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Neil Wiernik has been making sounds since the 80s. Listeners might know him the best from the minimal dub atmospheres he releases under the name Naw. Apart from producing music, he is also the curator of the digital art quarterly Vague Terrain, but when he is in a post-rock mood he feels free to grab his guitar as well. Neil was putting the final touches to a great amount of music when we interviewed him.



PRAE.HU: Have you learnt to play any so called traditional instrument?

NAW: I play a number of "non digital" instruments; Guitar and Bass are the 2 that I have played the longest since 1984 maybe even earlier then that but it was in 84 that I began to write my own music with these instruments.

PRAE.HU: How did you start vague terrain? Do you receive positive feedback or are there just 'silent downloads'?

NAW: vague terrain started off as an extension to an earlier project that Greg Smith and I started in the late 90s called "clonk". Clonk was an on going series of live art events that aimed to merge both visual art and music into an immersive live art event. We eventually wanted to take these curated events to a different level, which was to grade an online space for these artists to present these digital works. The idea was to create an online curated art gallery or depository of digital art making as a way of documenting a lot of the work we encountered in our everyday lives. From the start we received a lot of positive feedback and support from our peers, but it took us a while to gain respect from the academic work of art, it took a while for the other journals, academics, curators and museums to catch on to us. But that has changed even as recent as last week one of the curators at the MOMA in New York gave us a mention as a place to find digital art work.

PRAE.HU: What were efforts of making yourself "accepted"? How do you decide the main theme of an issue?

NAW: There were no efforts to be accepted we just did what we did regardless. We took the attitude that if you don't like what we do don't read or present work with us, for the most part we have never been refused by an artist to publish with us.

The issue theme's are collectively decided on by Greg and I, we pull together ideas of what we think would work well. Sometimes a guest curator will suggest an theme to us and if its reasonable we will usually go with it.

PRAE.HU: What will the next issue be about? Do you already know?

NAW: Our next issue will be on the theme of the city, we have other issues coming up this year another on the theme of interdisciplinary collaborations

PRAE.HU: For you, what is the greatest benefit and the greatest tragedy of digitalism?

NAW: I don't really see there being much tragedy in terms of digital art making, in fact I mainly see it as a positive thing. For one the limits are boundless, all you need is an idea, the rest of having the knowledge how to create the tool that you need to make that idea happen. In a lot of cases that tool

or software is already there so it's just a matter of making your ideas happen. I also see the positive in the fact that distribution of an art work is easily done through digital technology. So, on many levels I see it as a good thing and not a bad thing at all.

PRAE.HU: Many artists claim that their "ideas" cannot be elaborated in digital environments, e.g. Brian Eno himself states that... Why do you think those artists are dissatisfied with digital art? How is that situation of "ideas" in case of your "non digital" instruments?



NAW: I think that working in a digital medium is like any other medium, you can't realize a song with paint and brushes but you can with an instrument. It's really just a matter of choosing the instrument that works best for you to work in. I choose a computer and a guitar right now maybe tomorrow I will feel that crayon and paper will work better for me. I can't speak for other artists but for myself I really do think about the medium to present my work in and if a digital medium is not working for me for a project I don't limit myself to

a digital medium and start to look at the best method in which to present that idea. So really it's not the medium that directs my work but it's the work itself that directs the medium. So, if I have a body of work that would require me to just work with sticks and stones to make music for it then that is how I would work.

PRAE.HU: What have you been working on lately?

NAW: I'm not really playing many shows these days as I'm very busy working in the studio, I'm just putting the final touches on a new full-length album for Noise Factory Records due out in August 2009. I just finished recording another album called *The Birch White* with another project of mine called "The Whisper Room" which is a post-rock project I have with Aidan Baker of Nadja. It's very different than the material I do under the name of "Naw" which is a nice change for me. It took us 18 months to record that record which will be out on Elevation Recordings in March of 2009. I have also been doing a lot of remix work and working on some EPs for some smaller digital only labels, these will slowly be released throughout 2009. I am also about to begin some collaboration work with experimental accordion composer Raylene Campbell, which I hope will result in some interesting music. At the moment there are no tours planned mostly not because I don't want to but mostly because I am finding it hard to find people willing to book someone from Canada in Europe or the US, the cost of travel seems to almost always hinder the opportunities for shows outside of my own country.

PRAE.HU: Some producers even move away so that they can get closer to the "scene"...

NAW: Moving some place else would mean that I would just create a problem for myself to get shows in my hometown/country. So how I see it is if I moved to Europe, well then that same problem that I have getting shows in Europe from here would reverse itself. I also don't believe in turning my back on my home town, as it is them who supported my work from the beginning and

abandoning them just to get shows some place else is not really how I like to conduct my self as an artist. I have a very loyal fan base in Canada and I respect them, and would not abandon them just for a few more shows in another country.

PRAE.HU: You have mentioned many collaborations... What would be the collaboration of your dreams?

NAW: My dream collaboration is more about how we work then with whom. So for myself a dream collaboration would be with an artist where things just fall into place, where all the work to make things work is not necessary to happen that it just is.

[Naw website](#)

[Vague Terrain website](#)