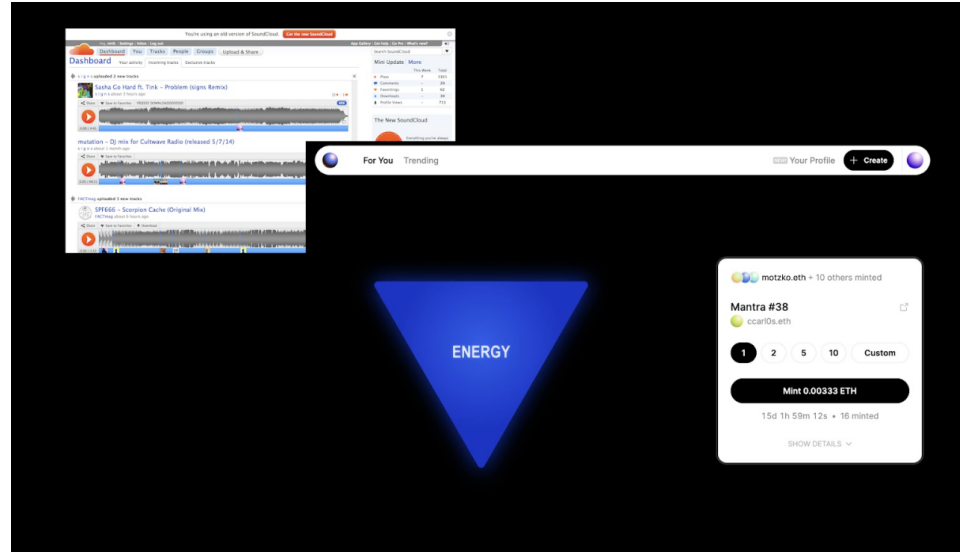


There then, here now

Reflections on building in the cultural zeitgeist



Today marks one whole year at ZORA, one year onchain, and one year in the most important role of my career so far.

There then

I moved to Berlin in summer 2012. People think I'm joking when I say I moved there because I wanted to go to Berghain every weekend, but it's true. What I wanted more than anything was to be right in the center of that cultural moment; the music, the clubs, and the people.

I landed a role at SoundCloud and I found myself directly in the middle of all that mattered to me. Everywhere I went, people talked about SoundCloud. My new friends, the artists I admired, the fans with exceptional music taste, and those within the industry. They were all on the orange cloud creating and curating.

I was new to tech, and felt completely out of my depth. And yet, it was exactly where I wanted to be.

At the time, streaming was the new meta disrupting the music industry, and it was the height of a golden age in social media. The technology was cutting edge, the people were smart and kind, and the scale at which we impacted the lives of creators and their fans was incredible.

Every day felt exciting and terrifying—we were making something for the culture, we were part of the culture, and we were defining culture. What we built mattered.

I'd almost resigned myself to never having that feeling again. It was a moment, a glorious fleeting moment for technology, culture, and for my career, when all the right conditions existed—right time, right place, right people.

Here now

I joined ZORA in June 2022. A few people said that a bear market is a good time to join crypto. I quickly learned that one year in crypto feels more like a decade.

Today, NFTs are the new meta disrupting online culture, beginning the golden age of onchain media. It will be simple for creators to create and collectors to collect.

Onchain can be that scale. ZORA can be that scale.

In 2023, onchain is where the native online culture lives. And more online culture will continue to come onchain. The best artists and creators are already bringing their work to Ethereum, and more collectors are finding their way to it. Anyone can create using the tools. Anyone can bring their ideas onchain and find an audience who wants to collect timestamped pieces of internet culture. *I was there.*

Every day feels exciting and terrifying—what will we learn today from our creators? Is the form factor shifting? What is playing out in the relationship between creator and collector? How can we help creators make money from this?

I am able to tell creators we shipped their wishlist feature. I am able to learn new constraints to work within and new ways to expand my product thinking.

Again, I'm new to the tech. And again, I've found myself outside of my comfort zone. But between there then and here now, I have a decade trailing behind me. A decade of building, shipping, successes, failures over and over again, improving and learning as I go. Being able to apply this experience in this environment—right time, right place, right people building the right product—is a different kind of magic.

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Thank you to all of the smart + kind people at ZORA who inspired this, edit by Corrine Ciani