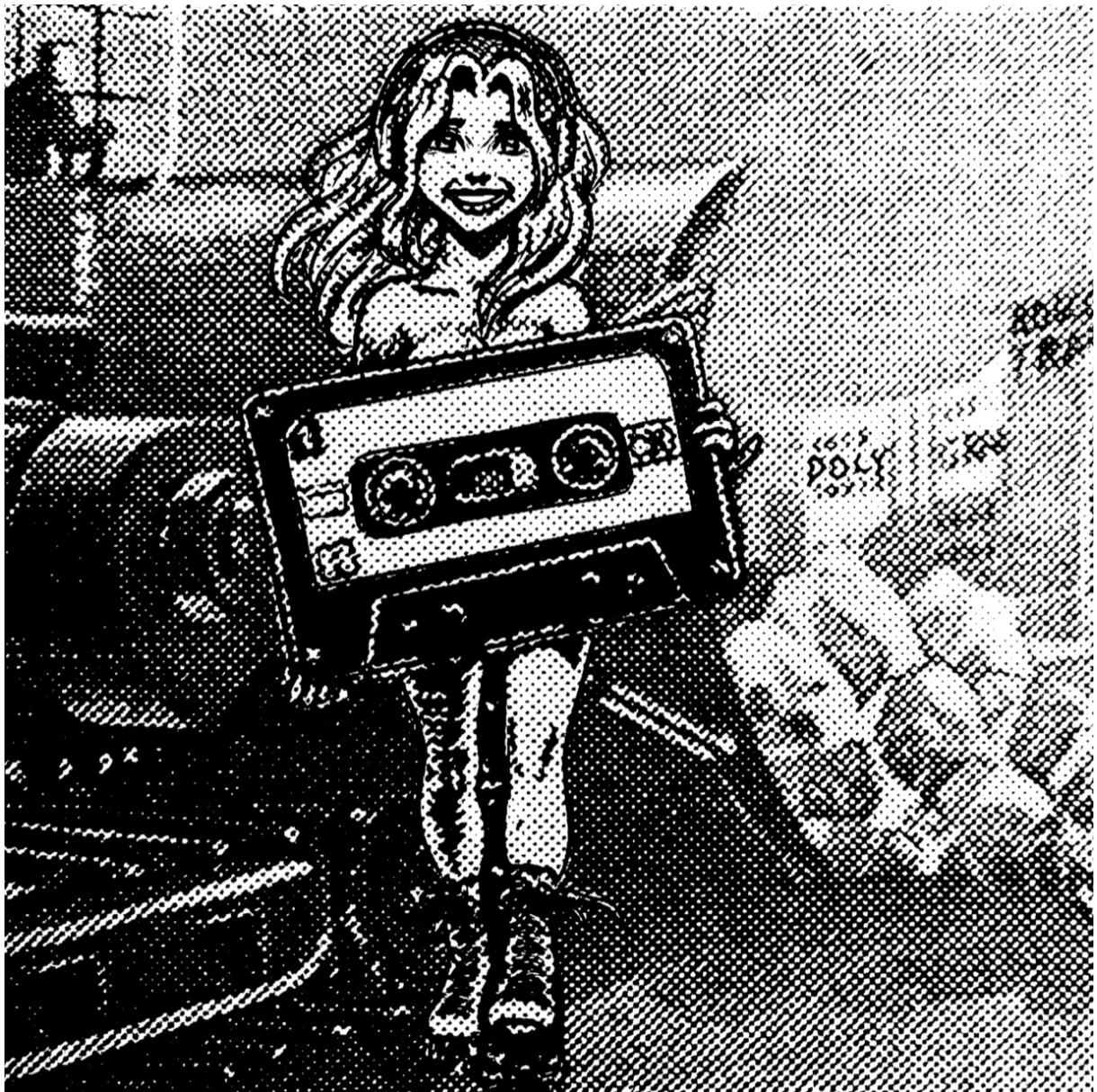


Do It Your Zelftapers

De opkomst van de
Nederlandse cassettecultuur
(1978-1986)



Projectplan, definitief
28 april 2025

Concertzender
Allard Pierson (penvoerder)
Muziekweb.nl
Diggin' Demos



Inleiding

De meeste mensen zien het cassettebandje als een muziekdrager. Net zoals de elpee of cd, maar dan van slechte kwaliteit. Wat velen echter niet (meer) weten is dat de waarde van het bandje toch écht anders is. Meer nog dan recente innovaties als de iPod, Napster en Spotify heeft het cassettebandje de muziekgeschiedenis geëmancipeerd.

Nederlands-Belgische uitvinding

De compacte muziekcassette, zoals we die nu nog kennen, werd tussen 1961 en 1963 ontwikkeld door het team van Nederlander Lou Ottens, met o.a. Gilbert Mestdagh, in de Philipsfabriek te Hasselt (België). De eerste generatie cassettebandjes en de daarbij horende spelers waren van een lage kwaliteit en mono. Puur bedoeld voor het opnemen van de stem. Met de jaren werd de kwaliteit steeds meer verbeterd en eind jaren zeventig werd het zelfs mogelijk én betaalbaar om thuis of in het oefenhok – op meerdere sporen en in stereo – muziek op te nemen en deze te kopiëren.

Muziekwereld op z'n kop

Tot die jaren bepaalden radio en commerciële platenlabels hoe je naar muziek luisterde en welke muziek je – wanneer – kon horen. Maar met de opkomst van de recorders en muziekcassettes konden muzikanten voor het eerst helemaal zélf bepalen welke muziek ze de wereld wilden laten horen. Dat zijn we *Do It Yourself* (DIY) gaan noemen. Het had ook zijn effect op luisteraars. Zij kwamen niet alleen met meer (alternatieve) muziek in contact; ook zij konden ineens alles zelf bepalen. Muziek opnemen van de radio, een eigen mixtape maken en weggeven. Een normale muziekliefhebber kon zo zélf smaakmaker zijn!

Cassettecultuur

De meeste (groepen) muzikanten, die DIY gingen opnemen, maakten zogenaamde demotapes; met de droom opgepikt te worden door muziekpodia of platenlabels. Een speciale stroming kunstzinnige muzikanten werkte vanuit de huiskamer en noemde zich *hometaper* of *zelftaper*; voorlopers van de hedendaagse producers. De distributie van hun muziek via nieuwe kanalen – juist helemaal los van de bestaande platenlabels en meestal in hele kleine oplagen – stuwde de scene op tot een heuse 'cassettecultuur'. Men wisselde muziek met elkaar uit via wereldwijde postnetwerken, richtte kleine cassettelabels op en er verschenen zelfs speciale winkels geënt op deze uiterst creatieve en levendige stroming. De muziek van deze scene begeeft zich in het experimentele spectrum tussen avant-garde en popmuziek en benut volop de mogelijkheden van nieuwe elektronische apparatuur en instrumenten, zoals de synthesizer.

