Copernicus

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Copernicus is an American avant-garde beat poet, nee jazz artist. His body of work is perhaps not fit for inclusion in ProgArchives (but probably for an upcoming archives addition where this interview is hopefully meant to be included), but his views are still interesting enough to warrant an interview also for ProgArchives.

I got in touch with him for this interview.

Your biography has been described in details both on Wikipedia and on your own website so let's concentrate on the albums and details where the respective biographies are unclear.

Your current location is Ecuador, but I am not sure if that information is up to date. How is your life and why did you sometime in your life relocated to Ecuador and South America?

My current location is in New York City. I was in Ecuador because of some business that I do there and met up with some excellent musicians. I had been working on my book, Immediate Eternity, and decided to record with the Ecuadorian musicians in Guayaquil.

Let's go straight to your albums. Let's start with your views on.....

I was the one who wrote the notes on the webpage where each album is listed and these notes pretty much reflect my interpretation of each album. I will transfer these notes here under each title and add whatever I feel is missing. The main interest of all of Copernicus' albums is the documentation of the evolution that his thinking has undergone over a period of thirty years. There are earlier pieces that Copernicus would not even do today because of the evolution of his mind and the focus of his intentions.

THE MAIN INTEREST FOR ME AND HOPEFULLY FOR OTHERS IS NOT ONLY THE CONTENT OF WHAT COPERNICUS SAYS BUT THE OPPORTUNITY TO VIEW AN AGGRESSIVE MIND CONFRONTING THE QUANTUM WORLD AS IT EVOLVES FROM THE MENTALITY OF THE 1950'S AMERICAN DISNEY WORLD.

With each release listened to in chronological succession, we can see this evolving struggle to understand and put the
human puzzle together as it reaches out to be joined to a hoped for absolute reality.

**Nothing Exists from 1985**

Before the LP, Nothing Exists, there was a single entitled Pink Lips/Quasimodo both recordings having been recorded on the stage of a local famous club called Max's Kansas City. It was obvious to us that since all of our concert work was improvised with absolutely no rehearsal that we could go into a studio and record. We had been satisfied with the work that we did on stage with no rehearsal other than a cup of coffee in a restaurant an hour before the gig. In those days, 1980's Copernicus was Copernicus, Pierce Turner, Larry Kirwan, and Tom Hamlin. Little by little more and more musicians were coming in and we were on stage with up to 13 musicians, all improvising.

Copernicus is mainly interested in the lyrical content of the pieces and has rejected pieces for an album based on not liking what he has said even though the music was excellent and these pieces still are stored on 4 inch tapes in a closet. In a recording session of about four to six hours, the group would record with no breaks, since everyone was told up front that there would be no stoppage of the production, 30-50 pieces of work one after another with NO BREAKS with each piece just coming from the themes popping out of Copernicus' head and the musicians all going along for the ride at their maximum best. Some of the most famous pieces of Copernicus were created in the time it took to record them, four, five, six minutes including the lyrics and the music. There never has been any album retakes of any Copernicus pieces. If it was not great at the first listening, it stayed on the four inch tape as part of the archives. Imagine, if there are only 8 or 9 pieces on an album, there must be 30-40 pieces left behind turning to dust on the four inch Ampex tapes in a dark closet in Copernicus' house for each album. We are now talking about hundreds of pieces of music and lyrics languishing in a dark closet to which Copernicus will probably never return since he is only interested in what is new.

There is video of the entire Nothing Exists recording session and video of everything that Copernicus ever did since Larry Kirwan stated that if it was not videotaped, it meant that it did not happen. Every recording session and every concert that Copernicus ever did is on videotape. Recently, a project to save the video of a concert in Prague in 1989 in front of 9,000 people has been saved and will soon be released. The original videotape was seriously defective. What saved the project was a copy that had been made directly from the analog master that was in excellent condition. The tape was saved by Fernando Natalici from xt design a long time Copernicus videographer.

The thematic creation of Nothing Exists depended on the intellectual direction of Copernicus and the musical direction of about 15 musicians by Pierce Turner and Larry Kirwan though Copernicus did a good deal of leading throughout the pieces. No one knew what was going to happen and that was how we liked it and when the piece was great, we knew it at its end. We probably never created an absolutely bad piece of work because we all really cared about what we were doing and we knew there was no second chance with the piece. If the piece was bad, we were just wasting our nonexistent lives.

