

GABI DELGADO (D.A.F.)

„2“

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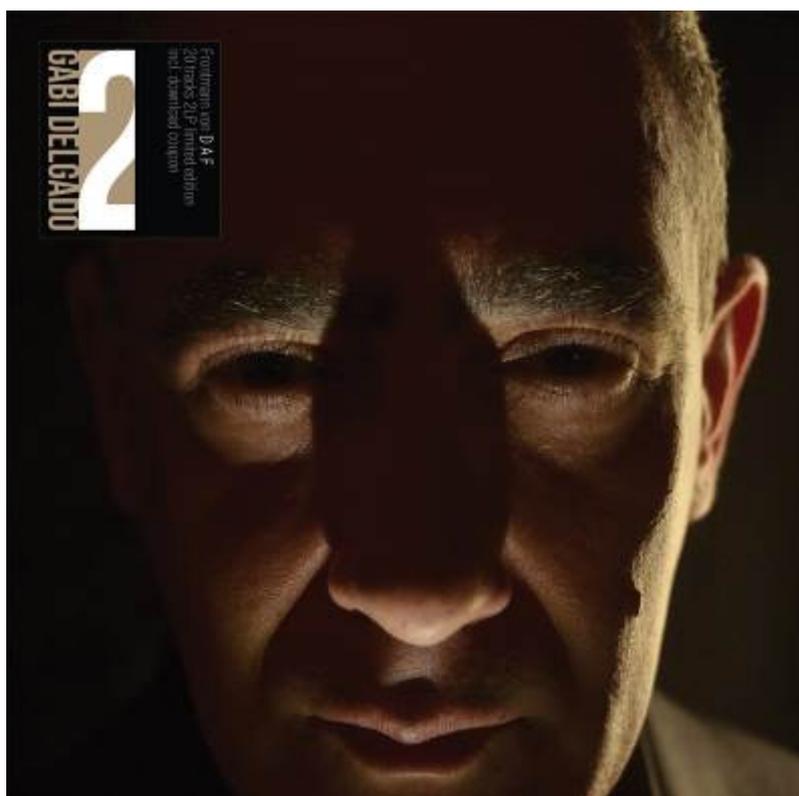
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Cover:



www.gabidelgado.com

Interview/Text: Thomas Venker

"Even back in the techno era, I was aware that music would have its limitations. I did realise that it would continue for a few years, but independence means a lot to me. I didn't want to end up in a situation where I would be forced to make the next record because I was strapped for cash. I don't want to have to stick to the rules to make something successful. The things that mean most to you should be free of financial considerations."

Gabi Delgado-López, the man who says these words, is nothing short of a German music legend. Together with the equally renowned producer Conny Plank and his partner Robert Görl, he created under the moniker of DAF songs such as "Kebab-Träume", "Tanz den Mussolini" and "Der Räuber und der Prinz" – and was responsible for the homoerotic techno blueprint of the "wasted youth" of the 1980s in Western Germany.

Delgado is sitting on the roof terrace of a small hotel in his home town of Córdoba (Andalusia). He lived in Berlin for 19 years before deciding to return to his native country. Only a few metres away from the hotel is his grandmother's house, where he grew up after his parents had fled across the Pyrenees from Spain to Germany to escape the Franco regime. At the age of eight he was allowed to follow them at last.

The reason for his return to Spain after all those cold winters were on the one hand the year-round warm temperatures, and on the other hand Delgado's annoyance with that typically German bureaucracy overkill and very special breed of pessimism. Gabi Delgado has come to value the Andalusian mentality which is marked by a ritualization of everyday life. "Unlike in the New World, where everything is available around the clock – such as in New York, where you can buy donuts 24/7 – we have some things in Spain which are available only at certain times; if you can't get something, the time isn't right for it, as people say here."

Young Gabi brought all those characteristics with him when he arrived in the small German town of Remscheid-Lennep one Christmas evening in 1966. "It was a culture shock," he remembers. "But due to my personal history as an immigrant, I have a different approach to the German language." One which has marked his lyrics from the beginnings of DAF to this day. "There are lots of syllables in German, which is why the imperative is the shortest way of saying something," he explains. "A word such as 'fog machine' – *Nebelmaschine* in German – is almost impossible to sing. And that's the kind of German word which inspires me."

Delgado's lyrics are appreciated to this day for their density, which has led many people to assume that they are the product of a long polishing process. But in fact he has always worked very intuitively, using words that go through his head and that he feels are 'awesome' and 'sexy' in a spontaneous kind of way. "There are senders and receivers," Delgado defines the communication which he creates from those individual words and imperatives. "There are narrators who only raise questions. But that's not what I like."

