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Paris special _ Star wax n°80

star wax

DJ lifestyle magazine





PARIS SPECIAL

STAR WAX #80

"Happy is he who, like Ulysses, has made a long journey." After countless travels - each more exotic than the last, from Manila to Réunion via Lisbon, Mexico City, Bali and Bangkok we decided to return home for our 20th-anniversary edition: Paris! This is where it all began, the place that "fluctuates but never sinks" - in a sense, Star Wax's own playground. It is a weighty yet delicate task, given that urban cultures have been resonating throughout the French capital since the 1970s. Presenting a comprehensive overview would be a complex undertaking, as collectives there are constantly forming and dissolving. Alternative cultures flourish here, and both the French hip-hop and electronic music movements have their roots in the city. "Ici c'est Paris!" A major European intellectual hub, thanks to the founding of its university and the development of Gothic art as early as the Middle Ages (12th century). A vibrant artistic hotbed that draws creatives from across the globe. Known as the City of Light, it is the world capital of freedom of thought and universalism. Baudelaire, Apollinaire, Prévert and Verlaine were among its signature poets. Its countless museums and libraries reveal its cultural richness. Following the Roaring Twenties, in 1930, the American Henry Miller arrived in the city, a first step toward realizing his dream: living in Paris on next to nothing and, above all, writing. Paris is also where the history of music halls - heirs to the cafés-chantants, cafés-concerts and later, nightclubs, was written. During the occupation, the Germans banned jazz and swing, deeming them degenerate music of Afro-American origin. Consequently, in 1941, a hidden bar named Discothèque opened on Rue de la Huchette, becoming the haunt of the laid-back, nonconformist Zazous. Fairground operators were already spining together 78 rpm records there using a mixer and two turntables, even though vinyl records did not exist yet. In the 1960s, rock music transformed the famous Golf-Drouot tea room. Disco, club culture, and DJing followed. The 1978 film "Trocadéro Bleu Citron" captured the burgeoning skateboarding phenomenon. In 1984, the Bercy stadium hosted a BMX event broadcast live on TF1. "Paname City Rappin' Lp" hit the shelves; the hip-hop movement was in its infancy, and the first French-produced techno or house vinyls did not yet exist. Notably, Gérard Zlotykamien and Bando were the pioneers of graffiti art. In 1986, La Locomotive was reborn as a massive 2,500-square-meter complex, featuring three rooms offering three distinct atmospheres. Serving as an alternative to traditional clubs, the iconic Terrain Vague De La Chapelle (hall of fame in abandonn zone) became a hub hosted by DJ Jo and Dee Nasty. Between 1985 and 1990, eastern Paris was teeming with undeveloped sites, while soaring prices priced out the middle class in favor of real estate developers. 1991 marked the peak of the rave scene in France; the Heretik parties held within the city limits were wild & massive affairs. The fifteen metro lines became a playground for graffiti writers, and La Mano Negra sang: "Paris at night is over".

Since then, it has become commonplace to hear that Paris is a stale, old-fashioned museum. Fortunately, the anarchists still have a few bullets left in the chamber and let us not forget that the Sacré-Cœur Basilica in Montmartre - featured on the cover of this edition - symbolizes the bloody repression by the Versailles government of the 1871revolutionary uprising, which sought to establish a popular, republican government in Paris. That repression entailed the summary execution of 7,400 Communards (according to official state figures, though historian Michèle Audin puts the death toll at 20,000) and the deportation to penal colonies in New Caledonia of Communard leaders, including the indomitable Louise Michel.

Intra-muros, Paris is compact, resembling a large village of two million inhabitants packed into an area of roughly 84.45 square kilometers. Its public transport system deserves praise, as it is constantly expanding as part of the Grand Paris Metropolis. If you are on a budget, note that a bus ticket from the airport to the city center costs €2.50, compared to a minimum of €40 for a taxi. When the metro shuts down after midnight, you can use the Noctambus night bus network. Bolt and Heetch offer alternatives to traditional taxis. Accommodation options range from suites with spectacular proportions to soulless rooms, catering to every budget. The same applies to dining or sipping a kir, a Picon beer, or a mominette (absinthe glass): prices can vary threefold depending on where you go.

In contrast to the bourgeois western side of Paris, the residents of the east are highly progressive. Regardless, the cultural scene there is deep. From free events and pay-what-you-wish shows to eye-watering €1,000 VIP tickets, there is something for every budget. Paris cannot exist without its suburbs, the rest of France, or foreigner residents - after all, only a third of Parisians were actually born in the city. We could have interviewed Sidney, who hosted the world's first hip-hop TV show and put Paris on the hip-hop map back in 1984. What about the Celluloïd Records label, a key player between 1983 and 1986? And the "Au DD" music video, featuring the rap duo PNL perched atop the iconic Eiffel Tower? Or even DJ Snake's Dj set atop the Arc de Triomphe to boost Paris's Olympic bid? Rather than focusing on celebrities, we decided to let the new generation speak by inviting the collective Bavardages. We also shine a spotlight on the 18th and 19th districts - where popular culture holds firm - through local stalwarts like Soul Ableta, One Niners, and C.Sen. D'Julz reflects on his thirty-year residency at the Rex Club, while Pierre, the boss of Patate Records, talks about a bygone era that those under twenty wouldn't know. Acid Arab discusses the influence of Arab music and Arthur Chaps explores the hybridization of electronic and Afro-diasporic sounds. Welcome to Paname.

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TU AS TOUJOURS RÊVÉ DE TE FAIRE COACHER PAR DEE NASTY, SNOOP DOGG, QUEEN LATIFAH, ERYKAH BADU ET BIEN PLUS ENCORE ?

L'ORACLE ICONS HIP HOP

UN JEU DIVINATOIRE 100 % SANS IA

CREATION LADY VOLDEMAR
LES SECOUSSES POPULAIRES X

JE PÉCHO ICI

SCAN ME

STREETWEAR HAS ESTABLISHED ITSELF AS A MAJOR CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC PHENOMENON IN FRANCE. IT IS CURRENTLY VERY CREATIVE—SO MUCH SO THAT FRENCH DESIGNERS ARE INFLUENCING TRENDS ACROSS THE ATLANTIC. THE SNEAKER MARKET PERFECTLY REFLECTS THIS, BOASTING OVER 260 MODELS BORN FROM COLLABORATIONS WITH FRENCH CREATORS. HERE ARE MY TOP 8 SNEAK DESIGNED BY PARISIAN BRANDS.