In Nothing Exists, thematically, Copernicus sets the foundation for what was to come in the next 25 years. In an apparent love song called, "I Won't Hurt You," the video of which is on YouTube, Copernicus, almost like a secret, introduces the world of Nevermore. What is this nevermore and where is it? In Blood, he identifies ignorance as being the cause of all man's suffering. In I Know What I Think, he establishes his sense of security and in Quasimodo, he relates to Victor Hugo's character in the bell tower of the Cathedral in so many ways. He feels a brotherhood with Quasimodo which forces the listener to ask what kind of character is this Copernicus relating to someone like Quasimodo?

In Let Me Rest, there is the struggle of crawling out of the swamp of what society had dumped on the poor defenseless child and the child's struggle to free himself from the past to come into his own thinking. In Nagasaki, also recorded on the stage at Max's Kansas City, we have the introduction of the atom and its significance in the evolution of a man's thinking. In Atomic Nevermore, there is the clearest statement ever made on any Copernicus album regarding what Copernicus is all about. He even presents his vision of the future.

**Victim of the Sky from 1986**

In Victim of the Sky, the only reference we see to the quantum world is in the first piece, "Lies" where Copernicus calls all modern definitions of everything just lies. Victim of the Sky is just documenting the further isolation of Copernicus from the normal views of his times. This album has no conscious effort to portray the quantum world just the furthering of Copernicus' isolation from the world around him. He is a victim of the sky; white people evolved from black people; the hidden force within him that knows about the quantum and disapproves of everything else; the rejection of measuring the world in terms of money which is almost a plea to some force to save him from becoming too materialistic; the further evolution of humanity from bacteria itself and finally in the Lament of Joe Apples, there is no reference to the quantum world other than the thought that there is something wrong out there. Victim of the Sky is a transition album as Copernicus evolves out of the past mentality that created his mind and begins to set forth on his own into the quantum.

**From Bacteria 1987**

An English company, Dead Man's Curve, bought the rights to take pieces from Nothing Exists and Victim of the Sky and created this English compilation of those two albums. It is an interesting English interpretation of Copernicus and shows the enormous possibilities in making different moods by arranging certain pieces of Copernicus in a different way and creating a completely different animal. This album is not available. Only about 20 albums are around in Copernicus' house. The remainder of the release is somewhere in England.

**Deeper from 1989**

In Deeper, Copernicus moves deeper into the quantum world but still reveals his caring about human history and maintains a toehold in the common views of reality but with deeper more powerful evolution into the quantum. In Oh God! there is implied some plea for help in achieving what he wants to achieve. Human politics enters in Son of a Bitch from the North as does history in Chichen-Iza-Elvis and visions of the quantum as human time passes in The New Is Never Safe. The last LP in the series, Copernican.
Disco Days are Over and finally in Hurl Silence a full forced quantum leap into the atomic world in Hurl Silence and Once, Once, Once Again all angry rebellious pieces. The entire album is angry and rebellious. The Death of Joe Apples ends the Joe Apples saga and They Own Everything initiates the undercurrent of political social revolution that underlies all of Copernicus' politics. But in Atom by Atom, we are full force in the quantum world boarding spaceship quantum and in Come to It we feel that evolving efforts and struggles can lead an intelligent individual somewhere if only he makes the attempt to evolve and Come to It. "It" is the growing understanding that arrives after a long time intellectual attempt to understand. It is this recurring theme of the need for the individual to never stop growing to be hopeful that no matter how old you are, it could be just around the corner of all the answers that you were searching for and surprisingly, the source of all of these answers could come from a source you least expect. Copernicus constantly says that two of his greatest teachers were one, a dog, and two, a drunk in a bar. You just have to be open enough to see and hear and understand the light. Very often a piece of wisdom only passes by once and then never again. Deeper is considered more profound than the previous two albums because Copernicus really tries to analyze more than before. (In 1989, the quark had not even yet been discovered.)

