

The musical journey of Markus Guentner, born in Regensburg in 1981, began at the age of 13 when the first two turntables and a mixing console in his childhood bedroom led to his first attempts at mixing electronic music. His first club performances quickly followed, and the talented DJ was already playing resident nights in Regensburg clubs and bars before reaching adulthood. Inspired by the Regensburg electronic scene (such as Gebr. Teichmann and others), music became the main focus of the young musician, replacing school. During this time, he also began working on his own compositions and productions.

At the age of 19, Guentner released his first musical pieces. The most attention was garnered by the "Regensburg E.P." released in 2000 on the Cologne-based label KOMPAKT. The distinctive sound of the re-arranged and reinterpreted chimes from the St. Wolfgang Church in Kumpfmühl remains one of the most important and influential "Pop Ambient" tracks, bringing global attention to the then-young musician. The press called it "The perfect soundtrack of the city" and paved the way for his musical career, which continued with the debut album "IN MOLL" released shortly afterward.

"Guentner's debut album is an impressive work of atmospheric electronica, and In Moll threads another feather into Kompakt's cap." IN MOLL *Pitchfork* 8.3/10

In the 2000s, Guentner was a frequent guest on various labels (Ware, Warner, Sending Orbs, among others), as well as a DJ in clubs worldwide. Performances in Austria, Spain, Russia, the USA, Sweden, Finland, and more were common. His releases and performances in this decade were characterized by a blend of various genres, both electronic and non-electronic. One of the most significant releases during this time was his cover of the Talk Talk classic "Such a Shame," which even appeared in the German Dance Charts. In 2002, Guentner was also part of the "Hildegard Knef - Reform Session," where long-lost original material by Knef was discovered by Universal Music, and various musicians were commissioned to modernize and reinterpret this material for a subsequent release.

Through the interesting mix of various musical influences and their interpretation and elaboration in Guentner's releases, the audience and fan base grew, eventually including renowned musicians like Sven Väth and Neil Tennant (Pet Shop Boys). The 2003 track "Express Yourself" could still be heard years later in the Hollywood film *Equals*, which won the "Best Soundtrack Award" at the "Venice Film Fest 2015".

Film soundtracks are not unfamiliar to the musician from Regensburg, as he has been a regular DJ for the Plattenfilme (Vinyl Films) at the International Short Film Week Regensburg since 2001. Here, Guentner took it upon himself to compose and perform completely new and original pieces for existing short films. He has also composed soundtracks and produced music for American short films like *Routine* and *No Magrettes*. Additionally, the title music for the ZDF-info show *KAVKA* also comes from Guentner. These were likely the key factors that led to Guentner being invited by the Australian Goethe-Institut in 2019 for a cinema concert series in Australia and New Zealand (which, however, could not take place due to the pandemic).

In 2005, Ivo Watts-Russell (the founder of the legendary British label "4AD") invited Guentner to compose and produce a complete rework album of The Hope Blister's *Underarms* album. That same year, the art project *Flashbox* by artist Mischa Kuball was accompanied by Guentner's music (on one side of the city) and simultaneously by music from Apparat/Sascha Funke (on the other side of the city) in Oldenburg. In 2009, Guentner performed his first official ambient live set with audio and video artist "nospectacle" in Ann Arbor, MI, USA, as part of the media art project "Collapsing Borders - Einstürzende Grenzen" (on the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall), an event for which Guentner was invited by the University of Michigan. But Guentner's activity was not limited to musical guest appearances. In 2006, together with friends from Regensburg, he started a successful event and concert series aimed at introducing unknown music from genres like shoegaze and noisepop to a wide audience, supporting and promoting it. Shortly thereafter, the non-profit organization SUBLIME e.V. was founded, which received the Culture Promotion Award from the city of Regensburg in 2011 for its cultural involvement in the musical field.