Saucony x Starcow Progrid Omni 9



Colette x MJC x Asics Gel Lyte III



Bernard Buffet x Nike



Air Jordan 1 High OG Dior



Salomon ACS Pro x Jah Jah



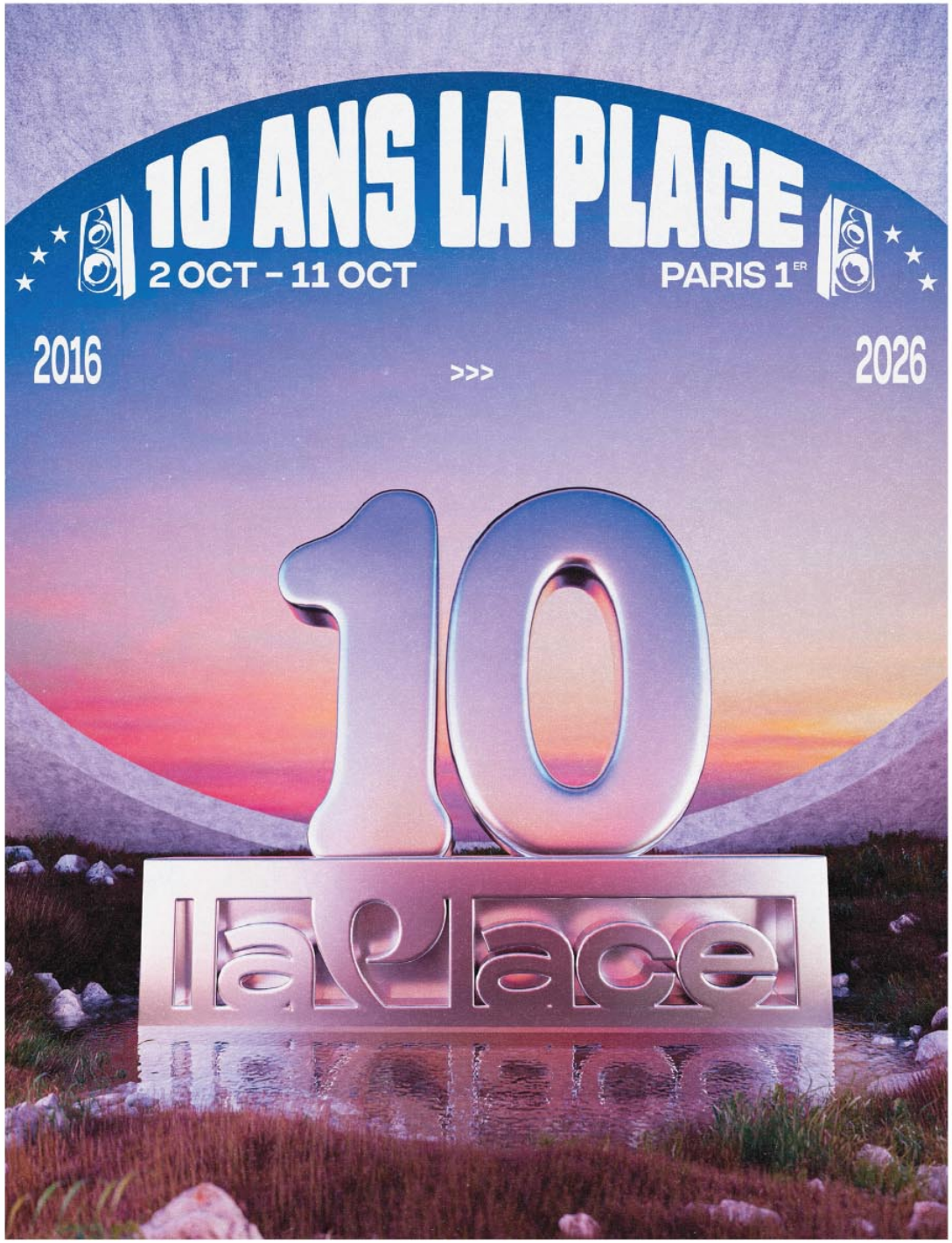
Opium x Nike Air 180



Air Jordan II Retro Sp
x Maison Chateau Rouge



Nike Air Max 1 'Centre Pompidou'



ONE NINERS: FOUR CHILDHOOD FRIENDS FROM THE 19TH ARRONDISSEMENT WHO HAVE BEEN INSEPARABLE SINCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. PASSIONATE ABOUT FASHION AND THE 90S HIP-HOP MOVEMENT—AS WELL AS BEING DIE-HARD TEKKEN GAMERS—THEY DECIDED TO BRING IT ALL TOGETHER IN A BRAND DESIGNED TO EMBODY THE CODES AND VALUES OF THIS MINDSET: LOYALTY, FRIENDSHIP, AND ALLEGIANCE. ONE NINERS IS MORE THAN JUST CLOTHING; IT IS AN ATTITUDE AND A LIFESTYLE TO BE EXPERIENCED THROUGH HYBRID EVENTS AND UNCONVENTIONAL POP-UP STORES. MULTI-GENERATIONAL EXCHANGE, THE PASSING OF THE TORCH, DIVERSITY, AND COHESION FUEL THEIR EPONYMOUS LABEL AND ITS THREE CORE PILLARS: FASHION, NIGHTLIFE, AND MUSIC.







oneniners.com



PARIS SPECIAL

"People often say that Parisians are a bit pretentious. I find there's a side to them that's relaxed, curious, and at the same time, a bit "I couldn't give a damn." A Parisian has an elegant sensuality..."
Gilb'r

"There isn't just one type of Parisian; there are many... Plenty of people have told me: "You're not a Parisian, you don't look down on people." "
Pierre de Patate Records

"A Parisian is someone who has been immersed in diverse cultures. Someone who has spent timein Belleville, Jaurès, and Montmartre alike amidst Black, Arabic, Asian, and French cultures..."
Sarah de Bavardages

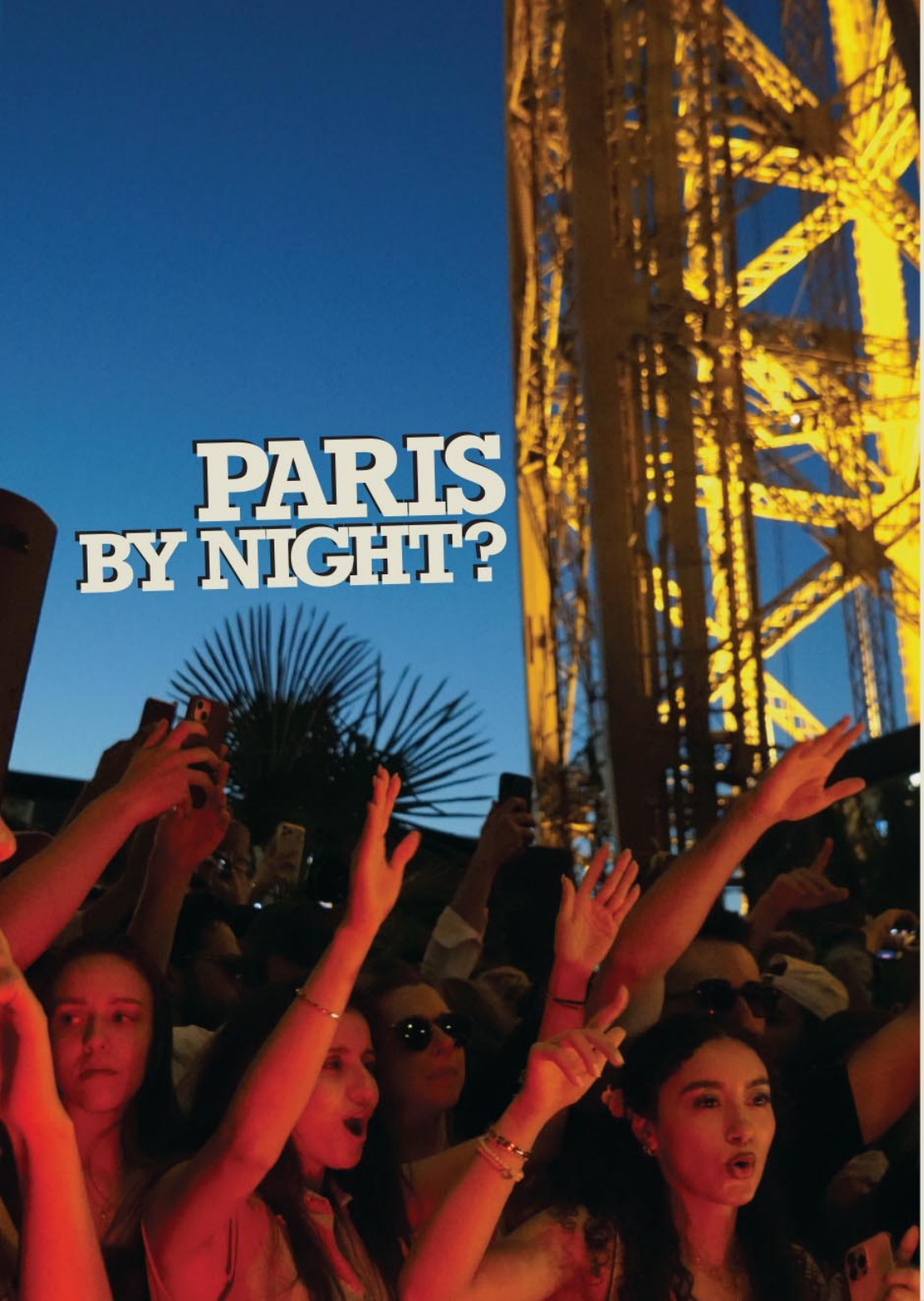
"Paris has always been a player in the game from the Rex, Djoon, La Mona. And my guy Dj Deep! All Star !"
Kai Alce



"A Parisian is a concrete Flower."
Mafaldista

"Paris represents love, music, fashion, culture, art, and that incredible smell when you walk to the bakery in the morning..."
EVM128

"I love Paris, its represents both history and the future."
LudoWic



PARIS BY NIGHT?

