

Biography of Manuel Göttsching - also known as Mr. ASHRA and the man behind ASH RA TEMPEL

Modest, quiet, bad with self-promotion and with answering the phone, composer and multi instrumentalist (he's one of the best on guitar :-)) Manuel Göttsching is instead content to stay at home meditating on his next project by painting his Berlin's flat windows, but yet, he is prominently exhibited as a wax model in Asia's largest Wax Museum, in the Tokyo Tower:, showcasing him as a world class musician.

This legendary guitarist of the 70's funky Germany has profoundly influenced today's electronic music, and his compositions are performed by contemporary ensembles like Zeitkratzer, by classical pianists as well as jazz musicians.

Beginning as Ash Ra Tempel, later Ashra, then solo as Manuel Göttsching, creating and originating the German music scene together at a time when groups like Tangerine Dream, Agitation Free, Kraftwerk and Can, to name a few, put music made in Germany on the map.

While there has always been and still is an Anglo-American musical influence, this new musical movement did not try to reproduce what they heard, but to make something new!

Since at the time the German language was not popular in rock music, most performers wrote lyrics in English, and as Ash Ra Tempel refused to play that commercial game, they more or less decided not to have lyrics at all!

Manuel Göttsching enjoyed a creative environment, surrounded by painters, musicians, film makers and fashion designers. He composed and performed live music for various fashion shows by Claudia Skoda and customized runway show music for fashion designer Wolfgang JOOP!

If you still cannot put your finger on the person that I am presenting here, one of the most celebrated pieces he recorded is the 1981 E2-E4, which has also been remixed as "Sueno Latino".

In the beginning...

Manuel Göttsching was born in Berlin on September 9th, 1952.

Like any teenager of that period, he was listening to Jimi Hendrix, the Rolling Stones, Cream, Small Faces, Who, Fleetwood Mac...

He had studied classical guitar from early childhood, but wanted to play drums at the age of 15, so he and his best friend Harmut Enke created their first band on Harmut's 15th birthday.

Manuel ended up as the singer of the band...

A year later he studied improvisations with famous Swiss avant-garde composer, Thomas Kessler.

The 70s...

Founding of ASH RA TEMPEL, Manuel Göttsching (guitar), Harmut Enke (bass) and Klaus Schulze (ex-Tangerine Dream) (drums), after purchasing Pink Floyd's sound equipment in London.

The idea was to combine blues influenced improvisations and new sounds with traditional instruments: guitar, bass and drums.

The debut album Ash Ra Tempel was released in 1971, recorded in Hamburg by famed Connie Plank. Klaus Schulze left the band to pursue a solo career.

In 1972, Manuel and Hartmut with guest musicians delivered Ash Ra Tempel's second album Schwingungen, recorded at Studio Dirks near Cologne.

In the summer of the same year Ash Ra Tempel, Manuel Goettsching and Hartmut Enke, together with Timothy Leary and other guests recorded Seven Up at Sinus Studio Bern, Switzerland and mixed at Studio Dirks (third Ash Ra Tempel album)

It did not stop there. Ash Ra Tempel with guest Klaus Schulze, joined by Manuel's girl friend Rosi spontaneously and totally unrehearsed recorded Join Inn at Studio Dirks, after the completion of the Tarot album with various musicians.

These sessions of musician gatherings were an exciting experience. Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, the producer of the OHR label encouraged jam sessions at the Studio Dirks. OHR was a pioneer label to promote new German rock music and as Manuel Göttsching said, "this was a revolutionary task".

The so-called Cosmic Sessions were always recorded; a tape was constantly running. The results of these musical meetings within the OHR studios led by Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser were later released as the Cosmic Couriers series.

After a sold out, spectacular debut concert in Paris in February 1973 followed by a splendid performance in Cologne, Hartmut Enke quit Ash Ra Tempel and music for good.

Manuel convinced his girlfriend Rosi to record a new album on which she would sing. This new line-up, with guest musician Harald Grosskopf on drums and Dieter Dirks on bass led to Ash Ra Tempel Starring Rosi.