"Kompakt's ambient pop wunderkind follows the exquisite In Moll with more subliminal notes and hyper-sustained synth chords." 1981 *Pitchfork* 7.8/10

In the late 2000s, the focus of the "traveling musician" shifted more towards compositions, productions, and releases. During this time, his work also delved deeper into the visual arts. Since then, Guentner has also worked as a graphic designer, helping labels, clubs, and festivals develop strong visual identities. Musically, his style further evolved away from the club environment, leaning more towards ambient and neo-classical genres. In 2009, the album *Doppelgänger* was released on the Dutch label Sending Orbs, and in 2011, the digital album *Crystal Castle* came out on Affin Records, which remained popular even when re-released in a limited CD edition for its 10th anniversary in 2021. Shortly after, Guentner teamed up with Hamburg-based musician Heiko Badje to form the project *Stareaway*. The combination of Guentner's atmospheric soundscapes and Badje's vocals and instrumental contributions resulted in an exciting and relatively unusual genre mix. The debut album *No Life in This Ghost Town* released on the Hamburg-based label *Couldn't Care More* remains one of the most interesting releases in this field. The subsequent solo album *Shadows of the City* on the American label *Moodgadget* followed shortly thereafter.



At the time, the label founder Jakob Alexander was also working with the renowned label Ghostly International, for which Guentner produced remixes for The Sight Below and Heathered Pearls. In 2014, Guentner composed the soundtrack for the exhibition Zettel:[T]raum: Tat(Sache) by Kunstverein GRAZ e.V. Regensburg. In collaboration with Jürgen Huber and Holger W. John, he created a 10-minute musical accompaniment made solely from field recordings and audio recordings from Regensburg, which was included as a CD in the exhibition catalog.

"You'd be wise to strap yourself in before undertaking this rather harrowing final journey."
THEIA *Textura*

In 2015, Guentner found a "new musical home" on the British-American label a strangely isolated place, where he has released music to this day. His first album Theia, which explores the themes of creation and order emerging from chaos, opened the door to an album trilogy that continued in 2018 with Empire. Conceptually, this album dealt with the human perspective and interaction between the created and the resulting. It also featured collaborations with musicians such as cellist Julia Kent (Antony and the Johnsons) and harpist Tom Moth (Florence + the Machine). As a small "interlude," the digital album Gradient Spirits was released in 2020, which was originally planned as a live improvisation "at home" during the lockdown in spring but was eventually released as a full album. The album series concluded in 2021 with Extropy, which was highly praised by BBC Radio and frequently played. The album took on the philosophy of extropy, which deals with humanity's development through technology, and allowed the audience to interpret its themes and the future in their own way.

"There's no sign of compromise on Empire, no resorting to volume manipulation to evoke scale and majesty, no cheap fade outs or reliance on lengthy stretches of glacially-slowly progressing loops to artificially extend its presence. And damn is it hard to believe that Empire is just shy of sixty minutes long! Where in the universe does the time go?" EMPIRE *igloo magazine*

Guentner's occasional remix excursions for artists like Sneaker Pimps, Dapayk & Padberg, and Joachim Spieth demonstrate his continuity and consistency. In 2023, Guentner released the solo album ONDA on Affin Records, which was complemented later in the year by a collaborative album with Joachim Spieth titled Overlay. For this joint project, which produced three limited 10" lathe cuts in the following year, Guentner and Spieth recruited fantastic artists (Hollie Kenniff, Rafael Anton Irisarri, Pole, Abul Mogard, and Galán/Vogt) to create reworks of the album tracks. This year also saw the long-awaited release of Kontrapunk, which marked the 50th anniversary edition of the label a strangely isolated place. For this album, Guentner invited eight different artists to compose and produce a track each as a collaboration. The concept of engaging the music in dialogue led to one of the most diverse and extensive works in Guentner's repertoire.

"The beauty and anguish of life, and Guentner manages to encapsulate the drama through a document of iron-grey sonics that are the finest he has given us yet." ONDA *sun13*

The now-defunct specialist magazine SPEX once described Markus Guentner as a "minimalist metropolitan refuser, who owes his affinity for ambient, techno, shoegaze, and pop to creating highly intelligent works in 'pop-cultural terms.'" And it is clearly this "refusal" to see things through the lens of a big-city scene or to follow trends—the relaxed and independent view of events from his small hometown—that makes Guentner's works so timeless, consistent, and unique.