De Radiola Improvisatie Salon

Een belangrijke katalysator voor de Nederlandse cassettecultuur was De Radiola Improvisatie Salon: een VPRO-radioprogramma van Fluxus kunstenaar Willem de Ridder. Tussen november 1978 en 1984 nodigde hij zijn toehoorders uit om cassettes in te sturen met muziek en improvisaties. Tijdens de uitzending konden luisteraars horen hoe De Ridder de post opende met daarin de cassettes, waardoor alle vormen van censuur en persoonlijke smaak werden uitgesloten. Ongehoord! Hij snapte – lang voordat Facebook en Tik Tok dat principe begonnen te exploiteren – dat het aanbieden van een platform creativiteit uitlokt. De scheidslijn tussen muziekconsument en -producent werd er nog meer door vervaagd.

De Poolse cultuurhistoricus Antoni Michnik schrijft over De Radiola Improvisatie Salon ([Glissando, 2014](#)): “The program became a space for those who created experimental music at home to find out about each other’s existence: for the hometaping scene to come into being, a program that united the dispersed bedrooms was necessary. The arrival of the tape made it possible for people like De Ridder to give voice to the audience, to change the relation between the listener and the host, and to increase the interactive aspect of the radio.”

Andere aanjagers

Hoewel het dus meer en meer om het netwerk en de muzikanten zélf draaide, zijn er - naast Radiola, de Staalplaat winkel in Amsterdam en cassettelabels als Exart, Trumpett, Ding Dong en Kubus Kassettes - nog een paar speciale aanjagers te benoemen. Ook dancepionier Eddy de Clercq bood mensen zonder onderscheid een eigen podium en combineerde de DIY-geest met democratische programmering. In nachtclub De Koer (een voorloper van de Roxy) organiseerde hij regelmatig “De Zelfkant Van De Cassette”: een avond waarbij bezoekers werden uitgenodigd om eigengemaakte demo’s, gedichten, geluidscollages of gewoon favoriete muziek te laten horen.

Oscar Smit recenseerde tot in 1986 uitgebreid over cassettes in het muziekblad Vinyl. Zijn rubriek Dolby maakte de obscure zelftapers bekend bij een iets groter publiek. Het overzicht van labels in de dertiende editie van Vinyl (april 1982), inspireerde Frans de Waard om jaarlijks een cassettecatalogus samen te stellen en te verspreiden. Het maakte hem – muzikant, schrijver, labeleigenaar en medewerker in Staalplaat – tot één van de sleutelfiguren in de Nederlandse cassettecultuur.

Projectpartners

De technische innovatie uit de lage landen zorgde voor een DIY-explosie aan muzikale creativiteit. Muziek werd zonder beperkingen, zonder enige conventies en in volledige vrijheid aan cassettes toevertrouwd. En hoewel de kwaliteit van muziekcassettes lang niet zo slecht is als menigeen denkt, begint het hoog tijd te worden om de kwetsbare magneetbanden en alle aanverwante parafernalia van de verstoffing te redden. Het is muzikaal erfgoed!

De partners van dit projectplan vinden het belangrijk om daar een begin mee te maken en hebben elkaar daarin gevonden, omdat ze allen – vanuit verschillende drijfveren – het belang van de Nederlandse cassettecultuur willen laten zien.

Allard Pierson	Beheert een groot archief van circa 10.000 Nederlandse (demo) muziekcassettes (jazz en pop), o.a. van het voormalig Nederlands Pop Instituut (NPI). Onderdeel van de cassettecollectie zijn de circa 300 cassettes, die Oscar Smit recenseerde in Vinyl. Allard Pierson wil binnen het project dit deel van z’n collectie digitaliseren en ontsluiten en al doende o.a. praktische ervaring opdoen met het toepassen van <i>linked data</i> . Allard Pierson wil graag meer vertellen over de muziekgeschiedenis in haar archieven en het archiveren van muziek beter geagendeerd zien in beleid.
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Diggin' Demos	Een private organisatie met een collectie van circa 10.000 Nederlandse demotapes. Ook in het bezit van 200 cassettes, die ooit zijn ingezonden naar De Radiola Improvisatie Salon. Diggin' Demos wil binnen het project dit deel van z'n collectie digitaliseren en ontsluiten. Ziet zichzelf als praktijkvoorbeeld voor de samenwerking tussen privéverzamelaars en institutionele muziekarchieven. Wil uiteindelijk de hele Nederlandse amateur muziekgeschiedenis (1978-1998, pre internet en zoals vastgelegd op demo's) professioneel gearchiveerd zien.
Muziekweb (Beeld & Geluid)	Heeft de Cd-collectie van het NPI-archief gekregen en voor het merendeel gedigitaliseerd en heeft daarmee veel praktische knowhow opgebouwd met betrekking tot het ontsluiten van erfgoedmuziek, die niet meer verkrijgbaar is (o.a. Fonos). Ziet een taak voor zichzelf weggelegd om deze kennis te delen en haar platforms (website, Beeld & Geluid collectiegebouw) te gebruiken voor storytelling over muziekgeschiedenis. Ook wil ze graag alle verloren gegane Radiola-uitzendingen - ontbrekend omroeperfgoed in de archieven van Beeld & Geluid - verzamelen.
Concertzender	Het creëren van een dynamische en inclusieve muzikale vrijplaats is al sinds 1982 haar missie. Ze biedt haar luisteraars bijzondere, ongekennde, kwetsbare, ontregelende en verrassende muziek om te ontdekken. De Concertzender wil binnen dit project graag een serie radioproducties samenstellen, waarin het verhaal van de opkomst van de muziekcassette wordt verteld. Ook naar de toekomst gezien wil ze als radiostation, opnameproducent en platform spreekbuis zijn voor Nederlandse muziekarchieven.
Podiumkunst.net	Podiumkunst.net heeft als missie om schatkamers van podiumkunsten, zoals muziekarchieven te verbinden. Met het toegankelijk maken van archieven – o.a. middels de toepassing van <i>linked data</i> (Kennisgraaf, Applicatieprofiel) en storytelling – wordt de Nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis levend gemaakt en kan ze een inspiratiebron voor makers van nu en de toekomst vormen. Het project over Nederlandse cassettecultuur is hier bij uitstek geschikt voor.