Null from 1990

In Null, we can actually see the atom taking over Copernicus psyche and the almost abandonment of the part of human history where there was no atomic consciousness. In the Lonely Man he concretizes how his thinking is isolating him from the world around him and how this isolation is necessary to go where he wants to go. You can't have jerky primates pulling on your feet criticizing every act. He is on a self fulfilling rocket and is ready to go wherever it takes him and is documenting the journey in poetry, cds, and books and is allowing the public to come along. His voyage is not some career and he doesn't care if he gets paid and he certainly is not trying to please the public. Pierce Turner once said that a Copernicus concert was an attack on the audience. In RA! after a voyage to ancient Egypt, he proposes that the Western World is just an Egyptian remake and he indicates that he has left the remake. In The Authorities, he dismisses all authorities and indicates that they must be abolished if you are to fulfill the mandates of your aggressive mind into the quantum. In the atomic world, the only authority lies in natural law certainly not in anything ignorantly human. And in Inside Here, Copernicus for the first time takes us into the heart of the atom from which after this he may never leave. In The Sound of the Mind, Copernicus praise the power of the human mind as the only tool around which can take us if only we listen to it and talk to it and trust it for it holds Truths that we should learn and we do not need outside teachers to confuse us or dominate us. We need only the rested clean living sound of the mind. In Dah!Dah!Doh! recorded on the stage in Berlin, the atomic world takes on life as Copernicus sings the music inside the atom. Copernicus is definitely inside the atom and we wonder what will he do next.

No Borderline from 1993

Here we see the atom taking over the entire album. Copernicus is inside the atom and he ain't coming out! Right through the entire 10 pieces on the cd, for we are now in the world of the cd as was Null, the previous album, with a lot more space on the cd, Copernicus shows that he has completely left what he calls the world of Illusion, the world perceived by the human senses, and has entered into the quantum. Everything is now connected to the quantum. There are no historical experiences anymore without connection to the quantum world. He recognizes in a Goethe quote that few men have imagination enough for reality and he feels that he is one of them who will bring a new reality to humanity. Though Copernicus is isolated from humanity out of necessity, he never abandons humanity and always feels his responsibility to give back to society for he has always stated that without society he would still be trying to invent the wheel. It was society who discovered the atom. Without that discovery, he would be writing poems of the 19th century expressing his love of visible nature.

So in Joe Meets Copernicus with the original music created by Michael Theodore behind him, he reveals how he was giving back in a poetry reading and meets his past and his past interviews him. In Break from the Senses, Copernicus begins to lay out the physical path to the intellectual evolution to the quantum. In the Sound of the Mind, he demands the us of your mind and he here calls for the abandonment of the human senses in trying to define reality. In The Voice he emphasizes that man is on his own as the historical God waives goodbye and gives his last sermon to the music of Mexican master of the marimba, Zeferino Nandayapa. The lyrics to this piece were actually written beforehand and took Copernicus three months to write with the music inspiring the lyrics.

The quantum has first place throughout the rest of the pieces in the entire album. Copernicus is inside the atom and he ain't coming out! Right through the entire 10 pieces on the cd, for we are now in the world of the cd as was Null, the previous album, with a lot more space on the cd, Copernicus shows that he has completely left what he calls the world of Illusion, the world perceived by the human senses, and has entered into the quantum. Everything is now connected to the quantum. There are no historical experiences anymore without connection to the quantum world. He recognizes in a Goethe quote that few men have imagination enough for reality and he feels that he is one of them who will bring a new reality to humanity. Though Copernicus is isolated from humanity out of necessity, he never abandons humanity and always feels his responsibility to give back to society for he has always stated that without society he would still be trying to invent the wheel. It was society who discovered the atom. Without that discovery, he would be writing poems of the 19th century expressing his love of visible nature.

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In Immediate Eternity from 2001

Most of the lyrics of the previous Copernicus albums with the exception of a few pieces, came right off the top of Copernicus' brain spontaneously. However, with his entry into the atom and the quantum world and the almost abandonment of the world perceived by the human senses, the choice of topics became very limited. He was now almost limited to the quantum world and when he went into the studio and began to record, the limitations of his now being immersed in the quantum sort of shocked and paralyzed him because if nothing existed, there was nothing to say other than, "Nothing Exists." His recording sessions became very disappointing to him. It was as if he had lost his mind or at least he had lost the sense of many things since he was abandoning the world perceived by the base human senses and
In the process of revising the book, he traveled to Ecuador and there with the unpublished manuscript in hand, he met up with Ecuadorian musicians. With recording costs being so low in Guayaquil, he recorded from his manuscript spontaneously with the Ecuadorian musicians. He liked the work that they did and mixed the album in Guayaquil and New York.

