



We aren't musicians any more

A Manifesto

Putting on headphones, pressing play, and diving in. The attraction of music will never change while everything else around will. Especially the production- and distribution conditions of music significantly altered during the past 20 years. The biggest challenge thereby is not of a technical nature, as presumably represented by MP3s or file-sharing, but remains in our thinking. We as artists, producers and marketers have to discover new and more suitable ways of publishing under digital conditions. I AM A FOREST seeks to contribute to this novel culture. We follow streams that blaze new trails and let ourselves be taken away. We share.

Solids become fluids

Since everybody is able to produce digital copies of songs in a matter of seconds, the availability of music is more important than the actual possession of physical phonograms [1]. A 110 years ago, people needed an automatic piano to have music in their homes which was then subsequently followed by the gramophone and the radio [2]. The physical transport of music evolved from metre-long piano rolls to gramophone records and radio waves. Today, every smartphone can store more music than a disk rack and streams allow everybody to access an almost endless ocean of tracks.

Although the music business was hit first by the shockwave of digitalization, the physical state of our monetary acquisition model has not changed. As musicians, we perceive the rhythm of the music business as a “shell as hard as steel” [3]. Writing an album every two years, financing a studio, pressing and promotion, just as playing concerts and ideally selling all CDs in order to avoid bankruptcy and being able to start the whole cycle all over again. Without significant reserve funds, this operation method does not only lead to personal mortification but also to disregarding opportunities.

We already achieved to bring listeners in as supporters in order to render better compensation models than the 16,99 Euro CD on Amazon (which leaves the artist with 1,50) possible. After the crowd-funding of the production costs, the next step is to make the production process itself transparent. Instead of solely talking about the general framework and conditions of music, we want to tread the path together with you.

Music exists to be shared

Which necessitates to dissociate oneself from formerly appreciated ideas such as the idea of submitting a finalized album as a completed cultural good [4]. Of course, we will produce a CD or even a vinyl if possible. Nevertheless, this has to be regarded as a subsidiary goal since it is neither the end nor the beginning of our trail. An album develops just as a book being based on an initial idea and passing several stages of writing, revising and proof-reading. Here, we aim to uncover these stages and present different versions of songs. Whether these versions are rough-mixes, mixes for online releases, song texts or the release of single audio tracks to allow for editing, sampling and remixing, it is about participating in the stream, about commenting and altering. We rethink the idea of the independent and autonomous musician.

Even in digital times, listening to music remains an intimate experience which creates subjective realities irrespective of the medium or the place where we listen. You found us on YouTube or Facebook, came across a stream on some blog or witnessed one of our performances which somehow moved you. As listeners, you are the most important element of this experience which is the reason for our longing to make you part of the album from the beginning. I AM A FOREST therefore provides methods to support the project which transcend the purchase of the finished album. Apart from contributions in form of comments, mails and edits, the representation of your support is especially appreciated.

Plant seeds, harvest a forest

At which point can someone afford to pursue his/her music professionally? Do we count sales, YouTube-hits or Facebook fans? Can we afford the ongoing work on new material, bus rents and rehearsal room, equipment, studio sessions, vinyl pressing and health insurance? Does our poster decorate the walls of kitchens in shared accommodations? Do we get positive critiques and fan mail or is someone also allowed to take a downtime for the continuance of the idea?

From now on, we concentrate selling, fans and meaning in our own currency. Cause it is about more than monetary means.

Join the wood, say I AM A FOREST.

[1] Dave Kusek & Gerd Leonhard: *The Future of Music. A Manifesto for the Digital Music Revolution*. 2005.

[2] Our publisher's office is located in one of the world's biggest producer of automatic pianos at the beginning of the 20th century, the Ludwig Hupfeld AG at the edge of Leipzig.

[3] This quite drastic figure stems from Max Weber's analysis of gainful employment [Often misleading translated as „iron cage“.] He described how systematic capitalist work once started as a phenomenon of few and became as system an unavoidable force for everyone. Max Weber. [The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism](#), 1905

[4] So called "versioning" is one of the central concepts of Dirk von Gehlen's fundamental book "[Eine neue Version ist verfügbar](#)" ("A new version is available"). Dirk von Gehlen: *Eine neue Version ist verfügbar*. 2013

[5] Malte Friedrich: *Niemand kauft das Recht Musik zu hören. Performative Wertschöpfung in digitalen Zeiten*. in: Lange/Bürkner/Schüßler (Hg.): *Akkustisches Kapital. Wertschöpfung in der Musikwirtschaft*. S. 217-240.

BECOME A LEAF

1 SEED – Plant a Seed

You listened to a song on Spotify, shared the link to our new video on Facebook or commented one of the articles here? You signed up for the newsletter or pinned our postcard to your wall? Each time one *Seed*. Thank you, you're the breeding ground of the forest.

1 LEAF – 100 Seeds are a Leaf

You downloaded one of our songs for your way to work? 1 *Leaf*! You ordered the Surfaces EP as CD here? 5 Leaves! You like the shirt and took it after the concert? 15 Leaves! You pre-order the upcoming album as vinyl here? 20 Leaves! Let the forest grow!

1 TREE - 100 Leaves are a Tree.

100 Leaves amount to a *Tree*. Watch here how the wood grows. Become a part. Become a leaf.

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