

festivals in the area, Mario Marzidovšek has actively participated in providing of the common social experience for participant musicians and audience(s). In spite of diverse aesthetic perspectives of the bands and musicians appearing on the label *MML* and on the concerts organised by Marzidovšek and other “activists” in the northeast Slovenia, the alternative attitude has been their common denominator. And finally, a definable self-regarding scene has appeared (its expression was before mentioned *Incriminal Collective*), in opposition to the political reality of the time.

Let me, at the end, assess the impact of the *MML*. The most important impact was on the micro-level. During the time of the label's continuous activity, several micro-local scenes developed and identified its existence with both live concerts and recordings. We may define different micro-local scenes with very various musical styles. In Žalec and Celje there were headed mostly by *Laibach* and Rock in Opposition inspired bands (*Sfinkter*, *Local Television* and *White Noise*), plus some interesting post-punk bands (for example *Yoohoohoo Uncle Vinko and Co.* and *Strelnikoff*). In Maribor and its surrounding villages several hardcore, punk and experimental bands appeared (*Masaker*, *CZD*, *P.U.J.S.*, *Soft and Simple*, *Avantkurent*, *Margine*). In Slovenska Bistrica, only Mario Marzidovšek himself has created a literal one-man scene.

On a local level, northeast bands and individuals cooperated, appeared at the same concerts, etc. – although mostly they didn't have common projects and they didn't meet otherwise than in concerts. As far as regional scene is concerned, that means Slovenia, because Slovenia was not independent at the time (although its cultural production functioned, predominately, as national), the impact was not expressed so much. The scene in northeastern Slovenia was a part of very dynamic alternative production of the time and was never really recognised as equally important as the scene at the centre, Ljubljana. Marzidovšek's production did have some impact on the national level, within the former Yugoslavia, but mostly with cassette releases and distribution of that releases, not with organised concerts. Finally, on the international alternative scene, the most important was the very appearance of the *MML* in alternative music press, but it actually didn't have much impact, except for his appearance on some compilations and his distant collaborations (by mail) with several American and other musicians.¹¹ There were, it must be stressed, several circles or ranges of its impact. *MML* had important impact in Italy, particularly in Trieste with release of a cassette with Italian bands, themselves mostly from Trieste, and organisation of several events, connected with anti-psychiatry movement. As mentioned before, the second range was touching Germany, and finally, USA.

The most important is that those contacts enable Mario Marzidovšek to give information back. *MML* was principally established as an underground two-way traffic system. No matter how ephemeral it was, it was extremely important because it provided some non-local basis of self-confidence to the authors and performers from the northeast Slovenia. And it was a very efficient means of linking (or even integrating) the Slovene production to the international context. The major national labels in the former Yugoslavia were not able to do that.

Afterword

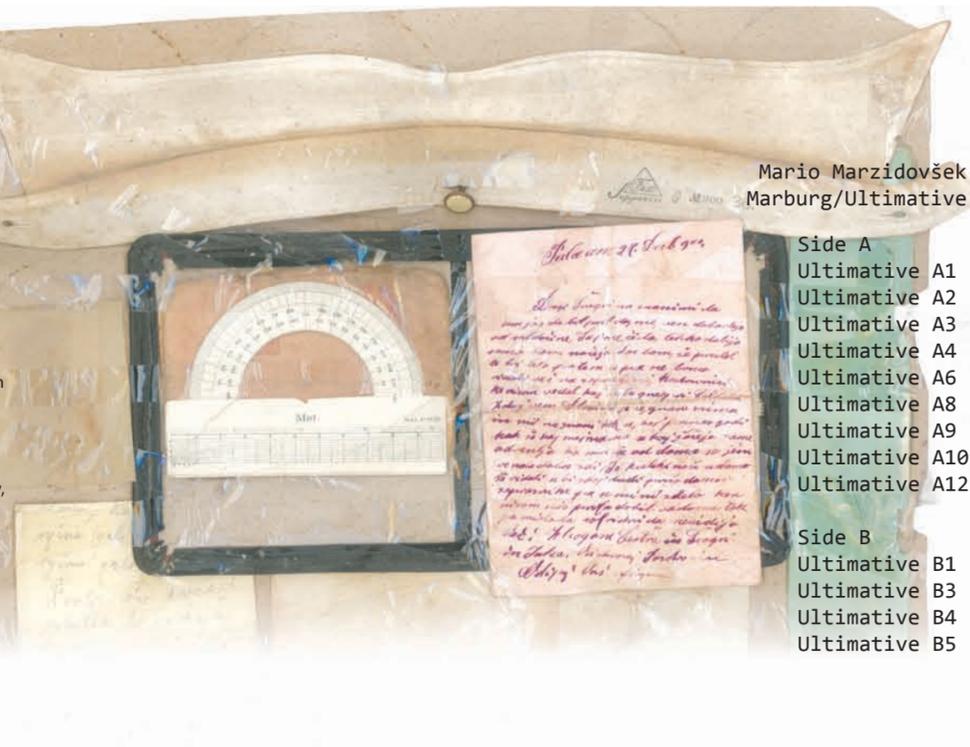
One of my friends in Maribor remembers that Mario Marzidovšek took his work very seriously and was aware of the danger he was faced with. Mario made a remark that it is extremely difficult to hold all parts together. He felt his activities as a kind of synthesis, mixing. In an interview (made by Jože Kos for the weekly *Mladina* in 1986) Mario Marzidovšek explained: "In fact, I experience it as pretty dangerous, almost paranoid: sound is picture and vice versa". He would also say that his music was so dangerous, that it could easily take his mind away ...



