

Q&A NICK ROTH

Nick Roth is co-director at Diatribe Records, an independent Irish record label.

Lucy Thraves finds out about the label's ethos, current projects, and hopes for the future

© TONY CARRAGHER



▲ 'What I most enjoy about the work is its constant diversity': Nick Roth

What was the inspiration behind the label's founding?

Diatribe Records was founded to provide a creative platform for emerging new music from Ireland. While traditional Irish music began developing a global audience in the 1960s and continues to enjoy worldwide popularity today, the vibrant contemporary, improvised and experimental music scenes in Ireland have often fallen under the radar. Our work attempted to redress this balance, allowing artists here to share their ground-breaking work with international audiences. In recent years our geographical focus has become a little broader, but we still retain strong connections to Ireland and to Irish-based artists.

What does your role entail on a day-to-day basis? What do you enjoy most about the job?

In truth, as a 'day job' I work as a saxophonist and composer – I am performing this month at festivals in Indonesia, developing

an interactive installation for the European Space Agency, and writing a new work for solo cello, holographic images and sculptural light for the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris.

My role as director at Diatribe however, along with my partner Matthew Jacobson, involves overseeing recording, production, design and launch of all of our catalogue releases, while maintaining an administrative capacity and developing new directions for future growth. After the launch of Ed Bennett / Decibel's superb *Togetherness* recording earlier this year we are now entering early production phases for our next four titles – which involve several really exciting new collaborations with internationally-renowned artists and a wealth of incredibly beautiful new music. I think that what I most enjoy about the work is its constant diversity – music can take you all over the world, and demands the constant learning of new things along the way.

Since 2009, the label has released the Solo Series recordings, which have focused on individual musicians. How did these projects work? What was the thinking behind them?

The eight Solo Series releases represent a wide-angle portrait of Ireland's new musical landscape. I believe that for an artist the making of a solo recording is the most demanding, and therefore potentially the most rewarding project, that one can undertake. The individual character, personality and sound of the musician is placed directly into focus and allows a very direct communication to take place between the performer and the listener. In many of the Solo Series recordings the performer was also the composer, which of course adds another dimension to the experience. Given the enormous efforts of all involved to realise these projects, I think that some of Diatribe's most satisfying releases overall come from this series of works.

How do you select artists? What are the label's priorities when forming catalogues?

We really have only one primary condition when selecting artists: that the music is really, really good! Since our foundation, the label's policy has always been to try to continually increase the diversity of the overall catalogue, so by necessity we are always looking for artists who are pushing the boundaries of their own area of music and seeking to develop relationships with artists in unexplored territories who can introduce new sounds to our mix. Currently Diatribe represents 117 performers and 68 composers worldwide, and we add to these figures with almost every new release.

What is Diatribe's relationship with streaming services such as Spotify? What sort of challenges do these services present to independent labels?


I think that almost any independent label will tell you that the work that they do is not really about making money, but

“ We are always looking for artists who are pushing the boundaries of their own area of music ”

about making music and having that music heard. There are far more lucrative industries that you could enter into if your primary concern was the former. Therefore I am certainly not going to jump on the bandwagon and decry streaming as the death of the independent label – in fact streaming services now make up a sizable proportion of our income streams overall and there is very little evidence to suggest that the additional audience figures generated through this medium would be

buying music directly if the service was not available. I think in fact the opposite is true: instant access to so much music has increased our audience base internationally and generated new opportunities for our artists worldwide.

What are Diatribe's plans for the future?

Beyond the ongoing growth of the core catalogue itself, we are currently in the process of developing a new Diatribe Film division, which will promote the use of our music in television, film and media. Irish film is currently experiencing something of a renaissance, and we have already seen some of our artists' work secure placements in major audiovisual productions. With the deceleration of direct sales, we believe that this will become an increasingly critical area of growth for the record industry and a significant source of long-term sustainability for labels and artists alike. 

www.diatriberecords.ie
www.nickrothmusic.com