IS PARIS'S NIGHTLIFE OVER? DID IT SURRENDER TO A BANDIT? NO, IT OUSTED THE TIBERIS AND DODGED DATI! DID SOME SCOUNDREL STEAL ITS SLEEPLESS NIGHTS? NO, HE INSTITUTIONALIZED THEM! GENUINE RECOGNITION OR CYNICAL CO-OPTING? IT'S THE ETERNAL DEBATE WORTHY OF A "NUIT DEBOUT" PROTESTOR SITTING IN THE PLACE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE. BECAUSE IN PARIS, THE NIGHT IS WHERE THE DAY BEGINS. THE PARISIANS ARE CRITICAL YET LAID-BACK, CAN SING, DANCE, AND PASS JUDGMENT. PARIS COMES ALIVE IN EUPHORIC PARTIES FUELED BY INFECTIOUS, FRENETIC DANCING. PROMOTERS VIE TO DISCOVER UNIQUE VENUES AND CREATIVE COLLECTIVES. AND WHATEVER THE NOSTALGICS MIGHT SAY, PARIS REMAINS AN ETERNAL YOUNG WOMAN, CONSTANTLY REINVENTING HERSELF. HERE ARE THE FEW KEYS TO ENJOYING PARIS.

Preamble

One cannot understand Paris without looking at its sociology. Contrary to the common notion of a Right Bank/Left Bank divide, the true Parisian "Maginot Line" runs along a North-South axis, splitting the city into two zones: East and West. Politically, this boundary appears almost immutable, even in the face of creeping gentrification. The same holds true for the nightlife scene. The West is home to the star system, while the East embraces the underground and popular culture.
The Center occupies the space in between. Often viewed through the lens of mainstream versus fringe, or elitism versus underground, Parisian nightlife is actually fluid, far more complex and elusive, and in a state of constant hybridization. Looking back to the early 1980s, the dawn of the clubbing era in Paris and worldwide, the line between squats and clubs was highly porous in both the West and the East. Nightlife as a whole represented a form of marginality, drawing its vitality and momentum largely from the LGBT community - a group that was at once the most creative, the most flamboyant, and the most ostracized by polite society. This explains why, in the eyes of any self-respecting Parisian, the city is first and foremost a melting pot - cultural, social, ethnic, artistic and even philosophical. Paris is home to over 110 different nationalities, reflecting both France's history and its global influence. While colonial history accounts for significant immigration from sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb, the Caribbean and Asia. The city's philosophical, political, and cultural prestige has played a major role in making it as a primary destination for a highly diverse international immigrant population. Paris stands as a kind of ideal in the global imagination.

If you are coming to Paris for the weekend, there is no guarantee you will gain access to those raw parties deep in good vibes and match your musical taste, unless you are deeply connected to the Parisian underground scene. If you aren't too picky, you're bound to find an event to your liking any day of the week - be it an art opening, an event, after-work drinks, a concert, a private party or a Fashion Week soirée. What's more, the most alternative or underground events often take place on weekdays. Parisians whether purists, discerning types, trendsetters or self-respecting autists, prefer to go where the masses aren't! So, if you're neurodivergent or have the soul of a trend-spotter, skip the weekends or head to the suburbs; you'll feel much more comfortable.

Sunday is also a favorite day for night birds. Around 6 a.m., all the colorful characters will be asking, "Where's the after-party?" By noon, they might cross paths with the laid-back crowd who prefer a dancing brunch.
Around 7 p.m., jam session aficionados will head to the iconic Belleville neighborhood for the famous Zorba jam or the newer Belleville jam at Le Vieux Saumur perfect stops after an Asian or North African restaurant. Old-timers will remember the legendary Disco Inferno nights at Le Queen, broadcast live on Radio FG on Monday evenings, or the Sunday afternoon hip-hop parties that later moved to Le Globo on Thursday nights. But in recent years, the landscape has changed. Jazz kissas are springing up here and there; the longest-standing ones include Fréquence in the 11th arrondissement and Bambino located opposite the Betinos record store. For bars open until 2 a.m., lylo.fr lists concerts and DJ sets at nearly 6,000 venues across the Île-de-France region every month. With a few exceptions, like Yoyo, a club right in the heart of the Palais de Tokyo, or Le Bridge, set beneath the stone vaults of the Pont Alexandre III. Our editorial team's heart and spirit clearly lean toward the East, as you've likely gathered! So, all you have to do is wander from Les Halles where the legendary Bains Douches is still open. Then head towards Ivry, or Pantin, or Montreuil, where Le Bal Chavaux is set to open this autumn, 2026.

Central Paris: 2nd, 3rd, and 4th districts

The book "Rex Club 1988–2023" chronicles the ghostly life that thrives in the shadowy Parisian basements of this legendary venue founded in 1967. Le Tryptique was renamed Social Club and now known as Sacré manages to maintain an appealing lineup, primarily featuring a mix of disco and cutting-edge house music. Silencio, located right next door, is very strict at the door as it is unconventional in its layout and design. ParisParis renamed Jangal was the club where we shot the cover for Star Wax issue 02 in 2006 and where the French Touch crowd used to let loose; like many such venues, it has since reinvented itself as a club specializing in Afro music. In the 3rd arrondissement, Le Tango, a cabaret founded in 1725 under the sign of the King of Sardinia transformed in 1997 into a legendary spot for Parisian queer nightlife: La Boîte à Frissons. And for the more adventurous, Raidd offers "naughty shows in shower stalls facing the DJ, guaranteed to make even the most uptight, closeted types scream with pleasure" (Mafaldista). Le Marais is a hub of LGBT life with bars and clubs concentrated mainly in the narrow streets of the 4th arrondissement such as Rue des Archives... Le Quetzal and Cox are two historic iconic bars where you might run into DJ André. Then there is Le Palace: originally opened as a cinema in 1912, it later became the Palace Music-Hall. From 1978 onwards, it became a benchmark club (read the interview with Guy Cuevas in Star Wax issue 69). After a long period of closure, rumors are circulating that it is expected to reopen in 2027.

Paris 6th, 7th, and 8th

Le Whisky, à Gogo opened in 1947 on Rue de Beaujolais; the establishment later relocated and Régine took over its management. Turntables replaced the live orchestra... Renamed and moved to the other bank of the Seine, it became a nightlife landmark in Saint-Germain. After a turbulent period, it reopened in 2001 under the name WAGG, featuring resident DJs from London's Fabric and deep-house nights. Now, known as Pamela, and hosting events like Cancan and Love Night. It continues to hold a special place in the Parisian collective consciousness. While clubs still exist near the Arc de Triomphe and the Champs-Élysées, the Seine quays and the riverboats docked by the Pont Alexandre III are currently more quality lineup.

In the 9th and 10th

Among the retro venues, Chez Moune, another intimate, low-key club near the 18th is open from midnight until dawn on weekends. Founded in 1936 in the red-light district, it was Europe's first cabaret exclusively for women - a taboo subject at the time...

Beyond the flamboyant, 900-square-meter Club Haussmann, there are more down-to-earth spots like La Java, a legendary venue that has retained the authentic atmosphere of the 1930s and once hosted performances by Edith Piaf. Today, this heritage listed site hosts numerous underground electronic music nights. Like La Mona, a legendary party night driven by Nick V began in 2008, perfect party for voguing and waacking lovers. Le Point Éphémère, located along the canal Saint-Martin, is a creative hub that comes highly recommended. Just a few meters away, check out La Rotonde. And for soul and funk fans, head straight to Bizz'art.

Paris 11th

Rue de Lappe is street without car and a lot of bars and restaurants. Le Balajo, opened in 1930, is known for its eclectic musical style and renowned for its caliente salsa nights, the club has been owned by the same family since the very beginning. It is one of the capital's oldest surviving clubs, the dean of the scene, so to speak. Also in the Bastille, Badaboum, with a capacity of 400 stands as a reliable staple for electronic music in 2026.

The Oberkampf neighborhood boasts countless bars. The Nouveau Casino club, with its 400-person capacity and high-quality sound system, is a heavyweight in the area. It hosts everything from live performances to all-night parties and is highly recommended by Star wax. A bit more cramped and modest is Punk Paradise, formerly the legendary Satellite, where "after an early-evening concert, a long-haired DJ looking like an Indian chief would take you on a trip around the world in 80 vinyl records" (Mafaldista). Also offering a more roots vibe, the ALG (Alimentation Générale) features a varied underground lineup.

Close from there, Place de la République, Le Gibus has once again announced its permanent closure. It was a hub for the 1970s punk and rock scene, later hosting hip-hop, electronic music, and LGBTQIA+ nights. Right above it, on the ground floor, Favela Chic has held court since 2000, a top-notch restaurant/bar and one of Paris's trendiest spots when it first opened, reinventing the mainstream party vibe with a baile funk mode. The place gradually lost its soul once the founders launched Favela in London" (Arthur C.). Elsewhere, Rue Amelot is home to two small electronic music clubs. Small but wicked. We're talking about Panic Room and 4 Éléments, rebranded as Bazar Paris...