One of the most striking tracks is the aptly entitled "Hausarrest", which is about two lovers who imposed on themselves 30 days of house arrest during which they did nothing but have sex. "People keep asking me why I come up with such a lot of sex tracks. To me, sexuality is the language of love, one of our most beautiful drives. There aren't a lot of areas left where we can experience that total relinquishing, where we can totally open ourselves up." He replies to the question whether the lyrics have an autobiographical background that he has experienced and enjoyed that kind of thing, as he has tried everything in life that interests him. "I enjoy withdrawing from the world into a closed room. That's where boundaries can shift if both are consenting adults."

Another important track is "Begrüßungsgeld" (Welcome Payment), which takes up where Delgado's song "Puppen" (Dolls) on his album "1" left off. He talks about the subject of asylum, once more allowing explicitly political views into his music. His comment on the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall makes clear that his opinion on the course of history is not an uncritical one: "*Ich gebe dir Begrüßungsgeld, damit der Anfang leichter fällt. Vorwärts immer und rückwärts nimmer. Willkommen im Kapitalismus. Ich hab dir 100 Mark gegeben. Mit etwas Glück und Optimismus wirst du es sicher überleben.*" (I'll give you a welcome payment to make the new start easier. Always forwards, never backwards. Welcome to capitalism. I've given you 100 marks. With a little luck and optimism you'll probably survive it.)

The less direct songs on "2", which are about going out and dancing and taking drugs, also testify to a lyricist for whom the separation between private and public exists no more than that between

political and unpolitical. "Everything's political, especially opening up to the physical aspects. Those in power in the old days – I'm talking about the Church – were so violently against anything physical because they were afraid of losing their power. Ecstatic states can spark revolutions. That's essential if you want to overcome the fear of repression."

"2" also has Delgado sing a number of Spanish-language tracks which automatically make you think of labels such as Comeme – which wouldn't be completely off the mark: despite his 57 years, Gabi Delgado always has his finger on the pulse of the *zeitgeist*. Having said that, his greatest interest is currently in Tecktonik, a new style from France "which features lots of electro influences, but isn't really electro," he says. "Tecktonik is – like hip-hop used to be – classic ghetto music which includes dancing and performances, along with the music."

Those influences have inspired Gabi Delgado – never a producer to rest on the laurels of his current status quo – to venture into uncharted waters. Just as he did during the punk era when he replaced guitars, bass and drums with electronic elements because he didn't want to regressively stick to the instruments of his predecessors, he is moving on to pastures new with his next album, using game consoles (such as PlayStation and Xbox), glitch apps from the Internet and other consumer tools. And although Gabi Delgado was one of the first artists to focus on analogue sequencers and analogue synthesizers in his music, he has now sworn off them again, replacing them with modern state-of-the-art machines. Today Gabi Delgado relies mainly on FM synthesis to design new synth sounds. Those elements are instrumental in that very special Gabi Delgado hybrid of electro, EBM, house, disco and new styles such as Tecktonik. He now considers the nostalgic worshipping of analogue synthesizers simply a hype, explaining that he is an "advocate of the end of the era of analogue synthesizers". "I think they're outdated and belong in a museum, if not on a garbage dump. They're forty years old and simply don't sound good anymore." He considers that retromania, the nostalgic element in the analogue synthesizer cult, downright off-putting. "That's something I see as a dangerous trend in society which goes way beyond conservatism."

"2", scheduled to be out a year after "1", will be released as a double album featuring 32 (!) * songs and bears witness to Gabi Delgado's unbridled creativity, which most recently produced the free "X" album and a data stick electro album. After a long period of sound research, which saw him work mainly on bass sounds, he stresses that now the time has come to bring out a new recording. After all, he says in all seriousness, he has "around 130 fantastic songs ready and waiting."

This may sound complacent, but his self-confident reflection of his own musical output is mainly the result of a consistent feedback channel between Delgado and his fans, because fan participation has always been important to him. He wants to create a new "pop star prototype", as he calls it. To achieve this, he has more than forty groups on Facebook, Mixcloud and YouTube through which he communicates with fans and other artists on specific subjects. "I don't want to have 100,000 followers on my sites like some people do," he points out. "Everybody thinks the wrong way when it comes to the Internet. If a group has 3000 participants, I won't accept any more and prefer to start a new one. A little like cell division." He currently has one group on the subject of "Art, Music, Films", one for actors, one for fashion designers and one on "Performance and Dance" – and doesn't simply get tangible feedback on his news songs, but also creative input from various fields for his lyrics.

If you wonder how Gabi Delgado manages to keep abreast of so much communication and so many productions – where most of us would be more than happy with a tenth – you may find comfort in the fact that he appears to have a very special metabolism! "I only sleep when my batteries are really low – which is about every two days. That's when I get really tired and stretch out for four, five hours at a time."

Fascinating. Just like it's difficult to resist the fascination of this exceptional artist. Gabi Delgado doesn't have to prove anything to anybody – and from that independent and free position he is dispatching an album in "2" which couldn't be more topical.