Having had the opportunity to work from already written prose, we can see a very different Copernicus less strident more in control which forces have a major influence on how the various pieces are presented. In Immediate Eternity, Copernicus is really having a direct conversation with the world rather than screaming from his soul as in the past. He is now having this direct conversation though as nice as he appears, we must always remember with whom we are dealing because though Copernicus can be charming, he can also be unforgiving if you insist on being in a place that he calls ignorant as in Beautiful Humanity and Balloon Dreams. In both pieces he gently sets up humanity and then wallops the s**t out of them for being messed up. He shows how hopeful he is in Absolute Truth is Possible. In Free of Me! he reveals the process of having liberated himself from himself as he goes forth egoless through the Universe being free of himself, being free of a false identity. In Dust, he turns everything including himself to dust and in a totally new direction, he explores the feelings inside nonexistence and the feeling it is to be consciously nonexistent. In the Carrot, he shows how beautiful spontaneous life can be and in the Stick, he reveals how humanity is screwing up the planet in a most vicious attack on the activities of humanity and their results. In a totally new concept, he reveals how humanity is a part of the Universe and in a sense, humanity is the Universe itself because humanity's elements came from outer space. And finally, in Viva the New!, the guru of nonexistence predicts the destruction of humanity by suicide and the welcoming of the new creature that will emerge by evolution out of the human dust. Long live the new! The world was not just made for humanity! Every moment is Apocalypse and every moment is Genesis.

la eternidad inmediata from 2001

After Immediate Eternity was recorded and mixed, the Ecuadorian musicians wanted the album to also be in Spanish. Consequently, Copernicus put a Spanish vocal on the music and immediately became a Latin artist. He proceeded to perform 25 concerts in Ecuador only in Spanish. In fact, Copernicus never did the Immediate Eternity concert in any other language just Spanish. Copernicus speaks Spanish fluently.

Immediate Eternity II / La Eternidad Inmediata II / Sofortige Ewigkeit II / L’Éternité Immédiate II from 2005

Why four different language versions of that album?

Actually the release date of the II's is 2003 not 2005 notwithstanding what the website says. Immediate Eternity II is the rerecording of Immediate Eternity after the band had performed 25 concerts. Therefore, Immediate Eternity is the original recording session with all of the original feelings and music while Immediate Eternity II is a nonstop redo of the original after 25 concerts. Immediate Eternity II was also recorded and mixed in a higher quality studio. Some people like the original and some people prefer the II. Both should be heard and appreciated. The Spanish, German, and French versions of II were done by Copernicus having access to translators in Guayaquil who did great translations and Copernicus has a fondness for languages and the studio was not expensive and it was a natural thing to do since it was possible. From one day to the next, Copernicus became a Spanish, German, and French artist. Unfortunately, none of these albums have been properly released, but that is coming soon. When the artist is the record company and the artist only cares about his material, the marketing of the material will suffer. Yet, this absence of fame can be a good thing. Fame is a drug that brings many problems that have nothing to do with the work.

disappearance from 2009

Copernicus' first 3 LP's always had a place to go which were the many independent distributors and the college stations for airplay. His first 3 albums were highly appreciated in colleges and magazines and for example, Victim of the Sky was number 4 in the Northeast. However, with the invasion and corruption by the major record companies of the college stations from 1990 onwards who in effect turned the college stations into top 40 record players, some college stations actually were returning unopened Copernicus releases. Null disappeared in college radio play. No Borderline was a non event. And like a farmer who eats the seeds of his next planting, the artists of America had no chance of receiving any recognition for their work. With no commercial radio stations playing new music and now no college stations playing new music, there was nowhere to go with an album.