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Mario Marzidovšek – Ultimative / Marburg
MFLP 002 / 2011

Concept: Dušan Hedl
Editor: Peter Dobaj
Mastering: Stojan Kralj
Artwork: Mario Marzidovšek
Essay: Rajko Muršič
Design: Peter Dobaj



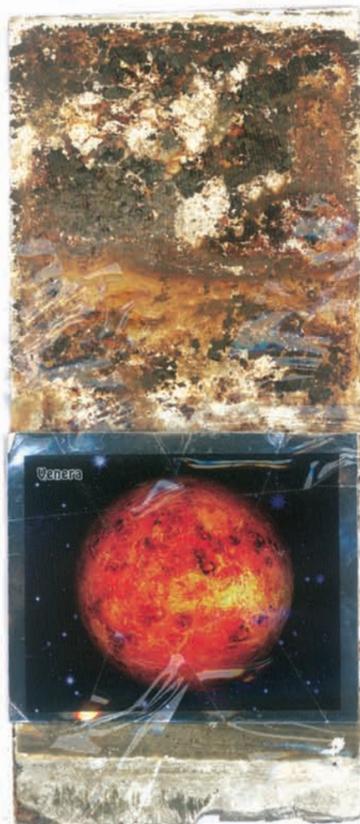
Mario Marzidovšek
Marburg/Ultimative

Side A
Ultimative A1
Ultimative A2
Ultimative A3
Ultimative A4
Ultimative A6
Ultimative A8
Ultimative A9
Ultimative A10
Ultimative A12

Side B
Ultimative B1
Ultimative B3
Ultimative B4
Ultimative B5



Rajko Muršič



On the relationship of Global and Local Music Production:
Mario Marzidovšek and his Independent Label Marzidovshekminimalaboratorium¹

MML as a catalyst of a local scene

In the times when the world record industry is concentrated in 5 or 6 major multinational companies (cf. Cohen 1994: 130; Langhurst 1995: 29-54), when “growing internationalisation of the sound” (Rutten 1994: 31) is evident, reminding on a short period of existence of a small, “local” part of the world independent cassette scene in the 1980s may seem peculiar. But it shouldn't be, because small, independent and local productions are of enormous importance in establishing of the “local” scenes and their unique ways of appropriation and adaptation to the “global” challenges. Local productions reflect very close and direct interference between producers and consumers. They are mostly obscured by amounts of global, national and regional music sales and, moreover, they are almost never incorporated in statistic data. Who cares about 10 or 50 cassettes, sent by mail directly from the producer (tax free, of course) to consumer on whatever address?

After the introduction of cassettes in the late 1960s, the third major recording revolution started (cf. Kaufman Shelemay 1991: 278; 285). The production of the CD's and LP's is still technologically too expensive and too sophisticated to produce and distribute them in small numbers of copies, while cassettes may be released (or taped at home), as necessary, in a few copies or in enormous number of copies. It makes no essential difference. Cassettes are cheaper than any other sound carrier, therefore the cassette production is still the most democratic way of music distribution.²

Cassette production is the most important part of local and regional music productions. In Africa, Asia, Indonesia and other parts of the so called Third World, cassette recordings predominate (cf. Wallis and Malm 1984: 5-7, 77, 270) and the ways of music distribution are very different from those in Western countries (Rutten 1994: 38). Therefore, there exist many independent local and regional productions of a large scale. Small scale and non-commercial cassette production itself is in fact only exceptional. In non-Western countries, there are large local and regional cassette markets (beside illegal tape recordings of western popular music). At the local and regional levels the sale of local and regional music may compete in sales to that of major international pop stars, because local and regional popular music is nowadays, as a rule, the most important part of the use of music in everyday life. From the aspect of use of music it is essential in what degree the music is “employed in human action” (Merriam 1964: 210; cf. 209-227). Cassette recordings are the most usable way of spreading and everyday use of different kinds of ethno pop, because cassettes may be listened to on virtually any occasion. To listen to LP and CD records one has to buy more expensive and massive equipment that is usually placed in living rooms, while the cheapest cassette recorders are essentially mobile and may be used practically on any occasion, including the workplace.

