



*Now and then you hit upon a rare talent in the EDM world...music that transports you and you find it in the most unexpected places. Such is the case with [ZZZZRA](#) aka Alexandre Lehmann. After some internet sleuthing, I finally discovered the man behind the music and tracked him down to France. Here's our little chat !!*

**CGNY:** Hi Alex! Thanks for taking the time to talk to CGNY! Really loving your music. Isn't the internet fab the way you can find delicious and new things to enjoy!

So I happened upon your Vimeo account and saw some amazing 3D animations that sort of just blew me away (I'm a big fan of fractals and all that math/infinity stuff, Escher etc) Le Trompe

L'oeuil – if you will. But the music to accompany it was what really took me on a journey. Who are you and where do you come from?! (Ricardo? Alex? Je ne sais pas!)

**ZR** : Hi Fiona, thank you so much for your invitation! My real name is Alexandre Lehmann, I'm going to be 40 this summer and I live in Paris West suburbia. As a teenager/young adult I studied video art in Paris ; one of my teachers was a contemporary music composer, working with the prestigious Ircam studio and I spent all of my time in my schools music recording studio, smoking weed and doing (almost) nothing!

At that time I also read some papers about fractal geometry. I also had the opportunity to be at a Benoit Mandelbrot conference in Paris. A few years later, I bought my first PC desktop and I immediately fell in love with a legendary freeware called Fractint. The best thing is this freeware is still in development! (<http://www.fractint.org/> )

**CGNY**: I read a little bit on your website ( [zzzzra.com](http://zzzzra.com) ) about the hardware you have used or use to make your music. But how did you get started in listening or making electronica? Who did you listen to growing up that made you think “oh I'd like to make that kind of music?!”

**ZR** : My interest in electronic music first came from listening to German bands like Tangerine Dream and Ash Ra Temple, but also from early break beat and pre-rap artists like Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash. I used to be (and still am) a Frank Zappa hard-core fan ; that led me to Edgar Varese's work, particularly his "Poème électronique" piece. By then, the acid/house/newbeat music movement landed in France and I instantly fell in love with electronic dance music and rave parties.

A big event was the first time I listened to the Basic Channel / Chain Reaction production. This was the most organic music I ever heard and it was purely made with electronic signals. I knew this was the perfect type of music for me.

**CGNY**: What inspires your music/art! Its so psychedelic to me. Have you experimented with any mind altering substances that you feel enhance your music?

**ZR :** I did use mind altering substances in the early 90's after reading the fabulous books "Connaissance par les gouffres" and "l'infini turbulent" written by Henri Michaux. I felt I could understand better all that trance music logic - at that time I also listened to a lot of ethnic trance music, specially gnawa music. Now I'm a pretty ascetic person, I don't even drink alcohol anymore!

**CGNY:** A lot of your releases you seem to give away for free or under the Creative Commons License which seems very generous. Why did you decide to do that as opposed to the usual mp3 outlets? Is that a personal philosophy?

**ZR :** I started to get really involved in music home-production in 2007 and, at this time, the Creative Commons netlabels seemed to be the best way to get people's attention. Actually it still is. There are some great netlabels around ! I enjoy sharing things for free, although I'd also like to get some bucks with my production so I can spend it on new gears, softwares and weed.

**CGNY:** Do you dj yourself – I mean play out at clubs and stuff? If so, how has your music been received? Some of it seems to be to be completely clubby and danceable and other tracks are very ambient and more orchestral in their composition.

**ZR :** Unfortunately I am not a DJ, and I don't know how to play live music. I never had enough time nor energy to practice and master this art. Anyway I'm more comfortable working in my living room on my laptop, this way I don't experience pressure and stress. I guess I am not a showman.

I'm willing to explore the minimalist dub music nebula, be it more on the techno side or the ambient side. My main goal is to get sleepy in less than 5 minutes while I am listening to my own production with headphones, lying on a couch. If I do so then it's fine for the release.

**CGNY:** That's genius ! You are also a 3D visual artist. Did both evolve together? I read that you took some time away from music to work on the art itself. Is one more important to you than the other? Or you just wanted a chance to focus exclusively on art. It is the perfect combination! Tell us about the programs you use for this. Mandelbox 3D. Do you need to know math to use it? Are you a secret math wizard?!



**ZR :** I have trouble to focus my interest on only one thing for a long period. Since I am just a modest hobbyist, I can afford such a behaviour.

Mandelbox 3D is a small free software created by Jesse and distributed by fractalforums.com. You don't need to be a math wizard to use it, although I wish I was one because I'm sure it would help a lot in my fractal exploration work - mostly for the shape design. Anyway complex shapes usually means very long rendering time ; I can't really afford that because I'm still using a pretty old computer.

**CGNY:** Your label Perso Records – tell us about that. It's all your own releases I presume? And about Insectorama ?

**ZR :** At the time I first got involved with the Internet way of distributing music, back in fall 90's, mp3.com web platform used to be quite popular and artists could get some bucks from their work, even if they decided to share the music for free. When I created my mp3.com account I was asked to enter a label name in the form, so I chose ["Perso Records"](#) even if it was an empty shell. Now Perso Records is dedicated to free distribution of all my rejected material (or alternative track versions) that regular labels/netlabels don't want/need for their releases.

As for Insectorama, Markus Masuhr asked me if I could work on a mini album for his label. I was very pleased to, so here it is. It is as simple as that ! Insectorama is such a great free netlabel, I couldn't refuse such a generous offer.

**CGNY:** Who are the musical artists working now that you admire – if any? What gets you excited musically?

**ZR :** I mostly listen to old music, ranging from 60's pop to afro-beat, funk, dub, post-punk, free jazz... I don't listen much to contemporary electronic dance music except for the very specific

dub-techno genre. I don't want to give you names because I don't want to forget anyone. Though I can list the "gods" for you : Moritz Von Oswald, Mark Ernestus, Rod Modell, Mike Von Schommer, Stephen Hitchell...

**CGNY:** How did you come up with the moniker, ZZZZRA?

**ZR:** Well it was mid-90's and a friend suggested a name that a snake-pig hypothetical creature could eventually pronounce. He came up with zra and then I chose to write it with four "z". Unfortunately, one year later, I found on the Internet that there is a guy named Zacharia Zzzzra living in San Francisco. What are the odds ? Funny :)

**CGNY:** What are your hopes for your music and your art? Are you planning anything with live gigs or visual displays? Have you ever played overseas? We'd love to hear you in NYC!

**ZR :** Actually I don't have specific hopes in this area because I don't have any plans. Well maybe I could have the use for a more powerful computer so the rendering time for my fractal work could be a lot faster. I am not looking for starification, I don't care about showing my face in the medias. Maybe that's why I don't really care for the live acting. Oh, also I am a claustrophobic person, I didn't travel by plane since about 15 years. Unfortunately I won't be back to NYC until teleportation takes over plane traffic.

<http://soundcloud.com/zzzzra>

Fractal Art work and vids [here](#)

Just uploaded the latest mix of all original tracks by ZZZZRA