

Insight! An Interview with Marc Urselli / The M.E.M.O.R.Y. Lab

the M.E.M.O.R.Y. Lab



Following the CD review I made for The M.E.M.O.R.Y. Lab, I've been asked by the project representative to sort out an interview, which indeed it's been made as seen below. This might not be an everyday's interview as it explores the depths of the 3 Grammy Awards winner, Marc Urselli himself!

Marc! You look quite solid in your musical career and I understand that The M.E.M.O.R.Y. Lab was one of your first musical projects. Can you tell us more about this project?
Yes The M.E.M.O.R.Y. Lab were one of my first projects and definitely my first solo project (as opposed to a band), even though I wanted it to turn into a duo, which it did when I found the Old Nick. Nick is an amazing singer and visual artist. When I met him he used to sing in the black metal band **Funerall Oration** with members of **Aborym**. I was part of that band for a while as well so we became friends and Nick became the other half of the M.E.M.O.R.Y. Lab. Today Nick works as a visual artist and fresco restoration expert.

What did you try to achieve through this very project, and why the debut album was released almost 10 years later?
At the time my intention was to create my own breed of electro-industrial-metal by mixing up my influences from those two main genres. I was equally into ebm/industrial and metal/rock and I wanted to find a way to blend all of those and create my own thing. Some of my favorite bands were Die Krupps, Young Gods, Nine Inch Nails, Stabbing Westward, Ministry, Swamp Terrorist, Fear Factory, Skinny Puppy and I looked up to them for incorporating heavy guitars in their music.

I also liked bands like Front Line Assembly, Cat Rapes Dog, Sepultura, Pantera, Pearl Jam etc so I tried to add those influences to my own sound.

The album was released 10 years after the band broke up only because at the time we didn't have the funds or to put it out. When I found the old masters last year and listened to them I thought they stood the test of times pretty well and decided it was worth putting it out. D-Trash (Canadian label) stepped up to the plate and helped with that.

How did you manage to get in touch with the Canadian label D-Trash Records, and what can you say about that label (for those who are unaware)?
D-Trash is a great little label with a great attitude. They do a lot of industrial and digital-core so they were a good match for us. Also they have that, almost punk/d.i.y. attitude which we embraced and supported as a band, so it was both a good musical and intellectual match. I am saying 'they' but it is really all the work of one guy called Schizoid. I first heard about D-Trash through my music magazine Chain D.L.K. - D-Trash started sending us their releases for reviews and that's how I learned about them.

All in all, how are things going with The M.E.M.O.R.Y. Lab and can we expect another release sooner or later?
I wouldn't expect a new release anytime soon, but one never knows... Nick lives in Italy and I live in New York so it's logistically very hard. Of course that doesn't mean there won't be other releases under different names! Quite the contrary! I have a lot planned, if I can only find the time...

There's also been some M.E.M.O.R.Y. Lab remixes out there and there might be more of those in the future...

Speaking of the debut CD Release, what can you tell us about it, and how was the overall reaction from the music scene towards the album?
The CD is basically exactly what we created 15 years ago, note by note. We did not add or change anything. We couldn't, because we didn't have the multi-track masters, only the finished 2-track master. The only thing I did is re-master it in my studio in New York to make it sound louder and even more aggressive.

The album is getting pretty good feedback. It just came out recently (the release date was 09.09.09, three '9s, just like in the year we split up, 1999) but we already got a ton of press and some interviews in the US, Canada, Germany and Italy mostly. 90% of the reviews were very positive and the remaining 10% were not so great reviews of people who mostly did not understand that it was done 15 years ago and thought we were a band trying to do '90es industrial in 2009!

A lot of the positive reviews we received were from people who commented that we were ahead of our times in trying to mix those genres back in Italy in those days and I was pleased to see that people recognized that.

Are you involved in any other bands at the moment?
Most of my time goes into mixing and recording albums for other people, but in my little spare time I am working on a musical project with Italian guitar player Vincenzo Pastano. The project is a mixture of guitar rock and electronic music.

In which musical genres are you into besides electronic?
I am into everything that is good! I listen to a lot of avantgarde/experimental music, world music, new jazz, blues, rock, metal, ambient... Lately I'm on a world music kick... I am traveling the world trying to do field recordings of local music and I wish I could do more of that... Ultimately I'd like to incorporate that with electronic and ambient music, which will be my next musical step, after I finish the record with Pastano.



Marc, I also noticed that you used to live in Italy for quite a while, and currently you are based in the USA. What was the push to that change of residence? Was it hard to change and get used to new cultures?