Wide spread myth is that consumption of music is a one way process, lead by the production of major multinational record companies. The consumption may, in the case of local or underground markets, take on opposition, liberation signifiers (as in the case of black music as noticed by Paul Gilroy; cf. Mitchell 1996: 85; on consumption see Miller 1995). Local music production reflects “a range of social, economic, and political factors peculiar to the city” (Cohen 1994: 117), town or an area or any other “localized” place (as opposed to the “non-place”, characterised by mass media, people's mobility and the flows of the “supermodernity”; cf. Augé 1996). Only heterogeneous music production may satisfy a person's all basic musical needs. It seems unlikely that music would ever evolve towards one and only global “pattern”. In the era of technical reproduction of the work of art (cf. Benjamin 1986), the “tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization” (Appadurai 1990: 5) became “accompanied by a localisation of cultural identity and claims to authenticity” (Cohen 1994: 133). Empirical studies at local levels, for example ethnographic researches in Liverpool or in rural Slovenia, indicate “various ways in which people create an image or sense of place in the production and consumption of music” (Cohen 1994: 129; cf. also Muršič 1995).

Marzidovshekminimalaboratorium (MML) may be seen as a case of the local scene entering into international, and, vice versa, reflecting of the independent international scene within the local context. The most important is that autonomous local productions, tied to global trends, whether “underground” or “dominant”, provide the frames of constantly creating and recreating identities of participants, both producers and consumers by negotiating their place in the contemporary “mediascapes” and “ideoscapes” (cf. Appadurai 1990).

Although the first jazz band in Slovenia appeared in Ljubljana in 1922 (Original Jazz Nagode; cf. Amalietti 1986: 6) and the first rock bands appeared in the first part of the 1960s (cf. Hmeljak 1995), the punk “movement” developed the first authentic domestic rock scene (cf. Tomc 1994; Malečkar and Mastnak 1985). In the early eighties, the first wave of Slovene punk came to the end. At the time, the initiative impulses have been successfully spreading from Ljubljana to other Slovenian towns and villages. The result was a peculiar situation at the beginning of the eighties, when more alternative and punk bands were active outside of Ljubljana. Several very interesting and successful groups appeared in Trbovlje (*Laibach*), Metlika (*Indust bag*), Idrija (*S.O.R.*, *Kuzle*), Žalec and Celje (*Lokalna televizija*, *Strelnikoff*), Maribor (*Masaker*), and the villages of Trate (*CZD*) and Cerklje (*Demolition Group*).

In the period between 1984 and 1988 Mario Marzidovšek and his label *MML* became a kind of a catalyst of the local or regional scene in the northeast region of Slovenia.³ I will try to define its position and its impact within micro-local, local, regional, national and (even) international underground music production, distribution and consumption. My starting claim is that the most important and apparent impact may be noticed in micro-local and local contexts, less so in regional and national contexts, and merely conditionally noticeable at the global or international (underground) context, although the cassettes were distributed all around the world.

The northeast Slovenian alternative scene may be considered as a local scene with particular characteristics. It was autonomous, concerning individual differences, and open towards new, unorthodox and interesting musical ideas. Undoubtedly, recording and reproduction quality of *MML* recordings significantly contributed to a unique sound of that scene. Although there may be put several objections to superficially used definitions of regional or local sounds, as for example Detroit, San Francisco, Seattle, Liverpool or Manchester sound within some dominant streams of rock production (cf. Carney 1995; Cohen 1994; Fornäs, Lindberg and Sernhede 1995; Mitchell 1996), there is no doubt that particular productions have their own characteristics concerning production, sound, style and locality. A very important compilation cassette was released in 1985 with two punk bands (*Masaker*, *CZD*) and a hardcore band (*P.U.J.S.*) from Maribor, plus Mario Marzidovšek himself. It determined (and documented) the local alternative scene and gave it a strong impulse.⁴ Although some of the bands soon disappeared, the influence of the initiative alternative scene in Maribor remained, resulting in establishing of a student radio station *MARS* in 1990, a rock club *MKC* in 1988 and the occupation of an empty barracks in Maribor in 1994.

