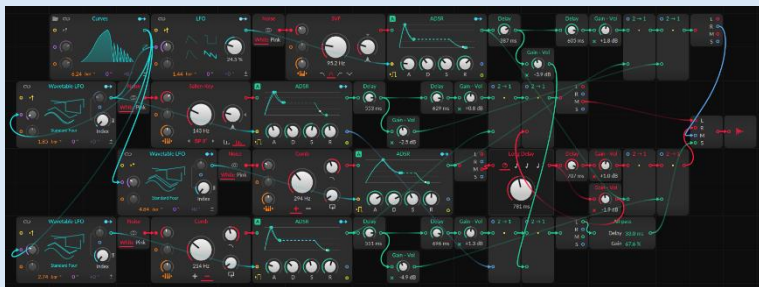

one of the 27 original red sound generator settings with Kaivo

The yellow group sounds were created using a Yamaha CFX Disklavier, playing a specially made MIDI composition

at various tempi, then filtering and variously modulating these recordings to go as it were undercover in the whole.

The 13 basic layers for the blue group sounds were made with Bitwig's native modular synthesis environment called Poly Grid, one of which is shown here:

one of the 13 original blue sound generator settings with Poly Grid

With these – to keep Mondrian's terminology – chromatic elements, a 'canvas' was created, against which the achromatic "noise-coups" could be contrasted. This was done with several VCV Rack modular synthesis setups, one of which is presented here:
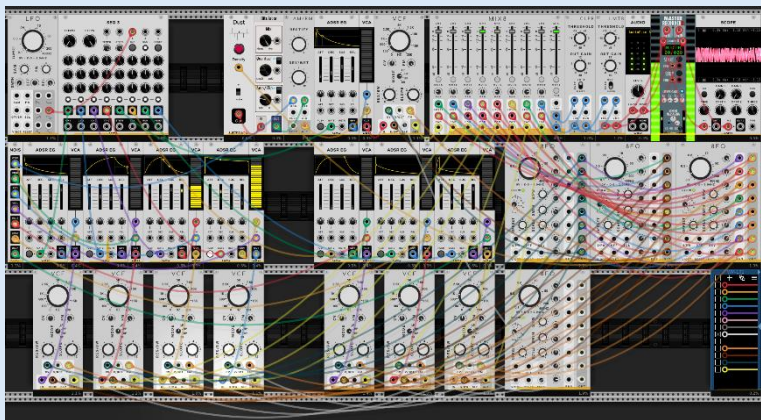
one of the 5 original achromatic sound generator settings with VCV Rack

All in all, from 27 basic red tracks, 6 basic yellow tracks, and 13 basic blue tracks, a canvas mix consisting of no less than 93 audio tracks was made into a high-grade stereo premaster. On top of this the 5 separately created achromatic audio layers were split into twice that number, and these 10 black/gray/white coups were mixed to the chromatic premaster, adding, among other things, a tiny double pendulum mechanism on variable sound delays.

Dronescapes

The title Dronescape suggests the contraction of the terms *Drone* and *Soundscape*, inferring a music which might at first sight be mistaken for ambient only. But not at serious listening: there is mostly a friendly and pleasant surface character to most compositions, but careful listening will reveal less obvious details and sounds, sometimes surprising, at other times perhaps disturbing.

In music, a *drone* (or *bourdon*) is understood to be a continuous sound, interval, or chord, usually an accompaniment to a modal structure (melodic music based on a particular scale). Special instruments exist, dedicated to playing the drone only, such as the *tanpura* and the *swar peti* from India. Instruments are found all over the world that include drones within the melodic instruments themselves, such as the *taraf* strings on many Asian string instruments, but also the drone pipes next to the *chanter* in bagpipes, or the hurdy gurdy, and its predecessor the *organistrum* with their drone strings.

Aboriginal didgeridoo music can be considered to consist purely of a rhythmized drone. Traditionally, drones with their sustained pitches are used as a harmonic support to the melodic music performed. In the Dronescapes by van Dillen the music itself has become more than rhythmized drone and soundscape at the same time, questioning what is background and what is foreground; foregoing the traditional compositional hierarchies of theme and accompaniment, by using the following musical elements, in order of prominence: 1. sound 2. harmony 3. rhythm 4. melody. This non-prominence of melody stresses the absence of a traditional theme and accompaniment-oriented music, instead the work moves towards a more inclusive approach. This does not mean there are no developing linear structures, but so that the album can perhaps be regarded as being semipermeable to outside additions, whether coincidental and random (such as happening when listening outdoor or with windows opened), or improvised, or composed, or even as a large *minus one recording*, open to be supplemented by the listener, whether by their surroundings or in imagined or performed future additional music.

Dronescape series

So far, the following Dronescapes have been released:

1. Genesis
2. Genomes – Emanations
3. Infinity
4. Requiem for a Planet
5. Myrmecology
6. Oneirology (series of collaborations)
   a. solo version Oscar van Dillen
   b. version with Kudsi Erguner
   c. version with Henri Tournier
   d. version with Pier Sante Falconi
   e. version with Leo Vervelde
7. Jñāna – Rigpa
8. The four Pillars of Reason
9. Matters of Life or Death
10. Anthropocene
11. Concerning Whale Languages
12. The Unbearable Formlessness of Chaos

A word of warning: after careful listening, the world around you may not sound the same any longer.

Oscar van Dillen

Oscar Ignatius Joannes van Dillen ('s-Hertogenbosch 1958), flutist, composer, and visual artist. A generalist rather than a specialist, next to his music studies in Indian classical music, Jazz, European medieval and renaissance music, and contemporary composition and music theory, he also studied architecture and mathematics. He was a founding member of the Rotterdam School of Composers and wrote its manifesto. His works span a wide variety of styles and genres, encompassing full score compositions for contemporary classical musicians ranging from solo pieces to full orchestras, style-specific scores for ensembles of jazz and world music musicians, as well as electronic works, and electro-acoustic compositions. In a more advisory role, he has been and/or still is part of cultural advisory boards and music competition juries, the board of Donemus, the board of Wikimedia International, having founded the Wikimedia organizations in the Netherlands as their first chairman.

He teaches composition, improvisation, music theory, and music history at Codarts University of the Arts Rotterdam since 1997.

Oscar van Dillen's personal website can be found at

www.oscarvandillen.com

OIJRECORDS can be found at

www.oij-records.com

Donemus and Donemus Records can be found at

www.donemus.nl

OIJ RECORDS

music is sound and silence