I was born in Switzerland and lived there, and then I moved to Southern Italy as a kid. That was probably a greater cultural-shock than moving from Italy to the US. I spent a good chunk of my young life in Italy and learned to hate it. That's also where I formed The M.E.M.O.R.Y. Lab. I built my first recording studio in Italy and I was doing quite alright but I realized that even if I was happy with what I was doing I wasn't happy with where I was doing it. Also I got tired of recording the same genres over and over and so I decided to move to the US, in particular to New York, which is one of the greatest cities in the world. I ended up staying and working in a recording studio here, which I now run. The change was of course hard and required a lot of hard work, a lot of saving up and not spending much, a lot of long hours but getting used to the culture was pretty easy... I was very American in many ways before I moved to the States, so it felt pretty much like the right place to be for me.

Before relocating, you started your first studio experience with the Italian Purerock Studios. Can you tell us more about that experience?
Yeah that was my first internship, where I learned the ropes about engineering. My friend Nanni Surace runs that place, still, and he taught me a lot and helped me get started in this business. I love him a lot and his studio is the best place to record at in that area of Italy. Check it out at [purerock.it](#)

On the other hand, you started up your music magazine called Chain D.L.K. Is it still active? And again, what was the main motivation behind that?
Yes, still active at [chaindlk.com](#), but only online now (when it started it was on paper). I created D.L.K. in 1994 to help electronic/industrial bands get exposure in Italy, which didn't have a great scene for those genres. A few years later I was joined by Maurizio Pustianaz who was doing a webzine called Chain the Door and we re-named the joint venture Chain D.L.K.. Today we have something like 30'000 visitors per month and daily updated reviews, interviews, news etc.

Last but not least...any information about 4NI Promotions, the promo agency you founded for young bands?
That doesn't exist anymore but I am impressed that you know about that ; -)

I started that in the late nineties to help bands from overseas get promotion in Italy. I basically helped bands get press in Italy. At the time the internet wasn't happening like today so it was hard for bands to break geographical barriers and get exposure abroad. My first client was a rock band from Switzerland.

Interestingly enough, it is said that you were also involved into some sort of politics? Quite a curious one indeed Marc! So...enlighten us....
I was socially active in my younger age... I wasn't part of a political party, quite the contrary, I loathed parties and still do. However I was very active with a group of people in Italy. We were trying to bring culture to people, get a space to do music, art, cinema, exhibitions etc... Believe it or not it's quite hard to do such things in Italy, still to this day! Eventually I lost faith in people and decided to go to where culture is embraced instead of frowned upon.

Maelstorm Studio! It reflects your inner talent, character and dedication towards both music and education you obtained during your teenage years. What was the main push to start your very own studio?
It just felt right. One night, while staring at the ceiling of my bedroom, it just all clicked and I realized that that was my path, so I took action and made it happen. My friend Nanni from Purerock Studios was selling his analog board and I jumped on that. That was the beginning of Maelstrom Studio. It was one of the best decisions I made in my life probably.

From your personal point of view, how was that Italy you once knew and survived in throughout your past?
I hate Italy. I love going there now on vacation and seeing my friends and the food is amazing, but I would never wanna live there. They are such bigots and lazy... all they do is complain and be corrupt... there's exceptions of course but Southern Italy, where I lived, was (and for the most part is) very narrow-minded and provincialist. People in Italy don't travel and don't care for culture. They don't foster or promote culture and they just think for themselves all the time. It's the death of cultures and ideas down there.

Before you got fully established, you were also involved with Dune Records and the international music promotion & webcasting company Digi Music. I presume such question will elicit some memories of joy and sacrifice perhaps. Can you tell us more about these special moments?
You presume right and you did your research. Yes Dune Records and DigiMusic were both created by Paolo Favati (of Pankow) and Federico Panero. I joined them when I moved to New York because they had an office in Florence and one in New York. I enjoyed my time there and it was a good experience but it never took off like it could have and so I ended up running the NY office alone for over a year and eventually the whole thing just died.

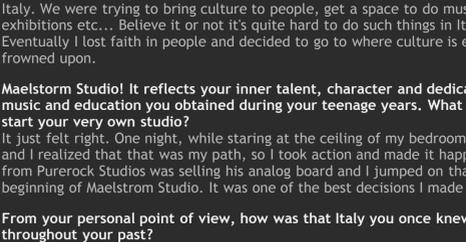
.....and it looks like it all began through Eastside Studios, which you call 'your home'. What can you tell us about this studio?
EastSide Sound is indeed my home and the Dune/DigiMusic offices were in the same building of the studio back then. EastSide is a great studio, one of the best in New York, and that's where I do all my work and I work with all my clients, like **John Zorn** and many others. It's an amazing studio with a lot of iso booths and great equipment. You can check it out at [www.eastidesound.com](#)

From a Likert Scale of 1 to 5, how much do you rate yourself when it comes to the love and passion for recording? (huh I guess this is an obvious answer).
The answer would be about 6 or 7 I guess. I live for music and recording and mixing it is way beyond just a job for me.