The bands, especially from northeast Slovenia, would occasionally perform in public. The most important among them, *CZD*, with Dušan Hedl, is still active and in almost three decades of its existence became the most important band at the scene. Mario Marzidovšek was concerned that all the bands will disappear and his label would have no meaning if there will be no bands to produce. He once said that only himself personally would survive, not his label. The record industry is, after all, the constant hegemonising factor in popular music, especially if we consider that five or six major labels nowadays control more than 80 % of recording production in the world. However, there is an important output of independent, small and non profit labels and home-made productions of cheap cassettes, distributed in special private channels by mail. Protest singer and improviser Eugene Chadbourne, for example, used to record and copy many cassettes and personally distribute them all around the world. That kind of activities may be treated as home-made music and we may find many similarities between certain aspects of production,

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1. The paper was first presented at the international conference on Balkan Popular Music, 22.-24. 11. 1996 in Ljubljana, organised by IASPM (International Association for Studies of Popular Music) Slovenia and ISH Ljubljana. Published in: *Rock 'n' Roll and Nationalism: A Multinational Perspective*. Mark Yoffe and Andrea Collins, ed. Cambridge: Scholars Press, Newcastle 2005, pp. 121-135.

2. I will ignore the important question of copyright, because the subject of my interest in the present paper is the cassette production and distribution by the author himself (or with authors' informal permission).

3. The similar "catalysis" process has happened again almost the decade later, when, at the beginning of the 1990's, an independent label Front-Rock from Maribor successfully joined the forces of the northeast Slovenian alternative scene in struggle for the rock clubs and places for alternative cultural institutions in the emptied barracks in the towns of Maribor and Ptuj (cf. Beranič, Hedl and Muzek 1994).

4. In 1984 the informal association called The Incriminal Collective was established in Maribor. Musicians, writers, painters and other active underground people worked along a programme put forward by Jože Kos. The main goals of the Collective were solving the problems of the lack of a meeting place, club and place for rehearsals, the establishment and normal functioning of alternative press institutions (kmečke & rockodelske novice, Katedrala) and the establishment of an independent youth radio (see: Inkriminalni produkt; Brum inkriminalnih živcev; Agonija Gustava).

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reproduction and use of popular music and certain aspects of functioning of traditional music (cf. Mušič 1996). Not only that the opposition between the “global” and the “local” becomes relativised because of home productions, the very central issue of the impact of particular product may be seen as the questioning of the “universal” effects of the particular popular music hits. It is difficult to put “global” and “dominant” music production as exclusively or crucially relevant for local music productions. It may be the opposite: is not every music in fact “local”?

MML: The hatching of the alternatives

In his mail catalogues Mario Marzidovšek wrote: “MARZIDOVŠHEKMINIMALABORATORIUM was registered abroad as the first private non-profit label for cassette production in Yugoslavia with extended activities in different areas of the youth subculture in Štajerska /Slovene Styria/” (facsimile in *Štajerski poročevalec*, p. 2).

*Marzidovshekminimalaboratorij*⁵ was started in 1984 when Mario Marzidovšek released the first 6 cassettes of his own music. A year later he began to produce compilation cassettes with the groups from northeast Slovenia and, simultaneously, release the compilations and collaborations with experimental musicians from the former Yugoslavia and from all around the world, predominantly from Europe and America. He managed to release at least ten compilation cassettes with new music.

Marzidovšek’s label *MML* was a unique phenomenon in many aspects. In the former Yugoslavia, some sectors of economy were following market rules long before the fall of socialism. The record industry was one of them. There were 7 major government-founded (in fact public or, literally, “social”) labels, *PGP RTV Ljubljana* and *Helidon* in Slovenia, *Jugoton* and *Suzy* in Croatia, *PGP RTB* and *Diskos* in Serbia and *Diskoton* in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their interests were strictly market oriented, their policy was profitable and only small percentages of releases were non-commercial (cf. Slobin 1993: 34). That means that there were only a few jazz, avant-garde and non-commercial rock music releases.

The first independent label in the former Yugoslavia was established in 1973 in Ljubljana by the Student organisation *ŠKUC (Student Cultural and Art Centre)*. Unfortunately, during the 1970s, *ŠKUC* was in a position to release only very few records and cassettes. At the beginning of the 1980s, *Galerija ŠKUC izdaja (The Gallery of ŠKUC Edition)* began to produce cassettes with live recordings of punk and alternative bands that were performing in Ljubljana. At the beginning of the eighties, two newly established labels released several jazz and rock records: *Dokumentarna* from Ljubljana and *Slovenija* from Koper. Both were established by associations of cultural activists. The label *Slovenija* released several records with local groups and some Italian bands. Later in the 1980s, some other independent labels appeared: the label *FV* (which has been derived from the *Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja*), *Front Rock*, *ŠKUC - R.O.P.O.T.* and *Druga godba*. Except for the latter, all of them have started to release LP records and, finally, in the 1990s, all of them started to release CD records.

At the beginning of the eighties, the label *Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja* released 14 cassettes, the successive label *FV* released several more cassettes, while in the period between 1984 and 1988 Mario Marzidovšek (*MML*) released more than 80 titles! Marzidovšek started his label, distribution and studio *Marzidovshekminimalaboratorij* in 1984. Although it is difficult to figure out the exact number of cassettes released by *MML*, we may find more than 80 titles in his mail order catalogue from 1988.

