

Sourdure - Mantras

3xLP (std in-fi 26 / mg128 / dst-08 / ao022)

Standard In-Fi (fr), Mental Groove (ch), Desastre (fr), Ana Ott (de)

INFORMATIONS :

Release date : 15th of November 2019

originally released on 3x cassettes in 2017 by Standard In-Fi

Format : 3xLP

Techniques : silkscreen print, accordion covers, stamped labels

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Tracklist :

Emeraude

A1. Ouverture des coeurs moirés

A2. Formules

B1. Radiations hyalines / Eveil aux ellébores *

Obsidienne

C1. Appel aux subtils

C2. De la terre

D1. Appel aux solides / Complainte à Pernoyer **

Or

E1. A l'embellie Solaire ***

F1. Bufador

F2. Pernuiter les songes / Confection des philtres



Presentation :

In June 2016, the great-outdoors music festival Echos asked Ernest Bergez aka Sourdure to produce a series of ten «mantras» set to be diffused in between each concert of the twenty-four hours event taking place in the french Alps. These ten pieces were played on the festival's gigantic speakers/ horns system in the afternoon, evening, night, morning, noon... and reverberated fully in the rocky valley.

This edition gathers the field-recording-like captures of the tracks delivered once again through the system later that year by Ernest Bergez with the help of Frédéric Bernier, Joachim Brissaud and Julien Dessailly.

All instruments by Ernest Bergez except the Gaida, the Uilleann Pipe and the Low Whistle by Julien Dessailly.

The tapes contain three complementary pieces composed from the original recordings (June 2016 and November 2016) and recorded in Royat in May 2017.

A highly esoteric and cosmic soundscape journey, to be played at maximum volume!

Ernest Bergez deeply thanks Association Dôme and Association Les Villages des Jeunes.

Credits :

All instruments by Ernest Bergez except Low Whistle*, Bagpipes** and Uilleann Pipes*** by Julien Dessailly.

Composed, arranged, mixed and mastered by Ernest Bergez.

Recorded in November 2016 in Faï and mixed in 2017 in Royat by Ernest Bergez.

Artwork by Sauvage, typography and ohm by Druid High, printed by Antoine Lambin and Sauvage at Société Ecran.

Sourdure Interview by Joeri Bruyninckx (for It's Psychedelic Baby magazine) :

You made this recording by request, for the ÉCHOS Festival. Is making music with a specific goal different than making music without one?

The Mantras were commissioned by Association Dôme for the ÉCHOS Festival, a really unique festival that took place at Le Faï, in the French Hautes-Alpes.

Le Faï is an isolated farm situated under a huge, half-circle shaped cliff. The cliff is acting as a sound reflector, returning complex spread of echoes. The farm is equipped with a sound system made of three gigantic horns, low, mid and high, that are oriented toward the cliff. The request was for a dozen of pieces that would be played between each

performances throughout the festival. This would be a kind of time marker and continuum. I was offered to stay at Le Faï a week before the festival to compose and arrange the Mantras. In terms of goal and artistic direction, I couldn't think of a better configuration; the request was very challenging, I had only 6 days to achieve it and composing long and meditative instrumentals was something I wanted to do for a long time.

Also the residency at le Faï was an ideal context, very friendly and artistically stimulating. That's where I met Julien Desailly, who is playing bagpipes, gaida and uilleann pipes, and whistle on three of the Mantras.

Association Dôme also offered me to perform live on the horns at the end of the festival. I played a 40 minutes long piece, improvised from a traditional song of French Massif Central area. This performance will be released early 2018 on CD by In Paradisum. The material shares a lot of distinguishing elements with the Mantras: a slow, hypnotic, ever repeated but ever changing chant.

During the festival Jérémie Sauvage from Standard In-Fi proposed to gather all Mantras on a cassette release. That's how I ended up coming back to Le Faï some month after to record them on location.

The album is called Mantras. Do you see these recordings as mantras?

I don't know how Association Dôme came up with the idea but I guess it has to do with the uncanny and meditative experience of listening to Le Faï's horns. I don't know much about mantras in Hindu and Buddhist religions but I had a strong intuition of it as a possible musical form. My idea was to focus on small melodic patterns, with few notes, and work on repetition and variation as deep as possible. I saw the Mantras as prayers, as a call or a salute to stones, trees, wind, sun, earth, insects, birds... For each I imagined a moment, a situation, materials, a scale in color and temperature so that it suggests and maintains a chosen mood. In that sense, these pieces are a kind of animist mantras.

