The JHM Sessions

Improvised Progressive Rock Music

One nice innocent day...

... at the end of the last century Michael Feller was watching his boom box to stumble over some guy talking about the international music scene. Suddenly the name of the guy was inserted on the TV screen: "John Weinzierl, Amon Düül II" – and Michael freaked out: This was the same guy he had spent years with in the Hohenschwangau boarding school. This was the guy he had played with in those days in their first band called *The Mersey Gents*. This was the guy he actually believed to be dead, because someone sadly had told him so. What a surprise!

Michael remembered the time in 1973 when he played keyboards for *Amon Düül II*. Lots of memories touring Europe! And now – years later – this guy wiseacres on TV. So he must be alive?

Not very much later Michael called John and they decided to meet again. Michael had a fine studio called Plan Blue Studio and it was clear: They didn't want to play what they had played for too long already. It had to be something special, something real...

At that time Michael played with Howel Roberts, not only a brilliant flute maker, but also a great drummer, born in Liverpool. Howel agreed to join in – the birth of JHM.

A multitrack studio tape lasts for about two hours, so they usually played until the tape stopped them. Then they fell into some nearby pub in Munich Gärtner-platz, drinking Bavarian wheat beer, to return after this resurrection to the studio, playing more music onto more tape – and it was great fun. They never had

to talk about what key or tempo they would use, what idea could bring them to the next musical galaxy, they just let "it" play. They had hardly stopped playing one number, when they fell into the next tune, like some force was pushing them ahead. It was like a giant big "séance" going on every time they met, and obviously they were really enjoying themselves at the same time.

In July 2000 JHM invited Armin Schüler, a gifted singer, to join them with improvised singing and lyrics. Although this is not a typical JHM instrumental trio session, it happened to be filmed by Thomas Koller, a Munich filmmaker. This spontaneous documentary, with (mostly) one analog VHS camera, Michael synchronized with the original mixes from the 24-Track DTRS recordings to create an impression of the spirit and atmosphere of JHM Sessions.

Between December 1999 and April 2005 JHM recorded 43 sessions purely improvised music. Out of more than 600 takes Michael mixed a selection of 219 tracks, which add up to more than 35 hours of music!

You can experience musicians communicate with each other only by their instruments – no overdubs, no corrections of "guest notes", just the plain music as it was played live – to chill out or to spend inspiration! But how to present this vast "landscape of music" to listeners used to CDs, Spotify and iTunes?

In 2019 Gabi Weber, a visual artist, painted a series of aquarelles without dominant orientation -no portrait or landscape format – just "turntables".

This was – 20 years later – a missing link to create something new...
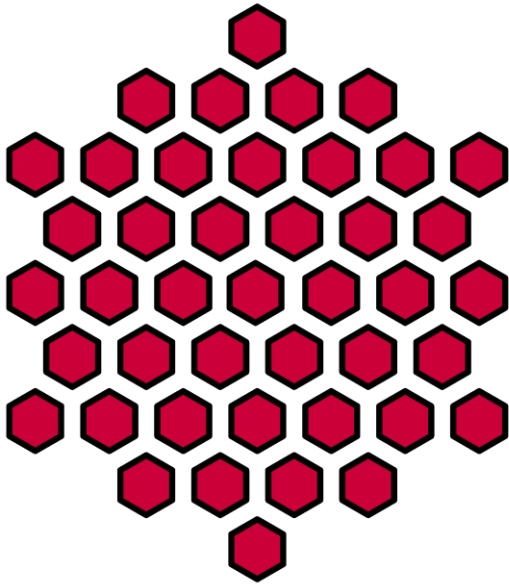
JHM scape

A musical journey through JHM Sessions

JHM scape is an interactive online 3D experience to navigate through the music in an always changing "landscape". The logo represents a symbolic map: 43 sessions with 218 tracks.

Influenced **by your individual decisions** to select the tracks as reference daytime and weather changes and colorful "turntables" arise from the sea, building abstract island silhouettes with enigmatic connections between them. Exploring the musicscape by listening to tracks, changes become faster and deeper, but also more complex and unpredictable: Is this the experience JHM had creating this music?

How to?
Every music track corresponds to a bowl hovering above the water. You have two ways of travelling:

1. **Click a bowl** to play its music as **reference**.
2. **Click on empty space** for a 30 seconds **suggestion** depending on what you listened before. If you like it, **click the bowl** to select it or on **empty space** for another suggestion.

Artificial Intelligence has analyzed the tracks on their **similarity** between each other. The **reference** raises all other objects relative to their musical similarity: The highest object is musically most different.

A **suggestion** always offers the musically most different track to what you played before, but every track is recommended only once.

If you want to keep your **favorites**, collect them by **click on the reference** and a **Playbar** will open: Mark the reference as favorite, pause/stop it or move to another playback position within the track.

Every **recording session** is illustrated by **paintings**, initially drowned in the sea. When a reference plays, the corresponding painting is moved by the music. That's why they are called **turntables**. They dance in unpredictable ways out of the water, until you see their shape and borders, forming an always changing landscape of islands.

On the upper left corner click on the **menu button**:
- **Reference** details about the current reference.
- **Recommends** filters the selection of tracks, suggestions are taken from.
- **Help** current statistic and undo/reset journey.
- **About** – you name it! Follow the links …

All tracks are assigned to a **genre**, describing roughly their musical content. Every genre is associated to a unique color, illuminating the rotating reference bowl together with all other bowls of the same genre. Their **common genre** connects already moved turntables with the current reference track: They move together during the reference track is played, but with different movements and speed. Turntables without this relationship keep their last reached position, waiting to be moved by your playbacks later. However, if you stop playing music at all, all turntables will **slowly return** to their initial positions!

Listening for the music and watching the rotating common turntables for a while starts automatic **camera moves**, looking from every common turntable to the active reference. For a detailed look at the reference's turntable, click the **turntable icon** in the reference menu.

At the bottom of the screen, the **status area** shows a colored line for every music track. A playing track increases the line's height. Click it to **move the camera** to his bowl. Line color corresponds with the genre color. If you decide to **filter** recommendations they are muted accordingly.

Listening to your selection of music tracks creates a unique **JHM scape**. The overall **score** is shown in the help menu. ***At 100% a surprising reward is waiting!***

Michael Feller, December 2019