MML production was not limited or oriented to Slovene area or to the area of the former Yugoslavia. The *MML* editions were distributed all around the world. Many of Marzidovšek’s releases were reviewed in international music magazines (*Option Magazine*, *Sound Choice*, *Maximum Rock ’n’ Roll*, *NME*, etc.) and were put in several alternative mail distributions.

Mario Marzidovšek wrote in a letter sent to the author of the present paper in April 1988 that his label plus the label *FV* from Ljubljana – of European orientation and quality – and *Slovenija* from Koper were the three major independent labels at the time in the former Yugoslavia.

In 1988 he divided his label in two major parts, *MML International*, and *MML Yugoslavia (East Music Service)*. *MML International* followed the production policy of the *MML* from the very beginning, that means to prefer more complex and experimental music, and releasing of more interesting groups and international compilations, released on more quality CrO₂ tapes. Within the heterogeneous territory of Yugoslavia he was searching for new and experimental groups outside Slovenia (e.g., *Grešnici*, *Hermitage*, *Larynx* from Požarevac, Serbia, *Autopsia* from Serbia, *Fast Deadboy* and *Karcinom desne dojke* from Zagreb, Croatia, *Diskretni šarm buržoazije* from Croatia, etc.) and distributed releases of Yugoslav punk music.

He never started to produce LP records, not only because of much higher costs, but because it was much more difficult to manage distribution of vinyl releases. And, according to the starting costs, it is much more risky to release a record of unknown bands. Cassette production was then, and still is, the most democratic way of production and distribution of non-commercial music.

One of his most important projects was a cassette compilation *Third Generation New Music*. In his promotional material, Marzidovšek announced a call for recent tapes. He received a lot of interesting materials. Musical experimenters from all around the world sent him their recordings. Naturally, the position of *MML* was marginal in the sense of commercial effect, however, *MML* was relatively important part of international underground production of new music. Similar underground connections and networks are very difficult to be noticed, although it is the sphere where the most interesting new things are going on.

Mario Marzidovšek, his work and his nerve destroying industrial music

Mario Marzidovšek was born in Celje in 1961 and raised in Poljčane, a very small town in the northeast Slovenia. In the early eighties, he married and moved to the nearby town of Slovenska Bistrica, where he started with art activities and established the label *MML*. In 1988 (or 1989) he left Slovenska Bistrica and went to the Netherlands and Germany. When he came back home in 1990/1991, he moved back to Poljčane, but since that time he has disappeared from public life. As far as I know he isn’t involved in any kind of music and art activities anymore. It is difficult to find out what is he doing now, because he doesn’t have any contacts with his former colleagues any more.⁶

Mario Marzidovšek is indeed a very peculiar person. He managed to be engaged in numerous activities and, nevertheless, he always walked around with enormous surplus of energy. At least for some time, he succeeded to skillfully control and channel his extreme personal and creative energy into sound and visual production.



– He was important for Slovenia’s northeast alternative scene as an organiser and as a producer. As far as organisation is concerned, only he was able to connect the alternative musicians and artists from Maribor and Celje regions. It happened in the year 1985.

He was a true volcano of alternatives. While he was employed as a chemical technician in a chemical factory in Rače, he was involved in numerous activities. Most importantly, he was working on minimal-industrial, electronic and experimental music. He wasn’t only recording his music, he frequently performed live. Furthermore, he was a painter, although he didn’t have any art education. His artistic development was very specific and eruptive.

As a non-professional painter, Mario Marzidovšek became a member of the Society of Visual Arts in Slovenska Bistrica. Anyone who knows how difficult is to become a member of the society, if the candidate didn’t finish art academy, would know that Marzidovšek’s membership was exceptional.

As an artist, Mario Marzidovšek was inspired – according to his claims – by (traditional) cubism, futurism, dynamism, constructivism, expressionism, surrealism (*Dalism*), spontanism, experimental techniques, and new image (*nova podoba*). Basically, he was fascinated by the conceptual art, dada and especially futurism from the beginning of the century. He was also involved in other graphic activities: making collages, photographs, visual and industrial design, posters and emblems, working on xerox and minimal art (mail art, book art), collage, photo-techniques, applicable arts. Some of his experiments were also connected with kinetic art.

He was also very productive in literature. He wrote visual, concrete and dada poetry.⁷ Finally, he wrote several articles and essays on music and avant-garde arts. Hard to believe that he didn’t have any art training and almost no school training in the humanities! Without any irony, we could take his work as a work of an industrial naive artist.