Paris XII

Le Mazette features a terrace facing the Seine; is a barge where Concrete held court for so long...

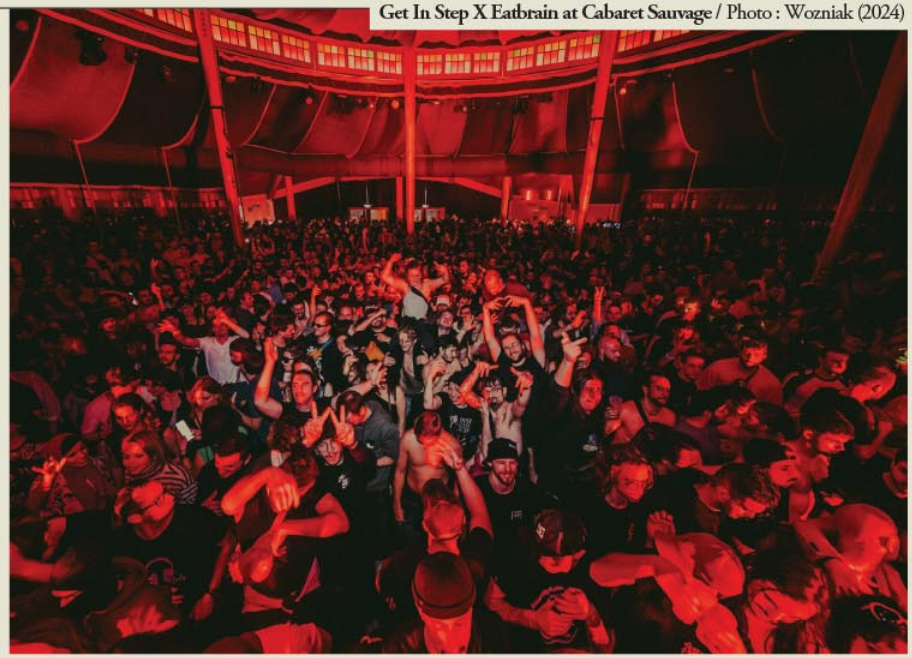


Lady Alma at Djoon Weekender / Photo : Leviet

With a lineup focused on funk and electronic music and four distinct spaces, it is according to Arthur Chaps"one of the best places to party in Paris." On the other side of Gare de Lyon lies Ground Control, a dynamic, hybrid spot featuring Major Tom; a record store with the finest eclectic selection. However, it closes at midnight. So, for a harder-hitting party, head to Cartilage at Nation! And over near Bercy, you'll find Le Phantom, the area's new heavyweight venue.

Paris XIII

This working-class district—unfairly overlooked was once a historic hub for reggae and hip-hop in the 1980s. Redevelopment is now breathing new life into the area. One long-standing exception, however, is Le Djoon (pictured above), which has been around for 23 years. Boasting a powerful sound system. This intimate, DJ-led club spins soulful house, disco and Afro-inspired tunes. Arthur adds: "Many legends have played here, from Louie Vega to Terrence Parker... the programming remains top-notch." Just 300 meters down the way, be sure to visit the Seine quays between the Pont de Tolbiac and the Pont d'Austerlitz. Beyond Petit Bain and the red Bateau Phare are known for its legendary, high-energy parties, numerous festive terraces spring up on both banks during the summer such as the Laho rooftop, home to resident DJ Babaflex. Adjacent to the Cité de la Mode et du Design, there are 3 clubs, including Wanderlust—host to events like Bum Bum Tam Tam, Yard, Dancehall Queen, and SSSound which has hosted Burna Boy and the highly popular Fvtvr, a favorite among fans of cold techno and industrial, concrete vibes...



Get In Step X Eatbrain at Cabaret Sauvage / Photo : Wozniak (2024)





Nick V and the dancers at La MONA / Photo : David

Paris 18th

Le Rouge Pigalle formerly Pigall's, remains a hotspot of Parisian nightlife, hosting a succession of DJ sets featuring electro, deep house, and minimal techno. Nearby, there is La Loco, a famous Parisian nightclub and concert venue founded in the early 1960s at the foot of Montmartre has been renamed La Machine du Moulin Rouge. From the 1990s onwards, it began opening its doors to electronic and techno music. "I remember a really good light jockey. It was huge. Undoubtedly one of the biggest clubs of its time. Laurent Garnier played there a lot... The place had a rock vibe that gradually transformed into an electro Berlin" (Arthur Chaps). Today, its program ranges from La CREOLE to amapiano and maintains an electronic feel... Over by Porte de Saint-Ouen, Le Hasard Ludique which closes at 1 a.m. on weekends. Frequently hosts DJs and part of the venue sits on the Petite Ceinture, a stretch of railway track repurposed into a lively daytime venue... Still a well-kept secret, Central Chapelle which opened in June 2026 serves as a sort of annex to the Adidas Arena, featuring a 700-capacity club that has barely been broken in. A new story begins.

Paris 19 th

The most interesting cultural activity takes place near Porte de la Villette, close to the historic Glazart, established in 1992 and considered by some to be one of the last remaining bastions of freedom within the city limits. Nearby, there is La Gare – Le Gore housed in a former train station offers a unique experience reminiscent of a house party...

Beyond the few lively barges and bars along the Quai de l'Oise, the vast Parc de la Villette boasts a vibrant cultural scene. Keep an eye on the lineups at La Folie, Kermes and above all, Le Trabendo and Le Cabaret Sauvage. The latter features a magnificent big-top tent and an open-air area. Just 300 meters away, beneath the ring road (périphérique) on the border between Paris and the town of Pantin, lies Kilomètre25 (picture on the right), which opened in 2021. Right next door is Mia Mao, also located on public land with a capacity of 2,000. It aims to become Paris's largest electronic music club and features a no-photo policy... The Philharmonie de Paris is also experimenting with DJ-led events. This massive 42,000 m² cultural complex, custom-built in 2015 and fully funded by taxpayers to the tune of €395 million is attempting to broaden its programming. Finally, the only fully private establishment in La Villette is Movida It isn't particularly known for its programming but Beat4Battle organized and filmed the world record for the longest freestyle scratch session there, featuring around fifty turntablists... Les Buttes-Chaumont is another park home to two historic buildings. Rosa Bonheur, with its large terrace, has a rustic countryside feel while the equally charming Pavillon Puebla also closes at midnight.

Paris 20th

The Mama Shelter restaurant which hosts live bands and DJs. Now features a rooftop though there is no club. Across the street, the more working-class-style - Le Gambetta always hosts DJ nights that run all night long! Many are waiting for La Flèche d'Or to reopen...

Summer in Paris

Summer runs from mid-June to mid-September. We are getting more natural light. In late June, the sky still light until 11 PM, creating perfect conditions for the emergence of numerous pop-up summer venues. Just a decade ago, Paris had few lively rooftop bars, but the trend has since shifted things for the better though few venues manage to withstand pressure from neighbors complaining about noise. There are also two exceptional daytime events: in June, the now-legendary Fête de la Musique (Music Day) brings together music lovers of all generations, transcending genre labels. Over the past three or four years, it has become a trendy destination for the British crowd and attracts an increasing number of activists and international visitors. Our after-movie"Hiphop Block Party 2023 Fête De La Musique_ Paris" documents the longest-running hiphop block party.

Then comes the Techno Parade in September. On the surface, it is a street procession, but behind the scenes, it is driven by an active collective that has been fighting against cultural and economic censorship since the 1990s. The same team is also responsible for Paris Electronic Week.

Intra-muros, there are hardly any open-air sites suitable for hosting a festival, so the Pitchfork Festival takes place across multiple venues. Meanwhile, Jazz à la Villette offers a delightful program at the end of summer. However, festivals abound in the inner suburbs notably in the Bois de Vincennes as well as Lollapalooza in the Bois de Boulogne (west of Paris) and Rock En Seine in the Parc de Saint-Cloud. Other events, such as the Banlieues Bleues festival in March, further enrich the cultural landscape. City-sponsored mini-festivals offer free outings all summer long, transforming parks or castles into dance floors for an evening or a weekend!