Projectdoel

De vijf projectpartners hebben allemaal hetzelfde einddoel: de Nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis (zoals die o.a. bewaard is op muziekcassettes) moet beter gearchiveerd, gedigitaliseerd en ontsloten worden. Nederlandse muziekarchieven – privaat en institutioneel – moeten daartoe beter verbonden worden en deze samenwerking moet op gang worden gebracht. Wij zien ons project als *stepping stone* naar dit hogere doel. Om daar een behapbare start mee te maken, kiezen we voor een aansprekend thema (de opkomst van de Nederlandse cassettecultuur) en een afgebakende periode: 1978-1986, vanaf De Radiola Improvisatie Salon tot aan de laatste Dolby recensie. Na 1986 wordt het opnameproces – o.a. met de aanwas van studio's – ook een stuk professioneler en gaat de cassettecultuur een nieuwe fase in.

Zelftaper André van der Bij over Radiola: "Het was voor het eerst in die tijd mogelijk om jezelf op een goedkope manier terug te horen en te luisteren. Ik bedenk me dan altijd hoe het in vroegere eeuwen moet zijn geweest. Mensen zullen toen ook zelf muziek hebben gemaakt, maar daar is niets van bewaard gebleven. Dat intrigeert mij enorm. Laten we nu wij dat wel kunnen doen vooral datgene dat nog niet is vastgelegd – al die muziekgeschiedenis en creativiteit – doorgeven aan toekomstige generaties!"

Projectdoel

Het proces van verzamelen, archiveren en ontsluiten van muziek uit *De opkomst van de Nederlandse cassettecultuur (1978-1986)*, en het verhalen daarover, gebruiken we om de verbindende rol van Podiumkunst.net binnen de wereld van institutionele en private muziekarchieven tentoon te spreiden

Concrete resultaten

De projectpartners hebben allemaal wat unieks in te brengen: een deel van hun collectie, specifieke kennis en knowhow, platforms en communicatiekanalen. Met deze mix van middelen werken we toe naar de volgende resultaten.

Voor het digitaliseren en fotograferen van de 500 cassettes maken we gebruik van bestaande protocollen of maken deze. De muziek en overige content is te vinden en te beluisteren via één of meerdere platforms. De partners gebruiken daarbij de kennis en toepassingsmogelijkheden van thema's als Linked Data, Kennisgraaf, Applicatieprofiel en dragen daaraan bij.
Voor de beste luisterervaring zoeken we een mix van platforms waar de muziek te beluisteren zal zijn. Denk daarbij aan Internet Archive, YouTube en/ of Muziekweb zelf. We onderzoeken daarbij de rol die het covenant Out of commerce muziekwerken voor onze organisaties kan betekenen.
Muziekweb schrijft een serie van 20 journalistieke achtergrondartikelen over cassettecultuur. Over de impact toen, maar ook over het belang voor de hedendaagse producersscene nu. Ook schrijven we 10 persoonlijke verhalen (storytelling), waar de partners contactpersonen voor aanleveren. Voor de verspreiding van de content benutten de communicatiekanalen van o.a. Muziekweb, Podiumkunst.net, Beeld & Geluid, AVA_NET, NVMB en Recorder Magazine. Maar ook externe platforms als Gonzo Circus worden hiervoor benaderd.
Van een selectie van de Radiola cassettes zal tenminste één verzamelelpee worden samengesteld en uitgebracht door Dead Mind Records.
Het Radiola Cassetteboek en de Dolby rubrieken van Vinyl zijn gescand en verwerkt tot digitale <i>flipbooks</i> , waarin de cassettes af te spelen zijn en recensies zijn na te lezen.
We produceren 12 radio-uitzendingen over de Nederlandse cassettecultuur en de Concertzender zendt deze uit.
We ontwikkelen een avondvullend programma over Willem de Ridder, De Radiola Improvisatiesalon en z'n Nederlandse zelftapers. Met een voorstelling (Frits Jonkers en Marco van Dalfsen), muziek (Hessel Veldman) en paneldiscussies (Frans de Waard, Oscar Smit en anderen). Met dit programma gaan we tenminste langs één podium (denk aan OCII of Paradiso, Amsterdam) of WORM, Rotterdam)). Er is ruimte voor de podia voor eigen inbreng, zoals het leggen van de verbinding met hedendaagse artiesten.
Er is een marketing- en communicatieplan gemaakt waarmee we – gedurende één jaar – actief 'nieuwe' Radiola Tapes, radio-uitzendingen en parafernalia gaan werven onder publiek. Te vergelijken met de manier waarop dat voor TROS Sesjun door het Nederlands Jazz Archief wordt beoogd. Onderdeel van het plan vormt ook de promotie van de verzamelelpee, de artikelen, de <i>flipbooks</i> , radio-uitzendingen en voorstelling als middel om aandacht te vestigen op het werven en de cassettecultuur aan zich.
Continu dragen we daarbij uit, o.a. via de kanalen van Podiumkunst.net en AVA_Net, hoe we samenwerken, wat daarbij onze ervaringen zijn en gebruiken we deze ook voor de projectevaluatie met advies aan Podiumkunst.net. In de evaluatie adviseren we wat er volgens ons nodig is om het verbinden en ontsluiten van cassettecultuur in de volle breedte te gaan aanjagen. Daarbij spiegelen we ons o.a. aan Meemoo.be.

Aan het einde van het project, na de evaluatie, zullen de gezamenlijke projectpartners een voorstel indienen voor een conferentieonderdeel tijdens het Eurosonic-Noorderslag Seminar of het Congres Podia Festivals Evenementen (CPFE). We delen de projectuitkomsten en bediscussiëren in een panel de toekomst van Nederlandse muziekarchieven. *Wat is de betekenis van archieven voor de hedendaagse scene? Wat moet er gebeuren om de Nederlandse cassettecultuur te behoeden voor verstopping?*

HOW TO GET ON RADIO



How to get on the radio? How to get your sounds on those airwaves, that is the big question of most audio artists, self tapers and cassette composers. If the radio does not play them, you rarely hear their sounds. No record company is going to release them, the concert hall presents only live music and no cassettes. There are not even scores. In fact, there is nowhere to go, except to the radio. This first Radiola Report is about that important question and of course about the answer. This booklet is a request, a proposal to most radio stations and our success story. How to get on the radio is easy nowadays....

Sometimes a radio station plays some audio artists. They realize that something is happening in the art world with sound. When they ask for taped art works, the director in charge decides which works are good enough.

An editor for Swedish Radio went as far as to compare himself with a tough dictator. Like video art, the work of audio artists (even the 'famous' ones) is seldom heard. Audio art programs on a regular basis are mostly short



CASSETTES



formal musical education, but they are making extravagant sounds anyway, mostly just for themselves or their close friends and family. All that music, all those sounds happen outside the official circuit.

My name is Willem de Ridder and I work for Dutch Radio. The station is called VPRO and can be received all over the country. It has the best New Music program in Holland, made by Han Reiziger.

