

THE COLLECTOR

No. 87 Marc Richter

Marc Richter is a self-taught graphic designer (TheMaleGarden.com) and musician based in Hamburg, Germany. He's also the founder of Dekorder (Dekorder.com), an imprint devoted to releasing obscure, mostly homemade eclectic electronic, psychedelic and drone music from all corners of the universe. Richter creates experimental sonic tapestries of his own under the moniker Black To Comm (BlackToComm.org).

What do you collect, and why?

I only buy vinyl. While I own a few CDs, I don't waste my time with digital formats and probably never will. I love the physical product. Maybe that makes me a fetishist rather than a collector?

How big is your collection?

I've about 2,000 LPs and a few hundred CDs.

What do you think it is worth?

I've no idea, but it's invaluable to me.

How and where do you store it?

I've recently bought a lovely wooden shelf from Rio Systems in Hamburg. It was pretty expensive, but it provides a really simple and handsome solution to all of my storage worries.

What's the rarest/most unusual/most valuable item you have?

I have a kid's Mighty Tiny record player that only plays 2" singles. I love the sound of these miniature discs: terribly raspy, but extremely charming. There are only three titles, but all I hear is crackle anyway.

What elusive gem are you still looking for?

As a sound artist working in the area of sonic collage, the turntable is one of my primary sources, so I'm always on a quest for records that I can exploit. Cheap thrift store finds or pricey musique concrète and free jazz vinyl – they can all offer something for manipulation and reconfiguration. Especially attractive in this respect are unique, privately-recorded, one-of-a-kind items: letters, homemade music, greeting cards and commercials cut directly to acetate (a common practise in the 40s). Actually, a few years back, the label acquired and restored a vintage Presto 6N cutting lathe, so we can now cut our own (mono) records if we can't find exactly what we're looking for.

What's given you the biggest thrill?

It has to be cutting my own records. The process is almost erotic. Ha – or maybe I'm just getting old.

How do you track stuff down?

They just come to me, one way or another. I stumble upon them really, without ever specifically seeking them out.

What's your favourite record shop?

My favourite store – Unterm Durchschnitt in Hamburg – closed a few years ago (like so many independent stores). It was owned by Uli Rehberg, who also ran the Walter Ulbricht Schallfolien label (which put out early releases by SPK, Throbbing Gristle and Laibach, among others). The store's basement was full of the most obscure records you could imagine, along with a menagerie of embalmed creatures housed in an assortment of preserving glasses. It was a strange place, with a total disregard for what a record store was meant to look like. But I guess that uniqueness is what made it so special.

How often do you listen to the stuff in your music collection?

Creating my own music is the priority these days, so I don't spend much time listening to others' work. But I have listened to every record I own at least two or three times, so whenever I'm in need of a particular sound or mood, I know where to find it. Of course, there are certain records I'll return to all the time, while others I rarely listen to.

Is the visual side of record collecting important to you?

Most definitely. I'm a self-taught graphic designer (one of my five day jobs) so, personally, I think that the visual side contributes significantly to the overall attraction of a record. Obviously, I'm talking about 12" vinyl here. Size does matter, sometimes (I do love 3" CDs though).

How do you think you'll eventually dispose of your collection?

That's a good question. Actually, I've never really thought about it. As a starving musician I'll probably have to sell it for my pension. Or, maybe, I'll fuel my car with melted LPs when the world's last oil resources run dry.

What's your all-time favourite record, regardless of value or rarity?

It has to be Public Image Ltd's *The Flowers Of Romance*.