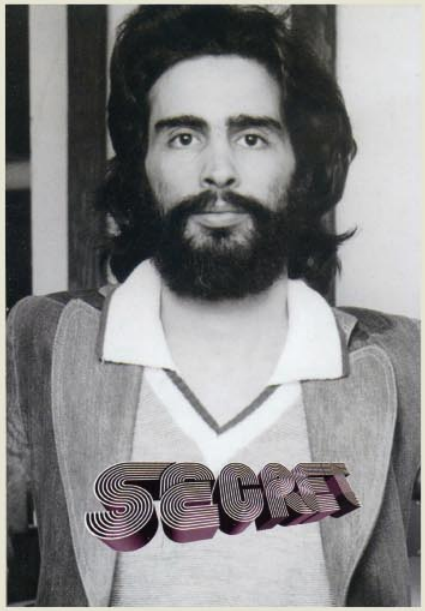
Club Nowadays at Kilomètre25 / Photo : Théo Thuillier (2025)

Latest plans

If you haven't found a party yet that appeals to you, try searching among the most active and iconic collectives such as Katapult, La Mamie's, Cracki, Technoram, or Tropical Discoteq. Brice Coudert, former artistic director of Weather Festival and Concrete (where the policy was "no photos") co presents L'Essaim, which he describes as "a gathering of purists focused on mental, groove, tribal, techno, psy and trance sounds."

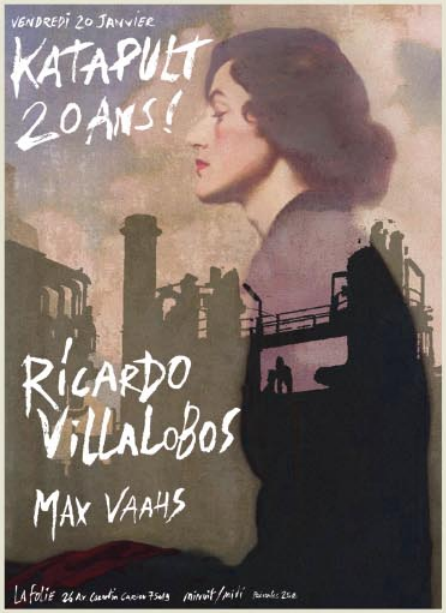
On another note, the only dub-reggae sound system intra-muros is Soul Stereo Sound System; the Dub Station night at Le Trabendo is the perfect place to make your ears bleed. The prolific Néboty Roots Sound System also regularly brings its good vibes to the Péniche Cinéma... Funk nights in Paris are fairly regular occurrences. Right now, you'll enjoy the best lineup of modern funk at events hosted by Amadeo85, co-owner of the record shop Blazing Music. Then there's the Funky French League collective, organizing funk nights certified phat by Star wax... While few hip-hop festivals have truly stood the test of time, the Scred Festival created by the 18th district's Scred Connexion collective endures with a 100% indie spirit; kudos to them! Beyond that, dance and rap battles are regular, especially during the weekend. Battle Pro at the Théâtre du Châtelet offers a unique experience within a majestic venue inaugurated back in 1862... So, there you go.Hope you'll find exactly what you're looking for….. Welcome to Paris!







Adrian Sherwood au Cabaret Sauvage / Photo : Lucas Mota (2025)











"TO BE LIKE NO ONE WHILE LOOKING LIKE EVERYONE"—THAT IS THE MOTTO THAT SUMS UP PIERRE CESSEINE. KNOWN BY THE ALIAS C.SEN FOR REPRESENTING 18TH DISTRICT MELANCHOLY THROUGH HIS FLOW AND RAW LYRICISM, HE RELEASED HIS FIFTH ALBUM, "CONFIDENTIEL", PRODUCED BY CHIMISTE, IN 2022. EQUALLY TALENTEL AS A GRAFFITI WRITER, HE SPENDS MORE TIME EMBELLISHING GRIMY PARISIAN UNDERGROUND AND YARDS THAN PAINTING CANVASES. HIS FLOW TAGS HAVE EARNED THE RESPECT OF THE COMMUNITY; HE CULTIVATES A OLD STYLE—A VISCERAL CRY FUELED BY AN ENERGY THAT ALWAYS HITS THE MARK. AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MAN HIMSELF.

C.SEN

You were born in Paris but discovered graffiti in the suburbs—tell us about that.

I discovered graffiti in '89, behind the Courbevoie stadium; that's where some of the very first pieces by RCF and Sino (FBI crew) were located. There was Sewy, Daily, Rocco, Ark (TLB). A rough, street-smart bunch, the local tough guys who tagged a lot and did it really well. There was also the DBC crew—though they weren't 90DBC yet, since it was 1989. The DKA crew was already around too; I remember Pesto and Rat. I was in sixth grade—my first PE class—and a classmate said, "Come check out the area behind the stadium; we climb a wall and end up on the train tracks." The style was insane; it blew me away. I was 11years old and told myself, "I'm going to do this." I was just a little kid, so I started out in my school notebooks. Sino's cousin was in my class; he never became a major graffiti artist, but he knew how to do it, so he taught me about structural bars, how to construct letters, and so on. What was funny back then was that there were certain alphabets everyone used, so you'd get the hang of tagging properly pretty quickly. It was a buzzing scene; tagging was starting to become trendy. You'd copy what was around you, and your own style would develop quite fast. Among the older guys, I felt like pretty much all of them had a good tag. I started getting really into it—taking the train, wandering along the tracks with a notebook, and copying down the pieces I liked since we didn't take photos back then. I actually still have that notebook; it's at my mom's place. Bearz and Vener worked as a duo; they were tagging everywhere. At the time, I was heavily influenced by them and by all the tags I saw popping up daily. There was also Air. I'd practice around my neighborhood and learn it; sometimes I'd manage to get a homies into Paris to Châtelet to go to Délirium. That basement spot, it later became Ekirok, but right at the start, it was in the basement of a thrift store. That was when the CMP crew was just getting started back in '90. There was the NMI crew: Naxt, Sape... Then the "Rapattitude" compilation came out, featuring Suprême NTM; everything was linked to graffiti, and I became passionate about rap, too. I started listening to Run-DMC, Public Enemy, the golden era. There were also skate magazines; every now and then, you'd spot a piece of graffiti in an ad or somewhere else. I'd copy what I saw but flip the letters around so I wouldn't reproduce it exactly... I was trying to figure it all out, and I used to wander around a lot—often on my own.

When did you move to Paris, and were there any vinyl records in the boxes?

I arrived in Paris in the fall of 1990. Actually, yes—I got hold of the vinyl records from my mother's collection; in fact, I have some right here. My mother listened to French song like Brel, Brassens, Léo Ferré, that whole wave, plus jazz and a bit of soul. My mother worked a lot; she'd leave very early in the morning and come home late at night. I lived with my grandfather, and what I remember most is that on Sundays, when she was cleaning the house, she'd blast the music (laughs). And when I'd been good kid, she'd buy me a 7-inch. So, every now and then, I'd get a single. I remember "Brothers in Arms" by Dire Straits. My godfather was always bringing me loads of stuff back from England. Actually, starting in '89, I really loved French alternative rock; I didn't know English punk, but I thought bands like La Souris Déglinguée, Les Satellites, Bérurier Noir, and OTH were amazing. On the other hand, I thought the punk look was awful like half-bums. Basically, there were the skinheads, who were horrible; I found the punks nicer, but they were dirty. Hip-hop was magnificent—new clothes were arriving from the States; it felt like the future. When I was younger, I was torn for a bit because I loved the gritty, harsh, angry vibe of Bérurier Noir. I knew everything by heart; we'd listen to it on headphones, on a Walkman, in bed. But from '92 onwards—once I was in middle school—I listened to nothing but rap.

In fact, by the time you arrive in La Chapelle, the La Chapelle hall of fame no longer exists...

Yes, I never saw the La Chapelle hall of fame. I only ever saw it in photos.

When did you start going to concerts & clubs?

A bit later, I was still a teenager, in ninth grade (having repeated the year twice, so I was still in ninth grade in '94), I was listening to a lot of reggae. I was really into it and used to go to Aquaboulevard in Paris. I saw Vibrations, the Gladiators, and all the reggae bands of that era. Then, around 17 or 18, we start wanting to get into clubs, though not too much at first; that came later. It was the rave party era; I went to the Rex and to illegal raves. You know, we'd go to a meeting point—there was an info line—and then take a bus. It's actually crazy that they let minors into those lawless zones. There were a lot of writers there. I'd see them from a distance—the FG, FSP crews... We were all there to make money, too. I remember seeing other people's tags there, even though back then it was kind of embarrassing to go to a techno party if you were into hip-hop. One time—I must have been 20—I ran into Obsen at Les Bains Douches, and we both said, "Yeah, this is my first time here," feeling a bit sheepish. We weren't really supposed to go, but actually, everyone was going! Back then, the underground scene was all about techno. There were rap concerts too, but I feel like rap parties turned into show-off and bling-bling events very quickly. The early events I went to when I was younger were more underground than that, you know? Because when I was a kid, at the first hip-hop gatherings I went to, there were guys doing graffiti; things got heated, there were fights—like in Colombes. (He stands up and shows me a poster hanging behind his front door—editor note.) Later on, during the Time Bomb era, when French rap growed, I got back into it. I was absolutely passionate about graffiti, and I started rapping at nineteen.