About five years ago I sat down with him to propose a special show for Audio Artists and Self Tapers in which we should play ALL the cassettes and tapes submitted. We should guarantee airplay for all...

Lived. Not only audio artists have that problem. More and more people have very sophisticated audio equipment in their homes. Synthesizers and other complex electronic instruments are selling like hot cakes. Many of the people who use them, have no

Han Reiziger liked the idea, but had problems with the end of our roles as editors and judges. How about quality? I tried to explain the principle of a 'clearing house' show for self tapers...most of them are shy and would never dream of sending their weird sounds to a radio station. It is difficult to get on the radio remember! Some even think that you have to pay off the disc jockeys. At least you have to be very good or successful to be played by them. So as long as we continued to exercise our uh, 'good taste' that's what we would get. If we used the 'clearing house' idea, we might even learn something from the course of unpredictable events that automatically would follow if we played everything. Didn't John Cage write that if you want to improve the world you only make matters worse?



After some more subtle persuasion Han decided to accept the new formula and the RADIOLA SALON was born... Soon the first tapes started to come in and with trembling hands the mail was opened. We broke out in cold sweat when we listened to them. My God! Not only was the technical quality gruesome, but the artistic level..the musical value..uh..was, to say the least, bad.. Han started to worry about his reputation and I wasn't so sure anymore

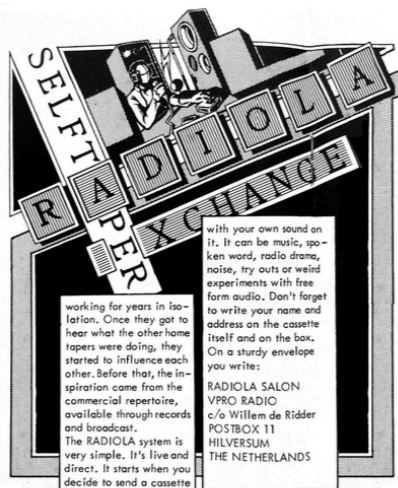


you have been playing in the Salon. I guess it's



if those home tapers needed a special show. We played all the cassettes anyway and our colleagues started to look funny at us. We got letters complaining about the atrocious quality of our new show. The future of the RADIOLA SALON looked bleak. After a few months of torture some complaint letters also had cassettes in them:...."Dear Han and Willem, the music on this cassette is not good, I don't know much about music, but at least it's better than all the crap

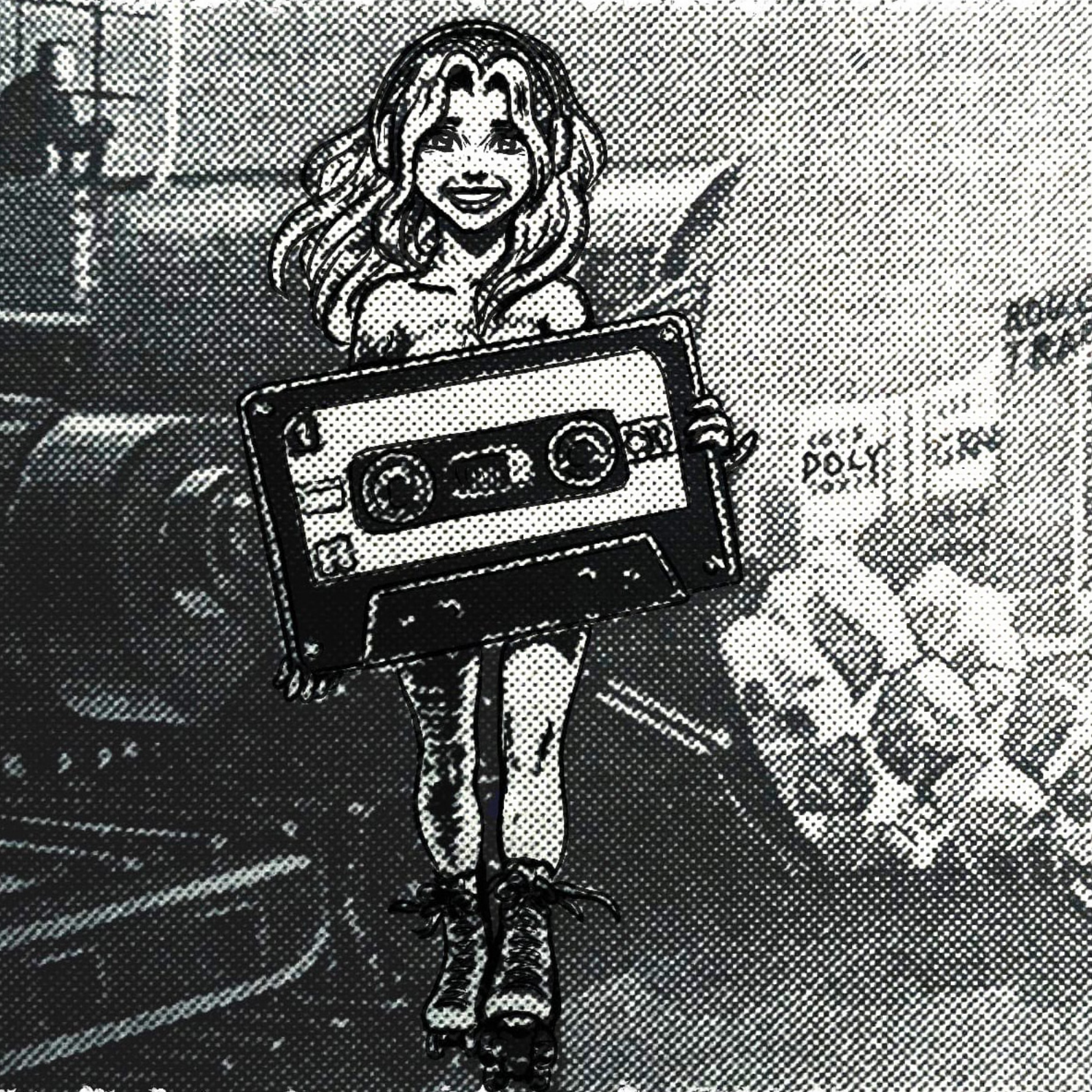
not your fault, since you play everything." From that moment more and more cassettes came in, the quality became better and the listeners seemed to realize that we were not responsible for the show. Some interesting mechanics developed. First of all we discovered why record companies print a cassette/skull on their inner album sleeves with the warning that 'home taping kills music'. Many of the cassette composers had been



with your own sound on it. It can be music, spoken word, radio drama, noise, try outs or weird experiments with free form audio. Don't forget to write your name and address on the cassette itself and on the box. On a sturdy envelope you write:

RADIOLA SALON
VPRO RADIO
c/o Willem de Ridder
POSTBOX 11
HILVERSUM
THE NETHERLANDS

working for years in isolation. Once they got to hear what the other home tapers were doing, they started to influence each other. Before that, the inspiration came from the commercial repertoire, available through records and broadcast. The RADIOLA system is very simple. It's live and direct. It starts when you decide to send a cassette



Marco van Dalfsen

Willem de Ridders Radiola Improvisatie Salon

Revolutionizing the music world. The power of cassette tapes

Offer people a platform, and it will provoke creativity. Visionaire Willem de Ridder understood and cherished this principle long before its exploitation by the likes of TikTok and Facebook.