In 1974, Manuel set up his own Studio Roma and released his first solo album Inventions for Electric Guitar; recorded with just his guitar and two tape recorders. It was a break through, a masterpiece, played in one continuous uninterrupted rhythm - precise like a metronome. It manifested Manuel's signature style. (the many years of classical guitar lessons obviously didn't hurt!) And, what a crescendo on Echo Waves!

Lutz Ulbrich joined Manuel Göttsching as second guitar player in order to perform Manuel's composition Inventions for the first time in December 74 in Paris, supported by church organ player John Strawn on synthesizer. This was followed by a series of concerts in France and England throughout 1975, when Göttsching/Ulbrich also collaborated for the soundtrack to the film Le Berceau de Cristal by French director Philippe Garrel.

Contrasting with Inventions for Electric Guitar, Göttsching recorded his second solo album New Age of Earth in 1976, as composition for keyboards and synthesizers.

In the same year Manuel Göttsching (on electronics and guitar) and Klaus Krueger on drums (who also performed with Tangerine Dream) played live at one of Claudia Skoda's fashion shows at her studio Fabrik Neu.

In December 1976, Manuel played his first solo concert tour for the release of New Age of Earth in France.

1977 Ash Ra Tempel became Ashra. This was a break with the past; a new beginning. Manuel formed this new band with Lutz Ulbrich (guitar) and Harald Grosskopf (drums) performing his composition

New Age Of Earth for the first time with his new band for Virgin's worldwide release of the solo album in London's Regents Park Open Air Theatre.

He recorded his third solo album Blackouts, again more guitar dominated, and later toured performing this composition with Ulbrich and Grosskopf in France, Belgium and Switzerland. The album and the title are inspired by his visit to NY where Manuel experienced the first blackout in his live...

He also composed the two pieces Dream & Desire, initially for a radio feature by Olaf Leitner in 1977, released on CD only 14 years later.

In 1978 the band finally decided to record an album together, Correlations, under Manuel's direction. In addition, Manuel performed solo, live on electronics for Claudia Skoda's fashion show "Laufsteg" at the renowned Berlin Egyptian Museum.

Belle Alliance, as its name reveals, was a true collaboration of the Ashra trio recorded in summer 1979, and in November.

This year marks another memorable solo live performance by Manuel to take place at the Kongresshalle Berlin. It was for "Big Birds" one of the most spectacular fashion shows by Claudia Skoda, featuring Salome & Luciano Castelli, the famous Berlin based performance artists and painters (Die Jungen Wilden), on a trapez. Manuel started by just playing a heart beat over the sound system in the jam packed room full of spectators - it caused a collective physical sensation and held everyone spellbound. The Kongresshalle collapsed shortly after the event - and rumor has it was because of Manuel's powerful music!

Also in 1979, for the first time, Manuel produced a foreign project. Salome and Luciano Castelli asked him to do their first record under the title and their band's name GEILE TIERE with guest singer Louise.

The 80s...

That same year, Manuel recorded, mixed and produced the 10" album and video clip "Die Dominas" (The Dominatrix) by his girlfriend Rosi and Claudia Skoda.

A year later, Ashra (Manuel Götttsching, Lutz Ulbrich and Harald Grosskopf) appeared on the Spanish "Musical Express" TV show, Barcelona.

Fed Up with the corporate music industry business, Manuel recorded in December 1981 in an 1 hour session, E2-E4 in his Studio Roma, which was released three years later on the label "Inteam Records".

This recording gained a great deal of attention at the end of the 80s in the house, techno and dance-floor scenes and was remixed as well as sampled by dozens of bands and DJs, one of them being "Sueno Latino", an Italian group of musicians and DJs.

He performed again for the Skoda fashion show in 1982 at Berlin's Museum of Art, a composition for eight drummers, followed by another show the year after, this time at the Light Hall of the Berlin Technical University. This was Manuel Götttsching's composition for a guitar orchestra featuring Manuel Götttsching, FJ Krüger and Lutz Ulbrich on guitar, Harald Grosskopf on drums, DJ Zak Preen on percussions.

