

Oscar van Dillen

DRONE  
SCAPE 9

matters of life or death

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# Dronescape 9

**Dronescape 9: Matters of Life or Death** is the twelfth in a series of albums, containing contemporary Electronic Symphonies by Oscar van Dillen.

The work on this album was composed, created, and recorded June 2022.

Music and cover art were created by Oscar van Dillen.  
Text and 2019 UN speech by Greta Thunberg (track 1).

## Tracks

- |    |                           |         |
|----|---------------------------|---------|
| 1. | We will never forgive you | 0:04:38 |
| 2. | The song without words    | 0:04:38 |
| 3. | Planet of the Ants        | 0:04:38 |

**Total duration**

**0:13:54**

## Dronescape

The title Dronescape suggests the contraction of the terms *Drone* and *Landscape*, inferring a music which might at first sight be mistaken for ambient only. But not at a hearing: 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 *Drones* by van Dillen the music itself has become rhythmized drone and soundscape at the same time, 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 rather that in a way 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 in imagined or performed future additional music.

## Matters of Life or Death

Composed quickly and in a burst of inspiration and hard work, Matters of Life and Death has become the eventual realization of a *cri de cœur*, in hindsight foreshadowed in the earlier Dronescares. We are slowly destroying our human planet by killing the life we depend on for food, a collective suicide. For good reason *avarice*, better known as *greed*, was considered a mortal sin for centuries. In fact all the famous seven contribute to this disaster, let us list them all: *lust, gluttony, avarice, sloth, anger, envy, pride*.

Greta Thunberg's words should be enshrined in our hearts, as should the sound of her voice be, a voice in the desert of the hearts of the people who refuse to face reality, and especially in the desert of the hearts of those who actively contribute to the destruction of our home, our planet, and most of the life on it, without which we cannot survive.

Growing up in a world in which technology is believed to be the ultimate answer to everything, one may perhaps hope for a miraculous escape by means of magic. But the

problems are far too fundamental to be solved by the mere invention and application of yet new *gadgets*. Technology cannot replace the living organisms we depend on for food, and for revitalizing the air and the water for breathing and drinking. The scale of the planet as a whole is just too big, and we need to consider that resources for technology also need to be taken from the very same planet. We need to come to the collective realization that here is a line: endlessness does not exist. The longer we keep up belief systems that promote a kind of endlessness or infinity as a real promise, be they of a religious, political, or economic nature, the sooner we will meet our end, because it creates a lethal mindset.

## **The music**

The 3 tracks follow a path of reverse deconstruction and unraveling, going back to the origins of this composition, and presenting earlier stages of creation as later tracks progressively. In this way the listener is not only able to hear details that might be hard to hear in the *tutti* version (track 1), but also the tracks become more introvert, while

striving to keep their emotional impact. Gradually the clear and concrete music of *We will never forgive you* merges into the slightly more abstract *The song without words*, which is in fact a minus-two version, to be followed by the even more abstract *Planet of the Ants*, connecting to the sound universe of van Dillen's earlier *Dronescape*s. The title of the last track explicitly refers to *Dronescape 5 – Myrmecology*, this time as a *planet of the ants*, which may be the very thing we are currently creating and heading towards. As mammals succeeded the dinosaurs, now ants may have a good chance to succeed the mammals, once extinct. If that happens, may they thrive and develop collective intelligence instead!

Greta Thunberg's speech circles tonally around *d minor*, and this and its relative key *f major* were used for most of the music, although the ending moves to an open *b*, completing a diminished triad *d-f-b*, emphasizing the ongoing global process of diminishment.

The rhythms used are polymetric, there are 9/8, 6/8, 3/4, 2/4 and 4/4, with both binary and ternary feel (triplets).

Modern DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) production allows for precise rhythmic quantization, but this was not used in principle, to preserve the performance quality of the sounds recorded. The unevenness which then at times surfaces clearly adds to a feeling of uneasiness which suits the music.

This album was fully produced in Reaper DAW, which the composer actually learned to use in the process, having worked exclusively with different professional software before. All sound sources have been digitally synthesized, and nothing was live recorded.

At the core of the tonal sounds is *Generate*, the chaotic oscillator synthesizer by Newfangled Audio.

At the core of the rhythmic sounds is the instrument *Konkrete* by Sonicouture.

A professional collection of plugins has been used to further tune/sculpt the sounds and layer sound designed versions of them, these are from Fabfilter, PSP, Arturia, Voxengo, iZotope and Eventide.



## Dronescape series

So far, the following Dronescapes have been released:

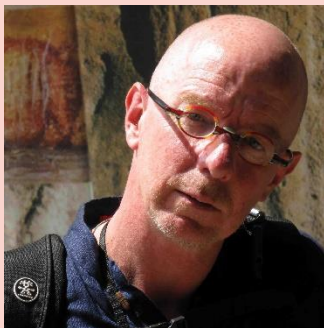
1. Genesis
2. Genomes – Emanations
3. Infinity
4. Requiem for a Planet
5. Myrmecology
6. Oneirology (series of collaborations)
  - a. solo version Oscar van Dillen
  - b. version with Kudsi Erguner
  - c. version with Henri Tournier
  - d. version with Pier Sante Falconi
  - e. version with Leo Vervelde
7. Jñāna – Rigpa
8. The four Pillars of Reason

New Dronescapes are in the making, you can follow Oscar van Dillen and Donemus Records publications by their websites, but also for example on Twitter.

*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), is both a composer and a 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, having written its manifesto in 1997. His works span a wide variety of styles and genres, encompassing full score compositions for 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 is part of cultural advisory boards and competition juries, as well as on the board of Donemus, and on the board of Wikimedia International, having founded the Wikimedia organizations in the Netherlands as chairman.



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

Oscar van Dillen's personal website can be found at

*[www.oscarvandillen.com](http://www.oscarvandillen.com)*

OIJRECORDS can be found at

*[www.oij-records.com](http://www.oij-records.com)*

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*[www.donemus.nl](http://www.donemus.nl)*

Photo Oscar van Dillen by Elise van Rosmalen

*[www.elisevanrosmalen.nl](http://www.elisevanrosmalen.nl)*

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music is sound and silence



The word 'DONEMUS' is rendered in a large, white, stylized font. Each letter is partially obscured by a vertical white line that passes through it. The letters are arranged in a slightly staggered, overlapping manner. The background is a solid light peach color.

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