What makes the 18th unique compared to the other districts of Paris?

For starters, it's a melting pot; cultures and diasporas from all over converge here. Many people there identified with hip-hop right from the start.

"Back then, it was a constant struggle. It was rude, we had to steal to get what we wanted. Today, we are starting to build things on somewhat more solid foundations."



It always remained very underground, and people didn't fabricate gangster personas for themselves—it was crucial not to spout nonsense. Doing that was a serious offense back then. Nowadays, you can make up a life story and no one will hold it against you, but back then, it was a big deal... In the rap scene, the 18th's standard-bearers is the Scred Connexion, and Fabe was the prime example. They always expressed themselves intelligently, without exaggeration, while describing real issues. That is quintessential 18th. Koma used to do graffiti and hung out at the La Chapelle lot. So did Fabe.

You wear number 18 like Jordan wore 23, but you've been unfaithful. When are you packing your bags for Rio?

Actually, my first trip to Brazil was back in 2001. I went there to do graffiti in São Paulo with Glock from Cosa Nostra, our crew of friends. We stayed with students. It was pretty dangerous, but I absolutely loved it. Afterward, we headed to Bahia. We just made do; I was supposed to stay for three months but didn't come back right away. When I finally did return, I didn't leave Paris until 2006, and I went on a massive run there. I was painting a lot and was totally into rap. In 2006, I went back with a buddy and met the woman who would become the mother of my son—he was born in January 2008—and I settled there. I painted less, though, because it's here in Paris that I really need it; otherwise, I'd lose my mind in Paris without graffiti.

Tell us about the graffiti and rap scene there...

In Rio, the graffiti scene is pretty weak, but in São Paulo, it's deep. When I arrived in 2001, not only was it everywhere, but every piece was different. They had their own unique style. You know pichaçãos? They might be the only ones who created graffiti without copying the New York style. They have their own history, which is very different from ours. In Rio, there are few crews that do good graffiti like the Flesh Beck Crew. When I see them, it feels like they went to art school and had internet access before everyone else, because their paintings look more like European graffiti. Graffiti wasn't a cultural movement 20 years ago, but now it is. There's samba, baile funk... out on the street, you see illegible tags—sort of chicken-scratch scrawls with really complex lettering—which you find in São Paulo too. Tagging is very much associated with guys from the favelas, the guys who climb buildings and mug people. Tagging is frowned upon; if you tag, people might get into a fight with you, and things can go south very quickly with the police. Street piece, on the other hand, is viewed positively; people think it's cool and might even buy you a beer. They make a total distinction between the tag and piece. So much so that for my son's fifth or sixth birthday, I did a piece on the beach; everyone was happy and thought it was great. At the end, I offered to let his friends add their own tags—just using one or two colors, for fun. And the kids said, "But that's a crime!" In everyone's mind, there's a complete separation between the tow. As for the music, I did a bit of rapping. I met Seu Jorge; I saw him a lot and worked on projects with him. He's a buddy—I even opened for him at La Cigale in Paris.

Assassin came to Rio; I had connections, so we went to see Mr. Catra and La Sagrada Familia, and we recorded a track together. They were huge rappers from Rio, but—just so you know—the guys from São Paulo are more into hip-hop. Those guys were more into baile funk; it's sort of a mix between reggaeton and Brazilian dancehall.

What did you take away from that experience in Brazil? Did you dig samples?

Yeah, on my album "Vertiges", there's a track called "Clara Nunes" that features a sample from a song by Clara Nunes—an extraordinary singer. I even use a line of hers in the chorus: "When all peoples sing in unison, it's invariably out of pain." Because, you know, people only seem to come together to beat the crap out of each other, basically. Then, on the previous album, "Le Tunnel", the title track samples Di Melo—specifically a song called "Conformopolis," which is also amazing. I brought back those samples, and certain ways of speaking. While I was there, I wanted to know everything about Brazil, everything about samba. I tried dancing it, but I couldn't pull it off. Still, I knew all the references and the music. I really immersed myself in the history of it all. And when I was in Rio, I wanted to live the Rio lifestyle—picking my son up from school. It was good; a cool life. Sunsets every day. It was different. Plus, I had to learn the language, so I did.



I was really more into living the Rio life. I didn't exactly bring my hip-hop scene over there with me. But then, whenever I came back here in the spring, within two days I'd feel like I'd never left. I went almost 12 years without seeing winter. It was deep, but it kind of screwed up my rap career, because the moment my son was born was the same time my album was supposed to drop; and that was when I needed to push it in rap game. On the other hand, I always wrote while I was there. And I wrote with Paris in mind, because you have a certain perspective a vantage point—and you know what matters, what you truly miss, and what you don't.

Neither your paintings nor your writings reflect much your life in Brazil; why?

If I leave Paris, I leave France. That's my life. That's just how it is—I belong to Paris. I came back after Covid. I'd spent the first lockdown in Rio—in the jungle with a couple of friends; I mean, really in the jungle. It was the Vidigal favela, there were monkeys, snakes, and those huge spiders that can really mess you up. I was happy there, but I came back after Covid because my mother was in Paris, and the situation was a bit scary. So, that was the main reason I returned. When I arrived in Paris, I realized I'd have to stay for a while—that I wouldn't be picking up my old life where I left off. I also separated from my son's mother.

To cope with it all, I threw myself back into vandal graffiti. I'd never actually stopped, but in 2020 I went at it full force, just like in the beginning. I reconnected with my old homies and I was off again.

What do you think defines a Parisian?

Well, for starters, it's not true that we don't smile or that we're all assholes—contrary to what everyone says. If you smile at someone on the street in Paris, they smile back. What makes someone a Parisian? It's true that we feel a bit like the center of the universe compared to the rest of France—which isn't really the case anymore—but back when I was a kid, people in the provinces would dress the way we did, just three years later. They can say what they want, but it's true. We were ahead of the curve because things arrived here first. Even the hip-hop scene—it was definitely much stronger in Paris. When I traveled elsewhere, I could see there were enthusiasts—really talented guys and all that—but there were very few of them. There was a bit of a lag; for us, London was almost like New York because they got everything before we did. It might have only been a six-month difference, but back then, that was huge. With the Internet, we're all on equal footing now regarding current events, music, art—you name it. We pretty much get the same information, but back then, it was different. Things moved fast in a short space of time while the scene was growing. Now the scene is so massive that there are people involved in it who don't even have anything in common with each other! Anyway, hip-hop doesn't really exist anymore. But otherwise, what makes someone a Parisian? It's funny—I've never actually asked myself that question. One thing's for sure: when you're abroad, you realize you're French. You can spot other French people from 2,000 kilometers away—you recognize them even if they're shirtless and wearing just a T-shirt and flip-flops; you recognize the way they walk, their whole vibe—it's funny. But as for being a Parisian... I don't know. Apparently, I have a Parisian accent when I speak. Of course, I don't notice it myself; I didn't even know I had one. I only found out when I wanted to get into voice acting. I did a test run, and the guy said, "Can you do it again without the accent?" And I was like, "What do you mean?" That's when I realized I had an accent—people tell me that a lot, actually, that I have a Parisian voice—but anyway...

Which Parisian DJs and beatmakers are you into?

I have to say—well, it's not that I have to, but—Chimiste. I didn't team up with him out of desperation; I did it because it was a childhood dream. I listened to La Cliqua; I used to hang around with Daddy Lord C a bit—you know, I'd run into him all the time, and he liked me back when I was a kid. And I listened to "Freaky Flow" tune that really blew my mind. Then there's DJ Pone; he rock it. I got to know him through graffiti and the party scene—lots of parties back in the day, the early 2000s. There's also Kyo Itachi



> “There was something pretty pure about it in the beginning, too...”


"A Beautiful Crime"...

Well, he's not from Paris—he's from the suburbs!