While many consider cassette tapes inferior music carriers, their true value is unparalleled. Unlike recent innovations like the iPod, Napster, and Spotify, the humble cassette tape truly emancipated the history of music. The emergence of affordable compact four-track recorders with cassettes (such as Tascam and Fostex) in the late seventies sparked a musical revolution known as the cassette culture.

Before this breakthrough, radio stations and record labels held the reins, determining how people consumed music, what they could listen to, and when. However, the advent of recorders and music cassettes changed the game entirely. Musicians gained newfound independence, allowing them to be completely self-reliant and choose the music they wanted to share with the world: the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) movement.

But it wasn't just musicians who reaped the benefits. Listeners, too, experienced a significant shift. They discovered a wealth of alternative music and found themselves empowered to make their own

decisions. They could record songs from the radio or curate personalized mixtapes to share with others. Suddenly, even the average music lover could become a tastemaker!

The cassette tape era marked a time of unprecedented freedom and creativity in the music world.

Diggin' Demos

I collect old music cassettes, notably demo tapes that aspiring bands used to create in hopes of landing a gig. Over time, I've gathered around 10,000 of these tapes. It's a captivating treasure trove because they hold much more than just music. These cassettes tell stories. You can hear the passion and dedication poured into the recordings. The hopes of the band members shine through. As the Urban Dance Squad aptly expressed in one of their early songs, "Finished the touch, hope for the best. Forcin' a priest to bless my cassette. Just say a little prayer for my demo."

Nowadays, I don't ponder whether I would have

booked these bands or what I think of their music. Those questions don't occupy my mind after thirty or forty years. Instead, I'm solely fascinated by the dreams that these cassettes represent. Did those dreams come true? What became of the dreamers?

Musical archaeology

Finding answers is no easy task because locating these musicians is incredibly challenging. For some reason, writing one's full name on the custom-made cassette covers wasn't common practice. Additionally, most bands that never released an "official" album never achieved fame past their local scenes. Beyond being a music enthusiast, I feel like a musical archaeologist, rescuing fragments of music history from the pre-internet era, preventing them from fading into oblivion. The genuine surprise on the faces of (former) musicians when they ask, "How did you manage to get that?" gives me goosebumps- it's priceless!

My hobby has garnered considerable interest and significance among many people. As a result, I often receive donations of boxes filled with demo tapes that have languished in the attics of former DJs, journalists, or music venues for years. My home is gradually transforming into a proper archive. Recently, someone approached me with an intriguing story about a radio program and cassette tapes. Was I interested? Initially, I suspected it might be an attempt to dispose of a collection of self-recorded cassettes cluttering his home. However, something within me prevented me from politely declining the offer.

The intuition I've honed over the past few decades as a music collector proved right again. The excitement I experienced when I opened the

box and beheld the unveiled cassettes was akin to that of Howard Carter when he first glimpsed Tutankhamun's sarcophagus precisely one hundred years ago. These were not self-recorded cassettes with radio programs! There was no sign of anyone trying to buy the same brand for a uniform appearance. The characteristic of such a person is also that neat handwriting attempting to create a beautiful series of cassette tapes. None of that here; this box was a mishmash. These cassettes came from an era long before the dominance of TDK, Sony, Philips, and Maxwell. I immediately recognized them as productions from the heyday of the cassette culture. What a remarkable find!

There were over 200 cassettes in total. Some had hand-drawn covers, but most were adorned with plain text- just a name, a place of residence, and a title. Nella Sviluppo, Arie van der Kooi, Otto J.E. Grünbauer, Rob Terwiel, Jeroen Friezen, Ad van der Koog, Het Zweet, Harry Teunissen, Eternity, Rotterdams, Enno Velthuys, Cleo van den Oort, Arthur Berkhoff, André van der Bij, Pieter Hensen, Ronald 't Hart, and Simple Simon and his Spontaneous Rubbish Kit. These names - complete with surnames, for a change (!) - appeared multiple times, but I had no clue about the musical gems I received.

De Radiola Improvisation Salon

To ensure that I fully grasped the historical significance of the cassette collection, Frits Jonker, the benefactor of the box, thoughtfully included a detailed handwritten explanation and photocopies of old magazine articles in the package. These served as a Rosetta Stone, helping me unravel the mysteries of the cassettes and their music.

Frits shared his story: "Between November 1978 and 1984, Willem de Ridder hosted a radio show on VPRO-radio called *De Radiola Improvisatie Salon*, and I was a dedicated listener. Willem invited his audience to send in music cassettes featuring improvisations. While not strictly limited to music, most of what I remember was indeed musical. I was particularly captivated by the peculiar sounds that Willem showcased on his show. Every listener had the opportunity to submit a music cassette, and their recordings were guaranteed airtime. Willem regarded anyone who captured sounds as a composer. During the broadcasts, listeners would hear De Ridder opening the mail containing the cassettes, eliminating all forms of censorship and personal taste. He never screened the tapes beforehand or made other preparations for the show. The popularity of *De Radiola Improvisatie Salon* grew so much that Willem organized concerts nationwide, where participants could bring their cassettes. The cassettes were guaranteed a spot in the concert if accompanied by a visual act. These concerts were also broadcasted. This was an entirely new realm for me as someone who typically listened to mainstream music. Improvisational music was unknown to me, and it blew me away. However, after the program went off the air, I forgot about it for many years.»

Twenty years later, Frits had an epiphany and felt compelled to inquire about the show. "Since I knew Peter Pontiac, who created artwork for Willem de Ridder's projects, I once asked him what happened to the tapes played on *De Radiola Improvisatie Salon*. To my surprise, Willem gave Peter two boxes of cassettes right after the show ended! Peter had never listened to them, and a few years ago, he passed the boxes on to Fake Booy and Ruud

Hulleman. Long story short, both Fake and Rudy stored their unopened boxes, and it didn't take much effort for me to become the new owner of what I now refer to as *De Radiola Tapes*."