1983 he had two unreleased studio productions: Guitare Fou and Tonight chez Wagner.

In 1985 Ashra, still with Lutz Ulbrich, Harald Grosskopf and Manuel Götttsching, performed in England and started the recording of Tropical Heat, which lasted two years, to be remixed by Manuel Götttsching in 1991, the year of its release.

1986 Götttsching composed a piece for German designer Joop! for his fashion show "Ost-West" at the Düsseldorf's international fashion fair and he also did the music for a play by Antonio Skarmeta, a Chilean exiled film director and professor at Berlin's Film Academy; later, the first democratic Ambassador of Chile in Germany. The play was called "Burning Patience".

Ashra participated in the official programme of "Berlin - Cultural Capital of Europe 1988" to take place at the Berlin Planetarium. For this event Manuel Götttsching and Lutz Ulbrich composed and performed the music "Desert Sounds" to novels by Albert Camus, St Exupéry and Otl Aicher. The main parts of this performance were re-edited by Manuel Götttsching in his Studio Roma and released a year later as Walkin' the Desert.

In 1989 he collaborated with the Italian dance music production DFC. The number 1 chart hit "Sueno Latino" was born, based on 80% of E2-E4.

The 90s...

...showed a new interest in historical recordings. The beginning of which was the release of the 1977 recording Dream & Desire, 1991.

The same year Götttsching collaborated with Urs Remond, Jan Schlubach (Wim Wender's scenographer), composing the soundtrack to Bram Stoker's play "Dracula" at the Berlin's famous Hebbel-Theater featuring German stars such as Sigrid Landgrebe and Erik Hansen.

Ashra re-united for the Rhine's Cultural Days in Cologne, an open-air concert in front of the Cologne Cathedral, in cooperation with German Radio and TV Station WDR/ARD, followed by the release of Tropical Heat, a remix of the 1985-1987 recordings.

In 1993 the 15th album Le Berceau de Cristal with the original recording of the 1975 soundtrack for Philippe Garrel's film with the same title was released as Ash Ra Tempel's 7th album.

In 1995 Götttsching also released a collaboration recording with Michael Hoenig back from 1976 called Early Water, followed in 1996 by The Private Tapes, a series of six CDs with all his unreleased recordings of the period between 1969 and 1979.

In 1997, Ashra was invited to tour in Japan, and it was the band's reformation with a new member, Steve Baltes on keyboards and electronics. Ashra concerts at the open air festival Burg Herzberg, Germany and in Nijmegen, Holland followed.

Manuel also performed solo in Center for Arts Höfgen-Kaditzsch presenting a composition for the 34-mirror installation RVSP by the Berlin artist Mercedes Engelhardt; later released as Die Mulde.

1998 Manuel Götttsching composed the music to Walter Mehrings famous poem Ode an Berlin (Ode to Berlin) and accompanied German movie star Ben Becker on piano forte in Ilona Ziok's internationally awarded musical film "Kurt Geron's KARUSSELL" (world premiere: Berlin Film Festival, 1999). Other famous actors and musicians featured in the movie were Ute Lemper, Bente Kahan, Coco Schumann, Max Raabe, Schall & Hauch. Manuel Götttsching also produced the Soundtrack CD to the film for Warner.

Ashra's activities in 1998 were the releases of the 23th album Sauce Hollandaise, a recording from the concert in Nijmegen of the previous year, and the 24th album @shra, a release of recordings from the first part of the Japan Tour.

The 21st Century...

The year 2000 referred to quite a lot of events, starting with a one time reunion of Ash Ra Tempel with Manuel Göttsching and Klaus Schulze playing at the Royal Festival Hall in London for Julian Cope's Cornucopia Festival on April 2nd. The reunion was rounded up with the release of two new Ash Ra Tempel albums, Göttsching's and Schulze's studio album Friendship recorded in 1999 / 2000 and the live album from the Royal Festival Hall concert.