I see that your step into the USA gave you quite a substantial exposure towards important musicians including: Sting, Eric Clapton, ZZ Top, Rolling Stones' Keith Richards, Bon Jovi's Richie Sambora, just to mention a few. Did they come to Eastside for their recordings?
Yes, those are the kind of artists you are hardly ever gonna get to work with if you live in Italy, which is exactly why I moved. Some of those artists I worked with in person at EastSide, others I mixed songs for at EastSide.

Les Paul?
Les is the greatest. I mixed that whole tribute album at EastSide and did some recordings at the studio as well as at Les' house. He's such a sweetheart and such an amazing person. He definitely changed my life and he's had such an amazing impact on people's life... Not to mention he invented multi-track recording so I owe him my job! ; -)

I believe that these life events gave you one golden component known as 'experience'. Experience is vast, and in our case this is about music or better music genres. How do you describe your flexibility of getting acquainted with new musical genres which perhaps you didn't like during your childhood/teenage-hood?
Life is all about experiences, that's why I love traveling. I was always very open to many genres and it was great to work with amazing people whose records I listened to as a kid. I would say that flexibility and my passion for multiple genres is definitely one of my strengths. It's very easy for me to interact with different people in different situations and I rarely feel uncomfortable. The sum of all my experiences allow me to work comfortably across many genres and with diverse people. Honestly I love that about my job. If I had to work with the same music genre every day I'd get bored, which is what was happening to me in Italy.



However, it doesn't stop here. Web Coding, Photography, Getty Images, and more! Should I call you a true artist? A passion for photography? How do you manage to stay on top of all your (let's call them) hobbies?
It's definitely getting harder and harder for me to find time for everything and some things have been put on the back burner for now. I have to prioritize unfortunately. Haven't had much time for photography lately, although I love it and would love to do more of it. Coding I still do but mostly for myself and my own needs and sometimes for other people, like musicians who need websites and stuff like that.

Speaking of hobbies... what is your hobby?
Well like you just pointed out yourself, I have many!!! Music, kite-surfing and traveling are my top three. Then photography, visual arts, coding etc...

As a matter of fact, I found your little slogan, 'Time and Money are your Enemies', because you can never have enough of either! That's the bitter side of life; however, are you optimistic enough that one day you will reach the pinnacle of that pyramid of Self Actualization?
That's a tough question. I hope so but those two enemies are quite powerful ones, you know? ; -)

I am pretty happy with where I'm at today considering that I am only 32 but there is always room for improvement and I strive for that.

You are in the here and now. Focus is needed and now have a break, sit down and compare your current situation with your previous situation and events while you resided back in Italy. There is a huge gap of events including progression, maturity but also sacrifice! What is your point about that? Maybe there are other people which are going through similar situations which you faced already. Marc, what are your comments, and do you have any recommendations?
A LOT of sacrifices go into all of this. It's true for everything that you want to really do in life. I intend to keep working harder and achieve much more. It's this drive I have to better myself and my situation that has set me apart from some of the people I grew up with who live in Italy. If you don't have the passion and the persistence to follow your dreams you are not going to do it. You can't half do it, you either do it or you don't. That would be my advice. If you are gonna do it, go for it, don't hold back!

And finally... Grammy Awards! You won 3 important ones for the 'Best Folk Rock Album', 'Best Pop Album', and Best Rock Album. Tell us more about these events and how did this happen?
Yes, the former was for a **Lila Downs** album while the later two are for the **Les Paul** tribute album I recorded and mixed in 2005. It was an amazing experience to work on those albums and winning the Grammy Awards was a great satisfaction and a great push to do more at the same time! I never stop.

Marc, any future plans that you might want to share with the readers, especially since it is now a new year (2010)?
I am doing a lot of work with **John Zorn** and I am excited about working with such an amazing artist. He's got a dozen albums coming out in 2010, which I recorded all, so that's exciting. I plan to try to make more time for my own music, I feel very inspired, and that's probably my New Year resolution.

All right! It was quite an honor to work out that interview! So, like all the rest of the conclusive questions - any last words, whispers, shouts or distortion? (lol)
It was my pleasure to talk to you. I am glad we had a chance to chat. My last words are: go out and experience the world!

Interview proudly made by Jo from Eclipse Media ([www.eclipse-media.net](#)) who is a writer for BRUTALISM.com

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