Beside all the mentioned creative activities and successfully started non-profit cassette label, Mario Marzidovšek decided to publish fanzines (*Slovenski poročevalec*) and the anthologies of his poetry and essays in limited number of copies, as he said, for internal use only (which means for his friends). And, finally, he was an enthusiastic performance artist, involved in numerous (spontaneous) street happenings, *ambients*, actions and interventions, as he called his often provocative activities. Let me give you an example. When he got an idea to make a photograph from within a police car, he simply organised spontaneous street performance in Ljubljana in 1981. He lied down in the centre of the crossroads near the railway station and a colleague of him took the photographs. When police came, both were put in the police truck, so Mario was able to take some photos from within the police truck – those photographs were one of the most important for his visual material used in different contexts.⁸

Mario Marzidovšek kept up a very extensive correspondence. He wrote more than 600 letters a year to his correspondents from all around the world. At the beginning, his correspondence was predominately oriented in mail art activities. Later, a large part of his correspondence was connected with his label. Besides that, he maintained an enormous private correspondence.⁹ He was famously open to the world. His English language abilities ware not perfect, but in spite of that he answered virtually to anybody who wrote to him. The promotion material for the label was made on xerox copies and was originally written on a typewriter. His label was actually a home production with extremely low costs and equally low benefits. Mario Marzidovšek had many contacts with similar labels and individuals, interested in similar activities, who distributed his editions and vice versa.

In his improvised studio, Mario Marzidovšek succeed to prepare more than 35 recordings and sent them to other labels. His music was supposedly included in many different home-made compilations of experimental and electronic music from all around the world. Actually, as he would claim, he appeared in more than 120 compilations throughout the world, including several LP records.

He started with music performances and recordings in 1984, although he began to play electronic music some years before. When Marzidovšek appeared in public, one could have claimed that he was influenced by *Neue Slowenische Kunst* and *Laibach*, but more likely they were all influenced by similar art and music starting points (futurism, cubism and electronic music). Mario Marzidovšek had a marvelous collection of new music (20th century classics), the so called German *Kraut* Rock, electronic and minimal music. As far as I know he never went to any music school. While experimenting he developed and learned several styles. In personal contacts he was able to mention more than 30 styles he was supposed to use.¹⁰ In Marzidovšek’s music, the process of creating different “sounds” and “loops” by limited electronic equipment has been very important, but more effective were rude anger and energy in the heart of his brutal electronic music, very similar to punk or hardcore. Although his live performances were pretty chaotic and noisy, he actually never produced a musical mess. Strengthened with his conceptual artistic ideas, the clear compositional structure has always been the basis of his “playing with sounds”.

He began to explore electronic music in the late 1970s, influenced with experimental approaches to electro-acoustic avant-garde music by composers like Stockhausen and Schaefer. The new music of the 20th century was the basic source of Mario Marzidovšek’s inspiration: Schönberg’s dodecaphony and (later) serial school, Italian bruitism (Luigi Rusolo) and machine music, punctual music, he was influenced by the aleatoric procedures of John Cage and by works of the minimal composers like Steve Reich, Terry Riley and Philip Glass. The new music combined with the influences of Frank Zappa, German (*Kraut*) Rock and British and German pop/industrial

chaos (*Throbbing Gristle*, *Test Department*, *Einstürzende Neubauten*) led Mario Marzidovšek towards various ways of developing of his authorial music at the beginning of the 1980s. He was also in touch with alternative (experimental, punk and hardcore) scenes at different parts of the former Yugoslavia (Maribor, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade, Požarevac). After all, significant aspects of provocation and more or less apparent opposition stance may be detected in his music production.

Mario Marzidovšek synthesised various musical and artistic influences, however primarily, he was a conceptually radical performer. He managed to combine conceptual and composed framework with impulsive and primordial sound explorations at the stage. On the minimal repetitions and noisy patterns, the sound melismatics became the most important. He invented some terms concerning his music: *geometrical sound*, the so called *third stream*, etc. His programme concerning sound (written in 1979) was: “Complete new music and trends from the past – New social and technical disguise – Too fast tempo of discovering the unknown spheres in music – Uncompleted – Back to the traditional sources of /electronic/ sound” (see *Štajerski poročevalec*).

Mario Marzidovšek has always performed solo. He didn’t have many concerts, especially not in Ljubljana. He performed in small clubs and several artistic occasions (art exhibitions), and, predominately, with punk and hardcore bands at mini-festivals. At the beginning he performed only in Slovenia. It is difficult to find out how many times he performed in the other parts of the former Yugoslavia. In 1987 he went on a tour in Belgium and Holland and, later, in 1988-90, stayed in the Netherlands and Germany for a longer period of time. As he told us, he didn’t actually perform much there.