Immediate Eternity was done in Latin America for Latin America. Copernicus immersed himself in writing and published the book, Immediate Eternity in both English and Spanish. This book would have happened on cd, but there was no more space to store cds in his apartment. When we have an artist alone who really only cares about the art form and its content and looks down on promotion and career, the result may be not to be noticed. Copernicus is the artist and the record company and the book publisher. The prospects of a new cd were grim since Copernicus did not know what he would do with the cd once it was pressed. He could publish a book and he found expression in the book. However, in 2008, while Copernicus was working on his second book still not published, he received an email from Leonardo Pavkovic, a friend he had not seen in five years. Leonardo had his own record label, MoonJune Records, and was interested in Copernicus. In short, Leonardo inspired Copernicus to go back into the studio with 15 musicians who in four hours, Copernicus and musicians recorded "disappearance" and the soon to be released, March 15, 2011, Cipher and Decipher. MoonJune records sent "disappearance" all over the world and the album was highly praised and Copernicus was now on the Internet and there were significant record sales. With the encouragement of Leonardo, Copernicus had come back to recording life though he was always alive as a thinker and artist in his own way.
Meanwhile the record business changed and the devils in the record companies lost their jobs and a new devil appeared in their place, the public, who took pleasure in stealing the artists' work and getting their desire for recordings satisfied by theft instead of purchase. There will always be artists because true artists do what they do because they have to do what they do just as they have to breathe in order to live.

Now, thematically, with "disappearance" we find a Copernicus no longer in the world of illusion. He is inside of the atom and he is not coming back to the world of illusion. He identifies the 12 subatomic particles that make up the entire Universe and describes a time in the past when there was a plasma out of which the atoms themselves had evolved. But now we see a critical Copernicus calling human beings Zombis who created themselves or the illusion of themselves who in a great part of the planet do not know or care that there is such a thing called an atom. Copernicus refers to them as poor homo sapiens plodding around with ignorant identity in their brains just satisfying their basic instincts with no awareness of the reality surrounding them. He calls for Revolution against the forces that prevent humanity from evolving philosophically into the quantum. This Copernicus really cares about humanity and all forms of life and like St. Christopher to whom he refers carrying the weight of humanity's ignorance on his shoulder.

The musicians under the direction of Pierce Turner were excellent and with the addition of James Frazee as recording and mixing engineer "disappearance" was a success.

and the new version of Nothing Exists from earlier this year.

With the success of "disappearance" there were writers asking, "How come I never heard of this Copernicus?" A decision was made to rerelease all of Copernicus LP's as remastered cds. And in 2010, Nothing Exists was released on cd and in 2011, Victim of the Sky will also be released on cd.

Please describe your creative processes.

The creative process of Copernicus comes from a commitment made in 1961 to search for Absolute Truth through expression and to share with the public his findings whether it be in poetry, books, or cds. Before Copernicus ever recorded, he had already written 2 novels. It was the appearance of Pierce Turner and Larry Kirwan in 1982 that turned the artistic expression of Copernicus to records. And it was the lack of outlet for the music that made him stop and return to writing books and it was the appearance of Leonardo Pavkovic that brought that back to recording. The process never stops with Copernicus. He is always alert to a new idea always working always with a pen in his pocket attached to piece of paper. Art is why he lives. It is not career or monetary wealth. Copernicus always said that someday an angel would appear and promote all of his work, but he was not that angel. His work was to create.

The pleasure of creating something new that is considered an advance is the most exciting event for Copernicus. He lives for the new idea or the new sound or the new experience which raises his understanding and he wants to share that discovery with the world. The creative process of Copernicus is to work 24 hours a day, to even document his dreams and to always be open to that which he has never thought before, simply to evolve.

What is the lyrical themes in your albums and what is your political ethos?

From the previous analyses of Copernicus work, it seems that Copernicus is preoccupied with the philosophical evolution of himself and of humanity. From the original days of 1975 when he came to the conclusion that to understand reality you had to understand the bricks that make up humanity, the atoms, all proceeded from that conclusion. His conclusion that nothing could possibly exist since everything was changing so quickly that to even have a name would be an error since by the time you mentioned your name, you had already changed atomically into something else. Nothing exists is the common theme running through each Copernicus albums and in this report we observe how Copernicus moved closer and closer to the subatomic as he left the illusion of the world of the human senses. Copernicus is stubborn and will not permit the ignorance of the human world to sway him to their wrong interpretations of reality especially their mystical religions that have and still are causing major divisions in the human world and persecution of the other forms of life on the planet.