Radiola research

Although I had never come across his name before, a wealth of information about Willem de Ridder is available online. He co-founded Amsterdam's renowned music venues, Melkweg and Paradiso. He was also a storyteller, an artist, and a radio host. However, when it came to *De Radiola Improvisation Salon*, there was a noticeable dearth of information.

Nevertheless, one in-depth and scholarly analysis of Willem's work concerning the cassette tape caught my attention. Antoni Michnik, a Polish cultural historian, shared his insights in the magazine *Glissando*: "In the 1970s, the cassette tape began to grow in importance in his work. With the spread of the tape, de Ridder became a "tape artist," carrying out experiments to test its potential for performance, radio art, independent art press, and various music forms. During the peak of popularity of the tape in the 1980s, he aimed to create new cultural practices around it, by means of referring to the ideals of the radical art of the 1960s: participation, interactivity, blurring the line between art and life. De Ridder's initial contact with the tape was supposedly connected to his work in radio. In the early 1970s, when he was living in Los Angeles, he used tapes to remotely host the weekly program *Radio Cadillac* in the Dutch public radio NOS. At the beginning of the following decade (1980-1982), he used this experience and expanded the idea in the VPRO radio, hosting the program *De Radiola Improvisatie Salon* (he was living in Netherlands at

that time), which consisted of playing tapes sent to the studio by the audience. De Ridder, as the host, opened the envelopes with tapes on air and played them in no particular order. The aim of the program was to provide the minimum time of 5 minutes to anyone who had mailed some material. The program became the catalyst for the development of the raising Dutch tape underground. Independent artists, recording the most bizarre works at home, sent in their materials, including the sounds of the electronic music trends of that time (from synthesizer music to proto-noise and industrial). The popularity of the program was so great that de Ridder could publish tape medleys under the Radiola Label and organize a series of concerts, during which anyone with their own tape could become a part of the show, if they were ready to appear on stage in some manner or other. On the other hand, the program became a space for those who created experimental music at home to find out about each other's existence: for the home taping scene to come into being, a program that united the dispersed bedrooms was necessary. The arrival of the tape made it possible for people like de Ridder to give voice to the audience, to change the relation between the listener and the host, and to increase the interactive aspect of the radio."

You won't easily find a more captivating testament to Willem's influence on the Dutch music scene unless we shift from scholarly analysis to personal anecdotes. Frans de Waard, a prominent figure in experimental electronic music in the Netherlands and beyond, recounts in his book *This Is Supposed To Be A Record Label* the profound impact the radio program had on him: «After failing at piano lessons, I decided to learn the guitar, but not the acoustic instrument my parents bought for me.

It was with this peculiar setup that I ended up recording my very first «experimental» piece of music. I struck the guitar strings with a handheld blender and captured it at high speed on my dad's reel-to-reel recorder, only to play it back at the slowest speed. «It's three times longer,» I realized. «Making experimental music is so easy!» I recorded it onto a cassette tape and sent it to Willem de Ridder, a former Fluxus artist who hosted a unique radio program. His premise was simple: «You send me a tape, and without pre-auditioning it, I will play five minutes on the radio» - a bit like the current *Who wants to be a Pop Star?* but the radio version. My piece was broadcasted, but it sounded like a mishmash of static over the radio. Nevertheless, hearing my music on the airwaves inspired me to create my next composition: using sounds extracted from an egg-timer and the same blender, with me rhythmically typing on a typewriter.» Frans also describes the encouraging nature of Willem, even when abruptly stopping a musical piece: «De Ridder would return to the airwaves, non-judgmental as ever, and say, «You too can do this, send me a cassette, and I will play it,» in his hypnotic, storytelling manner.»

Online, Gert Verbeek also shares his personal and enthusiastic experiences of the radio program: "The DIY mentality of *De Radiola Improvisatie Salon* was akin to punk but without the musical constraint of three basic guitar chords. The entry barrier had never been so low on Dutch national radio as all successful and less successful experiments were broadcasted, including those of a fourteen-year-old high school student from Heerhugowaard. Without a clear plan, I convinced a neighbour's child, my younger sister, and her school friend to play with kitchen utensils as percussion in our living room. At

the same time, I manipulated sound records using the echo knobs of a Sony tape recorder. Then I recorded some simple organ improvisations at home on the Hammond organ and the church organ where my father accompanied the Protestant congregation every Sunday. Without making a backup copy, I sent the master tape. I no longer remember which piece eventually made it to air. There is no evidence of it because I probably forgot to record the broadcast due to nervousness. However, I usually recorded the broadcasts of *De Radiola Improvisatie Salon* because that was the only way to listen to the remarkable contributions multiple times. Willem de Ridder rarely played a track a second time. There were recurring names like Arthur Berkhoff, Nico de Gruiter, Enno Velthuys, and Hessel Veldman. Some music was later officially released on cassettes, such as Veldman's Exart label. The rest of the submissions disappeared into oblivion."

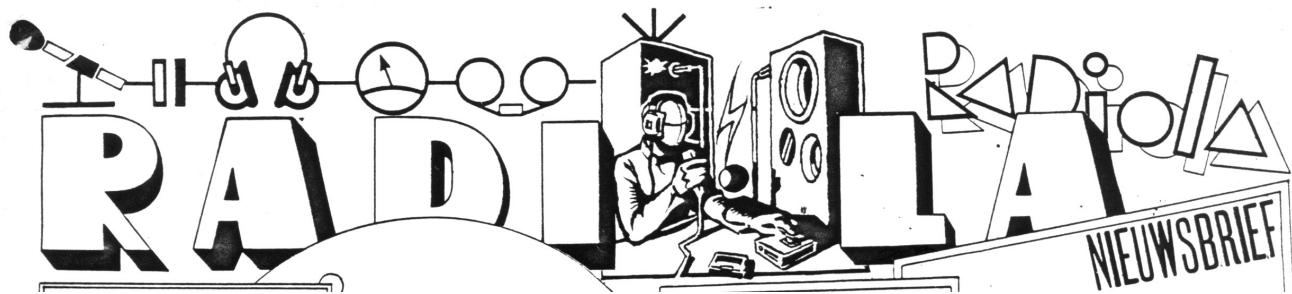
Stories of home-tapers

These personal stories started reaching me more and more as I began digitizing and publishing De Radiola Tapes on my Diggin' Demos project website. I started searching for the contributors, but they also found me because who doesn't occasionally Google their name, right? And even though I had never heard of *De Radiola Improvisatie Salon* on the radio, it gave me a better idea of Willem de Ridder's influence on aspiring artists.