Naturally, Marzidovšek’s music didn’t find many enthusiasts at home. Punks and other alternatives went to his concerts but they wouldn’t accept his experimental music very enthusiastically. An improvised home-studio became the essential part of his music creativity. From the very beginning he started to record his music and send the tapes on different addresses of well known and independent newspapers as well as various mail distributions, labels and to musicians who were engaged in similar music activities. In the times of growing post punk and developing of European techno scene, his explorations were not so far away from the actual industrial trends, especially when, in 1987 and 1988, he started to use more electronic rhythms. As he wrote in his letter in 1988, he succeeded to “materialise” his music, to give it “bullocks”. His concerts and releases in compilations (*FV*, *Staal Plaat*, *V 2 Org.*) in 1987/88 confirmed his position of eclectic mixing of contemporary styles. He wrote: “Under the influences of industrial music, my music transformed in more calmed phreny, difficult to describe otherwise than ‘post-industrial phreny of collective angsts before the nearby warfare ages”’ (from the letter to the author in April 1988). He knew!

Using of the term industrial was derived from personal experience. When he started to explore art and music, Mario Marzidovšek was employed in a chemical factory. He was also fascinated with industry in the town of Maribor, one of the major industrial towns in the former Yugoslavia. In the late phase of his work, his music became much closer to other European post-industrial works with apparent dance connotations “high technology on one hand and alter-dance on the other” (Tomazič 1988). Mario Marzidovšek has named that phase as “more melted industrial sampling tech”.

It is not a coincidence that the most mature work of Mario Marzidovšek was a cassette entitled *Marburg* (a German name for Maribor). On that tape he successfully combined industrial electronic music with occasional techno or electro funk (dancy) elements. Scott Lewis wrote about that tape in *Option* (August 1987) as follows: “Retained industrial electronics with simple rhythms in the center. It’s pretty good. I must admit that I would presumably be enthusiastic about it if it would be released some seven years ago. Some things are too similar to others, released in last years (though, supposedly, in Yugoslavia they didn’t hear them).

⁵ The essential programme goals of the *MML* were (1) the cassette production of Marzidovšek’s own music (*MML Production*), (2) publishing cassettes and cooperating with groups and individuals, (3)

establishing contacts and mediating between independent productions from all around the world and cooperating in the various music and art projects, (4) distribution of Yugoslav progressive music in Yugoslavia and abroad and (5) the exchange of ideas and opinions from all areas of art.

⁶ Some of his former acquaintances even claim that he lives in London.

⁷ In his mail catalogue from 1986 it was possible to find the following “books” (they were in fact fanzine-style photocopies): “Book”, *Conceptual and Art Projects: Marzidovšek & Skrbinek + Mail-Book Art: Concrete & Visual Poetry: Marzidovšek 1982-1985; Minimal Art: Marzidovšek 1982-1985; “Different Principle” 1: Atonal Xerox Art – Marzidovšek 1982-1985; Dada Poetry – Marzidovšek: “Poems for Children From Tins”.*

⁸ That was Marzidovšek’s interpretation of the event. His colleague who was with him at that occasion has told us another story. They went to Ljubljana by train to visit a concert by Siouxsie and The Banshees and were pretty drunk by the time they arrived. The “happening” happened at the first crossroads near the railway station and was more or less unintended, improvised and chaotic.

⁹ He numbered his letters. The number of the invitation for a founding meeting of the informal association of “alternative activists” from Maribor (*Štajerska scena – Styria scene*), sent to me in 1985, was 762/1985. The number of the last letter Marzidovšek has sent to me in 1988 was 4185/88!

¹⁰ Megalomania was his trademark. Concerning musical styles, he was supposedly working with the following list: *musique concrete, serial/punctual music, /a/tonal systems, dodecaphony in electronic sound, electronic expressionism, minimalism, collage music, Dadaism, aleatoric procedures, improvisation/ experimental sound, geometrical/abstract sound, futurism/bruitism; primitivé sound, synthetical orchestrated music, synthetical organs, synthetic vocal/chorus music, prepared sound of traditional acoustic means, electronic treatment of vocal, third stream music, improvised and experimental jazz, minimalism within jazz, synthetic jazz, xiloton music, electronically and mechanically prepared piano /alter-minimal/, synthetical half-industrial sound, new-sound-painting, reincarnation of the German sound in the 1970s, new psychedelic, combinational music forms (see Štajerski poročevalec).*

¹¹ Mario Marzidovšek once participated on the “mail” concert in San Antonio, Texas. Supposedly, Elliott Sharp was also engaged in the same concert.



He was extremely sensitive and was able to detect social disturbances long before any other. He was very well aware of the power of music and its dangerous elements. He used music as a form of exploring and, simultaneously, provocation. His experiments with sound, grounded on very limited material possibilities, were unique. He used old Farfisa organ, and several home-made electronic devices or devices taken from improvised electronic laboratory. His sound explorations were extremely personal. He was quite aware of his music messages. Many times he said (in personal conversations) that he would explode if he wouldn’t work as an artist. His energy was indeed extraordinary.