Ashra, with the line-up Göttsching/Ulbrich/Grosskopf/Baltes, played at the Akademie der Künste, (Berlin's Academy of Arts) during the French-German cultural exchange "Paris - Berlin 2000", in collaboration with the Berlin Music Festival "Z 2000". The closing ceremony performance of this festival was a concert by the Berlin based international avant-garde chamber orchestra Zeitkratzer, performing E2-E4 on classical instruments, for the first time ever.

2001 saw the release of two videos: "Ashra Live at the Open Air Festival Herzberg 1997" and "Die Mulde" by Manuel Göttsching from 1997.

In 2002, Manuel Göttsching set up his own label MG.ART, on which he released @shra Vol. 2, the second part of the Japan Tour 1997 and The Making Of, a 3CD box with unreleased tracks from the original session tapes with Lutz Ulbich and Harald Grosskopf, recorded for the production of Correlations.

In 2003, the FilmFest Brunswick, Germany, commissioned a composition to F.W.Murnau's silent movie "The Haunted Castle" (Schloss Vogelöd, 1921) for a live performance with the Chamber Orchestra of the Brunswick State Theatre at their annual film festival.

Göttsching also founded his film production company CV Films and produced his first film: "The Theatre Republic" (Die Bühnenrepublik) awarded with the prestigious German Grimme Award.

In 2004 the documentaries "The Nomi Song" (Teddy Award at the Berlin Film Festival) and "Salvador Allende" (to premiere at Cannes Film Festival) followed.

He composed and performed music for Ilona Ziok's documentary, "The Count and the Comrade" (Der Junker und der Kommunist), to be released in 2008.

In 2005, two more Göttsching solo album releases followed: Concert for Murnau, with live parts of the performance to Murnau's silent film in Brunswick in 2003, and Die Mulde, a studio mix of the original 1997 live event.

In March 2005, together with the contemporary ensemble Zeitkratzer, he performed E2-E4 (featuring on concert guitar) at Berlin's famous Volksbühne - a maxi CD of the concert recording was finally released as X-mas present in December.

At the end of April 2006 he performed a new solo program with video artist Kinga at the Anoyo Festival in Japan. Kinga realized also a 1-hour TV documentary about him for Polish Cultural TV Channel on this occasion.

In July the concert was repeated in Poland during the biggest Polish International Film Festival, "Era Nowe Horyzonty". During this festival he also performed for the second time to the silent movie "The Haunted Castle" (Schloss Vogelöd) at the Wroclaw Opera; this time, on pure electronics.

In April Manuel Göttsching's label released a CD and LP of a collaboration between him and Joe Claussell: Joaquim Joe Claussell meets Manuel Göttsching

End of August he performed for the first time ever E2-E4 in its original form solo on electric guitar and electronics at the Metamorphose Festival in Japan.

Finally, on 12th of December, the 25th anniversary of this groundbreaking recording, E2-E4 was performed, by himself; solo again, in the city where the music was born: Berlin. The location for the unique event was Berghain.

2006 also marks the premiere of his next film production "The Sounds of Silents" (Dir. Ilona Ziok), awarded as "film historical sensation".

In 2007, Götttsching released his 33rd album "Live at Mt. Fuji" and his first DVD "Wroclaw Live" (check out the trailer), both featuring the concerts he played with video artist Kinga in Japan and in Poland, 2006.

He performed again live to F.W. Murnau's "The Haunted Castle" open-air in front of 3000 people at the JIMFF Music & Filmfestival in Korea in August.

On September 9, for his 55th birthday, Elliott Sharp, Joe Claussell and White, musician friends from USA and China, joined him for the official birthday concert in Berlin and a marvellous birthday party.

In August 2008 Götttsching is head-lining Lincoln Center's prestigious music series "Wordless Music" with the US-premiere of "E2-E4" live on stage. He will also play a concert in the historic St. Mary's Church in Philadelphia as part of The Gatherings series.

www.manuel-goettsching.com

www.myspace.com/manuelgoettsching

www.myspace.com/ashratempel (fan site dedicated to MG's work with & as Ash Ra Tempel)