For some home tapers, it was all about the fun, the five minutes of fame. "Musical ambitions? I didn't really have any. I just enjoyed playing with sound and devices. I was a high school student then," says Jeroen ter Hofstede. Leonie Bouwknecht reflects, "How incredibly fun to hear me as a 13-year-old. I



had completely forgotten about this. 'Does your box also have a tape titled *The Revolution?*' Laughing, he continues, 'Yes, yes, we were so politically engaged at that time! It's a piano piece where Auke Sanders - unfortunately no longer with us - adds sounds like a barrel organ and a flushing toilet at my cue," adds Bert Dobben. "Yeah, it's funny, right? Of course, it's all fiddling, but still too precious to forget. In the early 1980s, I was a guest at the Queeekhoven estate. I could introduce my cassette in this unique VPRO program. I had always been tinkering with music and tape loops, and given the times, I had created quite an apocalyptic improvisation. Not to become famous, by the way. Recently, I found that cassette again, with a hand-made cover. We were so dedicated and creative when we were young. The music is a beautiful piece of nostalgia and cultural heritage. Sometimes, with all the modern conveniences, we forget how challenging



the paths we had to navigate back then,” shares Harry Teunissen. When surprised with his submission, Jan van Goethem exclaimed, “I had completely erased this from my memory. I was seventeen. Vaguely, I remember Willem de Ridder but not my contribution to the program. I didn’t pursue music further but studied visual arts instead.”

But for another group of musicians, the program sparked their artistic inspiration. Frans de Waard briefly mentioned it earlier, but Otto J.E. Grünbauer takes a more serious tone, saying, “Insiders would sometimes say ‘I’m Radiola-ing’ as a verb.” He continues: “Thinking back to the *Radiola Improvisation Salon* stirs up a lot inside me. Before the 1980s, people were merely passive listeners. However, with *Radiola*, listeners became the ones making things happen. Willem hooked them up with the radio, the sounds, and the content. Anything was on the table! Crumple a piece of paper, and boom, it’s art. Because no one can replicate it perfectly. This led to some heated discussions with buddies at the pub. Like, was it really art to simply mess up some paper? A lot of wine went down, yet we never settled on an answer. Nevertheless, I was on the same page as Willem. Every week, I’d literally be parked in front of the radio. It was like a moment of total openness. It kinda shouted, “Look, there’s space for everyone here!” Willem de Ridder embodied the perfect world I had in my mind. Then I had this thought: what

I’m hearing on *Radiola*, I could give that a shot too. Maybe my way, but still do it. I had a used cassette recorder, a random brand called Technicore. And in this music magazine, I came across an ad for inexpensive TDK cassettes. Recordings were made under the influence of a ton of wine. I still remember getting played on air, but I wasn’t doing it to get famous or dive deep into sounds. I did it simply because I could. That freedom Willem dished out? I was all about making the most of it!”

Otherworldly

André van der Bij is equally lyrical. “It was truly something new. Suddenly, interaction with the medium of radio became possible. I vividly remember being fifteen years old in the summer of 1981, when I heard my own music on the radio for the first time. It was unbelievable! Almost otherworldly. These kinds of moments have left a lasting impression on me. They were filled with excitement, surprise, and the opportunity to be a part of something extraordinary. I cherish them as precious experiences that have inspired me and strengthened my love for free thinking, art, history, and the unknown. I carry these with me every day in my work and personal life.”

Eugène Spaan, Quinten Dierick, and Robert Oor from Nijmegen called themselves De Jonge Onderzoekers (The Young Researchers). Despite being around 16 years old, they were already

exploring the world of sound and electronics. Quinten, now a professional sound artist, shared his experiences: “We built electrical circuits under the guidance of volunteers or found diagrams in books and the magazine *Electuur*. So, we also soldered circuits that produced sound! We obtained electronic parts from broken equipment we collected door to door or found in the trash. We had no resources for mixing or editing; every generator was soldered directly onto the recorder inputs. Nothing was rehearsed, at most, tested. Very primitive, very direct. With the first tapes, I was so foolish to send in the original cassettes, not knowing that only five minutes would be broadcasted, so I had to re-record it from the radio. What has changed in 40 years of making music for me? Not a lot. Perhaps only in terms of facilities. I still record everything in one take without much fuss. I want to surprise and innovate myself in sound and music.”

Arthur Berkhoff stands out as one of the most prolific home tapers. With as many as ten cassettes in the collection, his art and cassettes embody the international Neoist movement. His work involved playing with collective identities, reproducing artworks, and incorporating elements of fake art and plagiarism. Operating in Amsterdam during the 1980s, Arthur established his futuristic one-person movement called ‘Neoism/Anti-Neoism/Pregroperativism.’ His music, recorded in his Orguna Laboratory, consisted of long improvised experimental electronic pieces with voices and noises, reflecting a cyberpunk avant-garde style ahead of its time.” Arthur originally came from Almelo, and given his technical background, it’s not a far-fetched idea that he could be the Arthur Berkhoff from the nearby technical research University of Twente, from whom I happened to

find an email address. However, his response revealed that Arthur still enjoys misleading people. He replied, “Dear Marco, I think this is from someone else with the same name. It is not from me. Regards, Arthur Berkhoff.” Well, well...

Breaking down barriers

One of Willem’s favourite catchphrases was “Everyone in power!” This statement perfectly encapsulated the DIY spirit of the time, empowering musicians and listeners to take control of their artistic expression. However, Willem was not just a mouthpiece for the zeitgeist or a champion of the people. He was a visionary who pushed boundaries and posed challenges. He believed in making platforms accessible to all, regardless of their daring or unconventional ideas. I once read that – while Ridder actually translates into Knight – Willem de Ridder proudly highlighted the meaning behind his last name as “to get rid of your mind”. What should explain his encouragement to just go ahead. “Don’t think too much”, “Just do it”, “Just submit!”.

We all know the stories of numerous young individuals who were inspired to start energetic punk bands after witnessing the raw power of the Sex Pistols. It was a revelation that they, too, could do it. Similarly, *De Radiola Improvisatie Salon* profoundly impacted the more introverted boys and girls in their bedrooms. Long before the rise of Facebook and TikTok, Willem understood that providing an ordinary person with a platform could ignite boundless creativity. Whether it was playful tinkering or a severe artistic pursuit, it didn’t matter. Willem’s most significant contribution to Dutch music history was breaking down this barrier between music consumers and producers. And beyond the demo cassettes, De Radiola Tapes


are an incredibly intriguing and, in my opinion, a pinnacle of Dutch heritage.