The whole record sounds like it's recorded from a distance, like there's a lot of space between the instruments and the recording gear, which sounds really beautiful.

What you hear in that record is a field recording of the pieces played through Le Faï's horns and mixed with the original "dry" signal. The echoes are natural echos: sound actually spreading in the mountains and bouncing against the cliff. And because it's a field recording you hear the birds, torrents, sounds of the farm... In some tracks there are weird sensations of space because of the stacking of sound recorded in different locations: sound of a room fed into the horns, it's like "space into space".

Because the Mantras were meant to work with Le Faï's horns, I had to include physical distance and acoustic singularities of the location into the composing process. I had to calibrate speed, tempo and musical silences on the length of the natural echo. I also had to deal with the irregularities of the echo's spectral curve: each layer of frequency is spreading differently in space and time... It was deliciously complex!

I recorded the instruments in different rooms, with various qualities of recording, from a sharp static mic to a cassette recorder with on-board mic and recorded the electronic sources directly through audio-interface. Those sounds were organized and treated in the computer, then played through the horns, and caught again by three stereo mic sets at various distances from the cliffs.

Also the recording on itself is very nice. It's lo-fi, but not cheap. The recording has a certain warmth, almost like old Lee Perry Studio one dub.

There are lo-fi recorded sounds inside the pieces, on "Pernuiter les Songes" for example, all percussion and drones come from a cassette recorder played through a cheap guitar amp. The horns themselves sound pretty lo-fi too, they're even a bit crunchy. But the final field recording of each piece played through the horns was done with very sharp equipment. I had to get a precise image of how that music works with the location. Maybe the warmth of the album is due to the fact that "space effects" were made by recording actual spaces and not using audio effects. Also the fact that the music is always a combination of electronic and acoustic sounds and made with a combination of low and hi-fi gear may bring some warmth and a kind of balance.

Because this interview is for a magazine called Psychedelic Baby: would you consider this music being psychedelic? And what's your definition of "psychedelic"?

On one hand the Mantras obviously have characteristics of the psychedelic aesthetic: heavy use of time-based effects, alteration of sources, repetition, long droning pieces... On the other hand, in a less obvious and deeper way they have a hypnotic and surreal dimension. They're a blend of different realities: sounds near and far away at the same time, uncanny sounds combined with recognizable sounds... It's a kind of magic realism.

To me psychedelic applies to something that modifies or distorts perceptions and state of consciousness. Applied to music, I'd say psychedelism is more about suggestion and playing with time and space, and I think it is what the Mantras are about. I composed them with strong ideas of moods, material, temperature, other physical states and perceptions in mind. The opening track, "Overture des Coeurs Moirés" is a good example of that. I saw it as a bird chant perceived at a higher frequency, postulating that if I'd be a bird. The chant of other birds would seem slower and lower to my brain than it is for a human brain.

The album is over 100 minutes long. Why did it have to be such a long record?

All the pieces were composed together during a week of residency at La Ferme du Faï. I conceived the Mantras as unified corpus, divided in three sections: “Émeraude”, “Obsidienne” and “Or”. Each section has a distinct mood and is constructed in a kind of Yin/Yang equilibrium. It is a bit like a book of prayers or a collection of poems. Each piece takes it's strength with the relation it has to the rest of the corpus, and they all share common sound elements, be it a melodic pattern, sound sources or a processing technique. Because of all that they had to be gathered.

What are your main instruments? The violin and the guitar?

Electronics, mainly modular synth and effects, violin, voice and percussion. I don't play guitar. I sometimes use one as a kind of lapsteel...

In a way, you music sounds old. One could maybe also call it 'rooted'. So I was wondering: what do you see as 'your roots', musically and personally? What tradition do you come from? What is your folk? French and Middle European folk?

I'm happy you're pointing out that aspect. Undoubtedly I have roots in French folk music: South French/Occitan music and more precisely music from the Massif Central area. I'm working with traditional repertoire under the Sourdure moniker since a few years now. More widely, I feel rooted in oral vernacular/popular music and experimental music at the same time. This can be heard in the Mantras, I think.

About old music: I'm always impressed how rustic and raw traditional music can seem contemporary. It's the king of musical form I seek, but I couldn't stand the comparison with genuine traditional stuff. The least I can do is working in that direction.



Two views of Echos festival's bass trumpet.



The new medium-high trumpets still in construction (2019) pointing at the cliff.