Oh, I don't know where he's from. Are you talking about intra-muros Paris? Because Pone lived in Paris for a long time, but he's actually from Meaux city. I find it hard to give shout-outs to beatmakers—I don't know who to mention, and it's going to be a pain because I'm bound to leave a lot of people out. There's DJ Twoda, my longtime DJ, but he's from the suburbs too. Ahhh! I'd rather not single guys out, because there are always little gripes... Oh, wait—there was Watt, the beatmaker.

You started rapping back in 1997. "Confidentiel", your fifth album with Chimiste, came out in 2022. Tell us about how you met.

I met Chimiste through the Lascars crew. So, through graffiti, too. You know the "Lascars" animated series? Well, they invited me to go to Cannes Festival with them back when the "Lascars" movie was released. I was there with the whole PCP crew and Weedy from Expression Direkt, he'd done some voice work for the film as well. And one morning, I think it was around 5 or 6 a.m. Chimiste and I found ourselves on the Croisette. I remember Willy Le Barge was there too; it must have been the same year "Le Prophète" came out...

Tell us about the creative process behind "Confidentiel"—was your approach different from your other albums

Every album has been very different. The first one, "Correspondances", was the culmination of ten years of rapping; I reworked the tracks in a new way and recorded them all in one go. Before that, I'd made two mixtapes with my crew, 75018 Beat Street. We'd put out two street CDs, as we called them back then, which were actually really dope. For my second album, I was signed to a major label, so for the first time, it felt a bit like a commissioned project. I didn't go about it the same way. Plus, my first album was very boom-bap, very classic hip-hop. Afterward, I realized that was what everyone expected from me. So for the second album, "Tunnel", I went for a more electro sound because I didn't want to do what was expected, and I didn't want to be seen as the guardian of the temple. Then came "Heures de Pointe"; it was in a similar vein to "Tunnel" Lp, but I wanted to switch up the style again and be more modern—it had a bit of a trap vibe mixed with boom-bap, and the themes were quite different. Then there was "Vertige", a record I worked on over a very long period—it took a long time because I was spending a lot of time in Brazil as well. And "Confidentiel" is an album we recorded during Covid, thinking we'd never actually perform the songs live, because back then people were saying things like, "Maybe one day there'll be capacity limits of just 20 people..." We've largely forgotten it now, but there was a whole period when we thought we'd never go out and perform again. So, we were making this album with Chimiste—he was based in Pont-de-Sèvres at the time. We did it purely out of a passion for working together, because I'd always wanted to collaborate with him, and he really liked what I was doing.

So, we made the album purely for the love of it, without knowing how it would actually come out into the world; we had no vision of what was going to happen.

Was that your excuse to get out—did Chimiste sign permission slips for you? (laughs)

Yeah, we'd write the notes ourselves. In fact, Pone and I even got busted—we got fined because we took a taxi back too late one night. Pone did the scratching for the whole album. He was living in Barcelona back then, and whenever he came to Paris, he'd often crash at my place. So, the result was an ultra-hip-hop, very boom-bap album—almost a return to our roots. You know, in terms of the vibe, it's almost more classic hip-hop—underground boom-bap—than my first album. A return to the roots, but without feeling dated. Without feeling old-school.
That's what was cool about it.

Do you prefer underground spaces or the sunny streets of Paris?

It depends on the moment. One thing is certain: the place I've most enjoyed painting in my life is the metro. And trains—but especially the metro, because I find it to be an incredible network; it's ancient, it's mystical. In the tunnels or access hatches, you can sometimes still see tags left by the pioneers. There's a whole history there. Plus, I just love that network. Sunlight is tricky in Paris because the heat builds up on the concrete. After two days, it becomes hardcore. We spend the whole year waiting for the sun, and then after three days, we can't stand living in it anymore. So, I'd say the tunnels and the underground.

Do you feel nostalgic for the Paris of the 80s & 90s, or do you think the city is aging well?

No, I'm not generally a nostalgic person. You have to keep living and doing things. I love looking at photos of the graffiti, the tags on the metal shop shutters from my youth, where layers of tags from different generations would pile up. That was all magnificent. Before my generation started doing throw up over them, because after a while, we realized those tags wouldn't last much longer. We started doing graffiti, throwing up over them, and toying them. But they were going to get erased anyway. I'm not nostalgic. Especially since I remember something people often forget: the boredom. With hip-hop and graffiti, we were never bored. But I could see that a lot of other people were bored out of their minds. It was actually pretty quiet. You know, back when I was in sixth grade, Manu Chao was already singing: "Paris at night is over, Paris is going to die of boredom, Paris is fading away, bring back its sleepless nights!" You dig it? So, by the time I arrived in Paris in 1990, I think that era was already under threat. It was no longer the Paris of street toughs, "apaches", and guys just hanging around outside. Things like rival gangs looking for trouble or skinhead hunters—that was all over. There were still a few guys hanging out in front of Saint-Lazare, and at Châtelet, or in a few other spots, but the street life was gone. When I arrived, Pasqua came into power, and almost overnight, we noticed
a massive police presence.

So, things had changed. At the same time, for me back in '92–'93, the metro was easy because there were no cameras and no one around—it had a bad reputation, so you'd only see people during rush hour. On Sundays it was empty, so you could do whatever you wanted; we used to hit the depots on Sundays, all day long—not at 6 a.m. like today...

What are your favorite spots in Paris?

Well, I like the Arènes de Lutèce in the 10th district, it's a quiet place to be. Otherwise, I like the Abbesses area, where I grew up. It wasn't like this back then at all. It wasn't just clothing stores; it was all bars. The streets weren't very well-lit. There was a lot of local caricaturists, guys going from bar to bar reciting poems or whatever. There was a whole atmosphere that was... well, a bit like a Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre Jeunet movie. It was pretty amusing. Really colorful and full of character. I loved that. So, I still enjoy wandering around there, even though it's changed a lot. I'll always prefer the 18th to others. I love Belleville; it's a working-class area, but less violent. You see, down by my place, there are fights constantly. It's pretty violent here. Belleville is working-class too, but I see far less violence there.
So, I like Belleville.

When did you start painting on canvas?

Well, I've always painted on canvas, for a very long time. I started with the MCS—I think back in '96, so 30 years ago. I've always painted canvases; I used to make them as gifts. I'd create a canvas and give it away. It was just like the back of the jackets, at first, I made them for births, often for kids. But later on, as I got older, the idea started to appeal to me more. The thing with canvas is that you have to really immerse yourself in it. You have to go through a genuine artistic journey. It's not just about recycling your graffiti onto a canvas; otherwise, there's no point. Since coming back from Brazil, I initially threw myself back into graffiti full-on. But I don't have my son here—I live alone. So now I have the time to really dive into it and think about the direction I want to take.

Tell us more about your approach to working on canvas—is your evolution intuitive?

Yeah. At first, I started out as if I'd had a sudden flash of a graffiti image—like having that specific vision in my head. That was one phase. But now—partly thanks to Cristobal Diaz, who made a film about Xare and me that was shown at our exhibition—I've realized something new. He's doing incredible archival work called GraffBox, where he tries to capture all the talents—or at least high-quality tags and those that defined an era—using a system he invented. This system highlights the line itself—the tag—which is the element people generally despise most. People always say, "There are beautiful murals, but those little scribbles on the wall are disgusting." But through Cristobal Diaz's work, I saw that he managed to elevate that linear aspect and that people were receptive to it. That really validated my own direction, because the line and the signature are what I love most—trying to convey an idea or a touch of poetry with very little. So right now, I'm fully immersed in that.

Do you think that your passion for painting on canvas can replace your vandal approach?

No, it has nothing to do with each other but the two feed each other because in vandalism you learn, in fact, with details how to make your graffiti interesting, with very quick details, little things. And that works well afterwards on canvases, it can correspond. I love going to do throw up with Sore, for example. And it's very far from the canvas. They complement each other, it's not even that they complement each other, they are two quite different things, but which are linked. In my life it doesn't bring me the same things.

Am I mistaken, or do you experiment with a wider variety of styles in your rapping than in your graffiti?

