Report from Soundtrack\_Cologne

I was this year participating for FFACE again in Soundtrack\_Cologne.

This year there was a special focus on computergame music.

This was reflected in one panel of my arranging, which focused on the legal matters and financial future of game music. This panel I didn’t parttake in, as I know nothing about the subject, but was only trying to piece it together, The moderator was Miki Meuser, a German Film Composer from defcom. Participants were Michael Stoeckemann from Hamburg and Chris Huelsbeck, both high profiled game composers, and Johan van de Voet from Holland and FFACE.

The situation is peculiar for game composers, since there compositions are normally a total buy out. So they have basically no royalties. In Germany this results in a situation where game composers are not allowed into GEMA the German collective society. This is widely agreed to be a difficult situation, as game composers often make soundtrack editions of their work on records, and thus are caught in a grey zone, where they have to squeeze their way through the rightholders landscape. This is not sustainable, and measures to amend this situation should be undertaken, amongst in FFACE and EU, to force colletive societies to make applyable regulations particularly for game composers. This even more so, as the game production companies are now seeing the opportunity of making proper music editions of their game music, in collaborations with composers ,making a share on the profit of this. This is a new situation, and is particularly examplified in the US, surprisingly.

The day after I did a seminar with a Danish Sound designer, Roar Skau Olsen, with whom I did a Danish film, (“excuse me”) this year. We examplified by pictures with different music to the same scenes, like stages of the film, the defficulties and solutions, the were to the film, which was a very complex film of many stylistic and expressional layers. This was done in such a way that we also spoke openly about the problems of the process and the film, and the dissatisfactions afterwards. This was purposely done, as many seminars at STC are made in such way that there is a moderator who is very loyal to the person in the chair. That person is again extremely loyal, bordering to sickening, to the projet he talks about, and thus the audience, mainly consisting of students, first of all get the feeling that there are never really problems in a postproduction process, and that the people in the chair are just *soo* lucky. But other than that, they get nothing to take home. The composers in the chair often keep their secrets and solutions tightly closed, and let no insight into the real issues in making films, but stick to anecdotes and more or less common surface issues, just like Jeff Rona did this year. SO the panel we did was merely to try and give out some experience and thoughts and reflections on making a sound/music process that could possibly help hightlighting some subjects for the spectators. It was also my general impression that the audience perceived it like this.

Later we had another panel, moderated by Marcus Loeber a Composer from the composers club Germany, on the problems of on line music content and providers . I was taking part, Johan van der Voet, professor Ahlberg a German Lawyer specialist in Copyright law, and A guy who’s name escapes me, from a German online content provider. A report on that panel will also be provided by Marcus Loeber. Let me just state here that the conclusions are following: It was stated that the Bern and Rome conventions were taken more into account when talking of the actual politics and lobbying going on at the moment. These are treaties signed by a 115 countries worldwide. Treaties stating basic laws of rightholders and authors rights. Prof. Ahlberg was very insisting that this treatises must be referred to in all negotiations, just as UN conventions are referred to in international conflicts and negotiations. Further there is a general agreement that the idea of hunting content users individually for stealing online content is futile and useless. Rather, there should be done serious attempts of miscrediting big companies like Google, apple, youtube, etc. for making technology to quickly and smoothly provide the content, but to ensure the content providers living in this big business has been missed out completely. They have build a motorway using slaves to pave it; the content providers! Now they are, just like in the yearly days of industry, starting to pay a little bit for the content, as they would look too bad if they didn’t, but the fees are in general redicilously minescule, and great attempts to show this publicly and make it clear to users worldwide, is of utter importance. Because; if the online companies, realize that they a bad rumor at large, they will panic and change policies. There were many examples of how little you earn on online streaming on this different services, devastating.

On the other hand there was also put forward the suggestion that we should, as composers be more in direct contact with the audience, and not focus too much on the online thing. That a strength could be to return to a close intimate contact with the audiences, in live situations, and that the future is very much there. As it is an eternal truth that people might like to listen to music and watch films at home on the computer, but, still, the most important is the live experience of being in a room, enjoying the music or film together with other people, and in case of music, to see and feel real people executing their art.