A Poisonous Gift

However, why did the box of cassettes have to change hands again? Frits Jonker explains: "De Radiola Tapes excited me endlessly. I decided to transfer all the intriguing material onto DAT tapes in the best possible quality and create a few compilation cassettes for myself, Willem, Peter, Fake, and Ruud. Out of the 52 hours preserved on the DAT tapes, I carefully curated 11 compilations, which deserved a CD box set release. Not only because De Salon was a unique project but primarily because the music is fantastic. However, despite my expectations, I received no positive reactions when I gave some CDs to my friends, journalists, radio stations, record labels, or others I believed would appreciate these audio documents. No one, I mean absolutely no one, reached out or asked for more. Faced with the lack of interest, I eventually gave up after investing over a thousand hours into the project. Nonetheless, I still regard it as a highlight in my life. The cassettes ended up in my closet for years, with no chance of being heard again. That's why I handed them over to Diggin' Demos, trusting Marco would eventually find a way to make them accessible."

Thanks, Frits! This poisonous gift you've given me is something else. It's both an honour and a challenge. I agree that *De Radiola Improvisatie Salon* deserves the recognition it's been missing all these years. It's time to prove all the naysayers wrong and showcase the incredible talent within these recordings. But I'll be honest, and I must confess that my feelings about taking on this monumental task oscillate between a curse and a

blessing. How can I bring this old music into the modern world? Thankfully, Willem's words keep echoing whenever I consider passing the box to someone else. «Don't overthink it! Just start and see where it leads.» Thus, I've managed to digitize eight of the eleven compilations so far. It's been a labour of love, driven by the belief that De Radiola Tapes deserves a broader audience and its place in the canon of Dutch music history.

 You can access these unique recordings by scanning this QR code. They're also available for free download.

The music featured in these compilations represents just a tiny fraction of what was submitted to Willem de Ridder's radio show. I am eager to collect additional cassettes to provide a complete understanding of this cassette culture phenomenon. However, archiving and making them accessible is a task that requires the support of the public. If you have complete broadcasts on tape or home taper cassettes, I kindly request you to reach out to me at diggingdemos@gmail.com.

Some bands and home tapers have achieved breakthrough success, as it is often called. However, the cassette recordings of musicians who never ventured beyond producing music in their rooms or playing that one gig at the local youth centre are equally fascinating. That cross-section of twenty years of amateur music (1978-1998) represents a snapshot of the era and a cultural heritage that deserves preservation from gathering dust.

For more information about the cassette archive of Diggin' Demos (Marco van Dalfsen), please visit www.diggingdemos.nl.

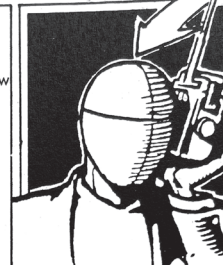
HOW TO GET ON. Radiola



it's easy!

How to get on the radio? How to get your sounds on those airwaves, that is the big question of most audio artists, self tapers and cassette composers. If the radio does not play them, you rarely hear their sounds. No record company is going to release them, the concert hall presents only live music and no cassettes. There are not even scores. In fact, there is nowhere to go, except to the radio. This first Radiola Report is about that important question and of course about the answer. This booklet is a request, a proposal to most radio stations and our success story. How to get on the radio is easy nowadays.....

Han Reiziger liked the idea, but had problems with the end of our roles as editors and judges. How about quality? I tried to explain the principle of a 'clearing house' show for self tapers...most of them are shy and would never dream of sending their weird sounds to a radio station. It is difficult to get on the radio remember! Some even think that you have to pay off the disc jockeys. At least you have to be very good or successful to be played by them. So as long as we continued to excercise our uh. 'good taste' that's what we would get. If we used the 'clearing house' idea, we might even learn something from the course of unpredictable events that automatically would follow if we played everything. Didn't John Cage write that if you want to improve the world you only make matters worse?



After some more subtle persuasion Han decided to accept the new formula and the RADIOLA SALON was born... Soon the first tapes started to come in and with trembling hands the mail was opened. We broke out in cold sweat when we listened to them. My God! Not only was the technical quality gruesome, but the artistic level...the musical value..uh..was, to say the least, bad.. Han started to worry about his reputation and I wasn't so sure anymore

Sometimes a radio station plays some audio artists. They realize that something is happening in the art world with sound. When they ask for taped art works, the director in charge decides which works are good enough.

An editor for Swedish Radio went as far as to compare himself with a tough dictator. Like video art, the work of audio artists (even the 'famous' ones) is seldom heard. Audio art programs on a regular basis are mostly short



CASSETTES



I lived. Not only audio artists have that problem. More and more people have very sophisticated audio equipment in their homes. Synthesizers and other complex electronic instruments are selling like hot cakes. Many of the people who use them, have no

formal musical education, but they are making extravagant sounds anyway, mostly just for themselves or their close friends and family. All that music, all those sounds happen outside the official circuit. My name is Willem de Ridder and I work for Dutch Radio. The station is called VPRO and can be received all over the country. It has the best New Music program in Holland, made by Han Reiziger. About five years ago I sat down with him to propose a special show for Audio Artists and Self Tapers in which we should play ALL the cassettes and tapes submitted. We should guarantee airplay for all..

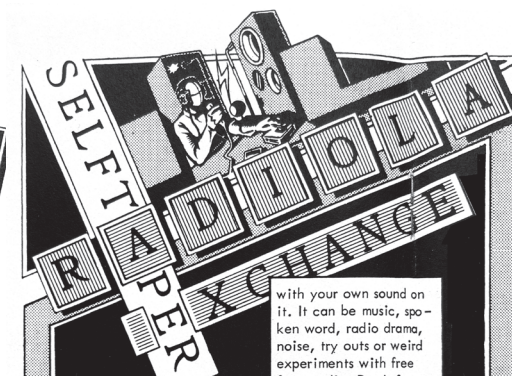


you have been playing in the Salon. I guess it's



if those home tapers needed a special show. We played all the cassettes anyway and our colleagues started to look funny at us. We got letters complaining about the atrocious quality of our new show. The future of the RADIOLA SALON looked bleak. After a few months of torture some complaint letters also had cassettes in them.... "Dear Han and Willem, the music on this cassette is not good, I don't know much about music, but at least it's better than all the crap

not your fault, since you play everything." From that moment more and more cassettes came in, the quality became better and the listeners seemed to realize that we were not responsible for the show. Some interesting mechanics developed. First of all we discovered why record companies print a cassette/skull on their inner album sleeves with the warning that 'home taping kills music'. Many of the cassette composers had been



working for years in isolation. Once they got to hear what the other home tapers were doing, they started to influence each other. Before that, the inspiration came from the commercial repertoire, available through records and broadcast. The RADIOLA system is very simple. It's live and direct. It starts when you decide to send a cassette

with your own sound on it. It can be music, spoken word, radio drama, noise, try outs or weird experiments with free form audio. Don't forget to write your name and address on the cassette itself and on the box. On a sturdy envelope you write:
RADIOLA SALON
VPRO RADIO
c/o Willem de Ridder
POSTBOX 11
HILVERSUM
THE NETHERLANDS