The ideal political system for Copernicus is the system of the philosopher king of Plato with powerful guarantees of individual freedom and life and death controls on any kingly corruption, though Copernicus is more interested in the philosophy of reality and his philosophy negates any lasting value in anything human. In effect, everything human is just illusionary atomic dust. Evolution of the subatomic as itself directs itself, its apparent dictatorial chaotic self, with its changing and unchanging relative and absolute natural laws embedded deeper and deeper with every new human perception dictates a corresponding ideal political world of controlled dictatorship. For humanity, there is only the dictator laws of nature and the only choice is to bow down to those laws and be in constant harmony with those laws. Mythical interpretations thousands of years old do not work and must be abolished, but with all of the understanding, there seems to be something that is very clear - Humanity does not exist in reality and all human endeavor is dust and worthless illusion as Copernicus says, "This is the human condition!"

This conclusion does not mean that humanity should not act. On the contrary, humanity should act and just do the best that i can do in harmony with the laws of nature. Nature is the boss and understanding nature is the goal, but in the end, the illusion of humanity and all of its "accomplishments" will disappear from the planet in the same way that the dinosaurs disappeared. In the dinosaurs, humanity can have a glimpse into its future, whether self caused or caused by some microbe or some act of nature. Of course, in case humanity is still around in five billion years, the sun will explode and consume the Earth.

Democracy is a fraudulent lie invented by the oligarchy to make the masses feel good. Adolf Hitler came to power through democracy to show you how good democracy can be. The guys with the money will always have the power and nothing can change that truth. No matter what you call it, human politics is only the expression of the powerful to attain more power. At least with the philosopher king, there may be at least one force with power to look out for the powerless.

I feel your albums are best described as performed poetry based on dada'sm type of music and some jazz structures. How would you describe your music and is your music and outlook pretty similar to William Burroughs, the father of the beat genre?
Though Copernicus has a 1/2 masters degree in English literature from Columbia University and somehow is a product of the beat generation with its faith in spontaneity, he does not know what is dadaism and has never read William Burroughs. Copernicus is alone with his brain confronting the cosmos aided by the newest discovery in whatever scientific discipline that achieves a new discovery. For Copernicus, there is only the base: Nothing Exists. Humanity does not exist. Nothing can exist except maybe the fundamental subatomic still undiscovered particle that never changes which Copernicus calls MAH in his book, Immediate Eternity.

Copernicus does not care that much about music rather he cares about the thematic lyrics. The music is there to inspire the creation of the lyrics and to help the lyrics to be better communicated. Copernicus does not consider his work to be poetry. Poetry is a very disciplined medium created by masters of the art form. Spontaneous lyrics that use poetical tools is not poetry. It is just poetical expression, but it is not poetry. A great poem could take 10 years to write. Copernicus at Water Music in 2008 created 25 pieces in four hours of poetical expression.

I have seen some live photos with you and your band. What is your gigs plans and any other plans for this Christmas and next year?

There is the hope of Copernicus on tour but that is in the hands of Mother Nature and will be announced when it is appropriate.

What is your experience with the music industry and the new internet music scene? Anything you want to tell us before Wikileaks does it?

As expressed before, for decades, the music industry cared more for the bottom line than for their job of bringing America's best artists to the public. They are traitors to the country and should be punished not only with the loss of their jobs but rather as true traitors should be punished. The last 20 years in America have been sad days for true artists. A true artist is not a performer who makes you feel good. But then again, we could be living in the middle ages where they burned you for being a true artist. Apparently, things have gotten better. All they do to you now is ignore you and hope that you go away, but Copernicus will not go away, because the payment of Copernicus lies in the process and being able to create not in the bottom line. Copernicus shares his work with the public because he cares about humanity and the planet not to attain money or fame.

To wrap up this interview, is there anything you want to add to this interview?

Yes. Though all of this interview was answered by Copernicus, himself, he has the tendency to refer to himself in the third person. I do not understand what that is all about. It's like stepping outside of your body and observing your illusion. There must be other explanations. We could run a contest calling for the best explanation why Copernicus refers to himself in the third person. Then again, in thinking about it more, when I am being Copernicus, there is a section of my mind that turns on and becomes Copernicus, but I am always Copernicus in my thinking but maybe a very different Copernicus from the one in performance. Whatever the explanation, I refer to Copernicus in the third person as if he was over there and I knew everything about him, but he was not speaking for himself, but actually was speaking for himself. This is all spooky and Copernican.

Thank you to Copernicus for this interview

His homepage is here where you can find a lot of videos and other stuff too.