Impact of the MML, “the first private independent label/production company” in the former Yugoslavia

Mario Marzidovšek worked alone – not only musically, he was an extreme individualist – but that doesn’t mean that as a producer and leader of a label he had an ambition to become a kind of tutor, censor or selector. His credo was to produce anything worth to produce within alternative scene. Creative idea was favoured, not technical equipment and skill. In fact he was extremely tolerant and was able to establish connections between very different persons. It was the only way to drive forwards very different music activities in northeast Slovenia in 1985 and 1986. Music was as diverse as punk, hardcore, industrial rock, improvised music, electronic music, acoustic and art music. He never earned much money with his label. If he did, he used it for further production plans. Several times he was prepared to pay costs of recordings in studio for bands. The production of *MML* was both a small scale production of a kind of home recordings, sold to fans and given to friends (cf. Finnegan 1989: 156), and alternative regional, national and international network distribution.

His “laboratory”, *Minimal Laboratorij*, was in fact an improvised studio with home made devices and some old instruments and very old tape recorders. He had home made 4 channel mixing console and very cheap microphones, some of them of Russian origin. The effective combination for noise!

MML was a non-commercial underground label and it also became an important local distribution centre for experimental and alternative music. Marzidovšek was involved in an extremely wide spread mail distribution network with one of its centres at the Post Office Box in Slovenska Bistrica. He received many records and cassettes in exchange for his products, so he was selling them by mail throughout the former Yugoslavia. Among them, he also dis-tributed some illegal cassette (live) recordings of various new wave, punk and experimental groups, altogether approximately 50 titles. However it was not a one-way exchange. Marzidovšek’s cassettes appeared in several other similar alternative distributions and catalogues in Western Europe and in the United States (for example: *Graf Haufen/Mutant Music Distribution*, *X-Kurzhen*, *Gog-Art/Afflict Records*, *BBI Records and Tapes*, *Bloedvlag/Nihilistic Records*, *De Koude Oorlog*, *Global Music Distribution*, *Dark Star Tapes*, *Used Records Mail Order*, etc.). Furthermore, he distributed independent cassettes and records from the whole territory of the former Yugoslavia throughout the world.

He started his distribution in Slovenia, but simultaneously made contacts with other regions of the former Yugoslavia and abroad. During the first two years information about *MML* releases was published in the most important Slovenian weekly of the time, *Madina*, but after 1987, when *Madina* ceased to write about new and alternative music, he oriented towards other regions of the former Yugoslavia (so, the reviews of his cassettes were published in *Student*, *Rock* magazine, etc.).

Despite published information about his label, Mario Marzidovšek was convinced that personal communication, whether oral or by mail, is the most effective.

Marzidovšek’s *Minimal Laboratorij* was not only important because it was an efficient channel for releasing and distribution of alternative music from northeast Slovenia alternative scene. It was important because its position was both local and global. Mail connections with similar alternative productions throughout the world were essential for internationalisation of the local scene(s) and for “localisation” of the “global” alternatives. Every process of autochthonisation (or indigenisation, if I may use Appadurai’s term) is in fact the process of mediation between the adaptation strategies of individuals (and small groups) within the changing context of everyday life in the particular localities (and regions) and the challenges of the global trends.

Contrary to major regional commercial record labels in the former Yugoslavia, *MML* was not limited to the internal market. It was not limited in the range of any market at all. If the local music production may well serve the needs of the majority of local population (and their inherited musical taste), then some creative parts of local scenes may be well interacting within the global network.

Local scenes may be ephemeral or unimportant in the global exchange of products and ideas. However, creating of the autonomous sphere of production and creating of the autonomous network of communications does have effects. They are, mostly, limited on the local contexts. Nevertheless, the very life is a matter of locality, so any production is necessary local in its origins. The relationship between cultural imperialism and its local appropriation is far from being simple, there is a complex “tension between progress and restoration; between the eclectic, syncretic forms of acculturated expression brought about by the meeting of various musical techniques, technologies and traditions” (Negus, cited in Mitchell 1996: 264).

“Local practices and musical idiosyncrasies” are nowadays increasingly important, not just in terms of providing expression for “often problematic notions of national musical identity,” but as agents of what Appudarai has called ‘repatriation of difference’ (Mitchell 1996: 264). Although John Street concludes that “there is no clear or direct link between music and locality, except as a rather nebulous indicator of identity and difference” (in Mitchell 1996: 89), it is worth to check out the locality of the *MML* production according to the criteria of the proposed six main indicators of (local) musical identity: industrial base, social experience, aesthetic perspective, political experience, community and scene (ibid.). In Marzidovšek’s work and his label *MML* there were significant traits or reflections of industrial base (concerning both real industries in the area and local/regional music industry) and the *MML* itself (cassette production, re-cordings, distribution) was a kind of industrial base for Marzidovšek’s music. By assisting in organising concerts and