(Laughs) You're right, because in rap, I like to switch things up constantly. Actually, it's my rapping style and my voice that provide a sense of unity to everything I've done in rap. But the music backing it varies a lot. Back in the day, I really looked up to Gainsbourg; from one album to the next, he'd do reggae, then jazz. He changed every time, doing very different things... I used to love him, but now I struggle to separate the man from the artist. And the person himself kind of repulses me—the older Gainsbourg, not the young one. So, he's less of a reference point for me these days. That said, I do change my graffiti style a lot, too. I try to keep evolving—working on my colors, letters flow, and all that. But I really like including references to the graffiti that originally grabbed me. So, I always work in little details—whether it's B-boys, or just an "E" or an "S," or something that clearly reminds you of the style from way back when. That's what made an impression on me and made me want to get into it. There was something pretty pure about it in the beginning, too... I heard Stomy Bugsy say this in an interview not long ago: "It's inevitably much more creative when you're at the start of a movement than when you already have all the alphabets, all the references, all the established techniques..." Now it's gone even further—you've got tutorials, AI. You know, I was at Polymex store near my place recently, and there were kids coming in with their parents, who were buying them spray cans. You see, that never happened back in our day. It was an issue for a writer... So, I like revisiting the past to bring it into the present, you know? That's what Funco does: he draws on very old-school elements, but the way he executes them today—that kind of thing wouldn't have existed back then. That's kind of what I'm trying to do too—taking old references and pushing them in a way that didn't
exist before.

What is your best memory on stage?

My best memory on stage is a concert in Rio where there was Criolo, there was the girl group ESG, and lots of other artists. I sang in front of at least 4,000 people, it was big, it was at the bottom of a favela, in the open air, and my son who was 5 years old came on stage to sing with me the song “Loin des Yeux” that I write for him. And that was moving. I sing in French but as I speak Brazilian, I explain the song I am going to sing before starting. And there, the first two rows, he was crying. It was moving, it was beautiful, and my son was so proud. So this is my best moment on stage, that's it. I loved singing at La Cigale with Seu Jorge. And afterward, all the little concerts with my friends, I love them too. It doesn't matter if it's a big or a small venue, these are moments and what's important is who you share them with. Grems, he also invited me to his Cigale, a year ago, a year and a half perhaps. And it was shocked because, the same, there was his daughter who went on stage and made a statement to all her audience. It was super beautiful. Afterwards, the public, you see, for example, in Clermont-Ferrand it's a crazy city. They're too loud because they're singing your choruses that haven't been released yet. That is to say, they guess them so much that they want to sing with you. It's a crazy crowd. I was told, you'll see, clearly they're hot, but I wasn't expecting that, it's really amazing. It was the best moment of my tour... Finally, the memory where it was the hottest was when I was doing the warm up for Kery James on a Zenith tour. And there you have 2,500 people coming to see Kerry James, who don't give a damn about you. And you have to catch them. So when you're behind the curtain at the beginning, you tell yourself it's going to be hot and then, like me, I'm kicking, I adapted my show to that, so that they get what they like. But every time it was hot. I also toured with Giorgio, so his audience was much younger. So when I arrived, they felt like they were seeing their teacher of history that berated them...

And what about graffiti?

Well, regarding my best graffiti memory, one comes to mind right away. I've had a lot of great memories lately. It's cool when things go smoothly, or even when things go wrong but you and your crew manage to pull it off and get out safe. As for the biggest moments? I have two. One was hitting the London Underground in January '96 with the DDS crew. I hit the Northern Line, it was a crazy. I'd met them that afternoon at an hall of fame where they'd shown up as a massive crew. I'd tagged in the background of their piece, and I managed to make a good impression. It was tense at first, though—especially since one of them tagged Sensei. They thought I was a local because I was wearing Reeboks and a PSA jacket. So when I said, "I tag Sensei," this Black guy stepped up and said, "I'm Sensei." We sorted it out, things went well, and they decided to take me out to hit a train that very night. I arrived at Golders Green Station, it was super rough; there was a pool of blood, a guy who'd just stabbed someone, and a crowd of about thirty guys. The DDS crew were drinking cheap booze, smoking, and tagging everything... I was thinking, this is like “Style Wars” or “Subway Art”—what is going on? You know that photo of Daze with the baseball bat? I was thinking, Is this what London is like? It surprised me because I knew London was usually heavily policed. They said, "Right, well, good luck, 'cause it's sketchy out there." But we did it, and it went well. The way we pulled it off was insane. We went through people's gardens; they had stashed mattresses to lay over the barbed wire so we could climb over. We had about 20 meters of brambles to cross to reach the trains; we'd jump onto the roof of a subway car whenever one pulled in. It was a yard that held four trains. When we first arrived, there were two. We'd wait for the third one to park. That's when I saw they really knew their stuff. It was precision work—we'd paint while waiting for the fourth one to arrive and park. So, we had about 20 minutes. In that time, they'd knock out three panels, while I'd only managed one. They were incredibly efficient. I was amazed. Hear and Houch were the ones who took me along. It was an awesome experience—I even did a shout-out to Yoza. It was a crazy; I was underage, so I really couldn't afford to get caught. My other best memory is with Renaud. We painted that "whole car" you see in the photo—a train near the Versailles barracks. It was the summer of '97; we spent hours painting it, a colorful whole-car piece with a lot of detail. When we finished—dawn was fast approaching, maybe an hour away—we climbed up one of those tall metal towers by the tracks. We climbed right to the top—I didn't have a fear of heights back then—smoked a bit, looked down at our train, and just soaked it all in. Then the police showed up—I don't know why, considering we'd been there for hours. They spent half an hour searching everywhere with flashlights. But there we were, right at the top of that tower, and they didn't suspect for a second that we were up there. Eventually, they took off. We climbed down, walked along the tracks to the Versailles-Chantiers station, and made it home without a hitch. Then, years later—I remember it was back in the Myspace days—I got a message from a guy saying, "I'm Lieutenant xxx"; "We know you're the one who did that train, but we loved it and kept it. We brought it into the station and we're holding onto it." It was almost like a thank you. The piece featured a French rooster under a guillotine, and our letters were filled in with a camouflage pattern and a sunrise in the background. They took it as a tribute to a French symbol, whereas we were coming from a more rebellious place (laughs). And the crazy thing is—I think it was Ecrase and Feito who sent me photos—they've kept that train at their station to this day; thirty years later, it's still there. Sure, the windows are broken now and the paint has faded completely, but it still exists—it's wild. I also did a lot of rooftop work with BDB. I have some very funny memories from that time. Because it always comes down to the people you're with. BDB was a guy with an incredible sense of humor. I actually saw him again later; he came to my exhibition at Tati with his wife and daughter. You need guys who are reliable—people who won't just bail and leave you in the shit when things go south—and who are funny. And if trouble arises, they've got your back, you dig?







So do you still believe in it or not?

Ahhh it's in "Human", I see what you're talking about. I believe in it less and less. But that's not it. In this song, I'm not talking about graffiti or rap or hip-hop at all. I'm talking about the RN (A racist political group – editorial note) which is on the rise, you see the far right which is exploding all over the world, these are things that I would never have thought of when I was little because already there were no young people from the far right, apart from the skinheads who were really on the fringes. And especially the rest of the young people, it never crossed their minds to be racist. Until I was 40 I never encountered racism. Now I see them all the time. I see people talking in the street, saying horrible things. Before, I would have fought straight away. Now I'm not going to fight against half the population. But that's what I'm talking about when I say I don't believe it anymore. The far-right discourse has invaded our world in a quite astonishing way, because it is still an ultra stupid discourse and which functions as at other times in history. It's a bit cyclical, but it's very sad. And above all, for a very long time, people could debate. They didn't necessarily agree, but not racists, you see, there was a debate. Today, there is no more debate. They are all very fixed in their ideas, very venerated, they can no longer see each other. There are families that split in two. So there you go, I'm not saying I don't believe in it anymore, I'm saying that I believe in it less and less.
I still hope that in the end, intelligence will win.

And does your book project reflect that 18th-arrondissement melancholy of yours?

Actually, no—not at all. I mean, the 18th is in there, but the book deals with a different subject. It's called "Du Bon Côté du Mensonge" [On the Right Side of the Lie]. It's about a graffiti artist who... No, I don't want to give it all away. I'm keeping that secret. It's supposed to come out in the fall; I've already got some leads. There are publishers interested in picking it up. I'll find a way to get it out there. I'm also working on a film adaptation with a producer right now. It's going to happen, and it's going to be good—there'll be graffiti in it, but that's not the main theme. The graffiti is just the backdrop. And it's not melancholic, because the 18th is still the place where I have so many friends, where I watch kids growing up... I love it—maybe even more now, because I'm in a better place in my life. I love seeing my friends get older, have kids, and just being around cool people. I love seeing my homy Xare making progress with his painting. Back then, it was a constant struggle. It was rude, we had to steal to get what we wanted. Today, we are starting to build things on somewhat more solid foundations—even if it's still maybe a little shaky, unpredictable, and winding...

So, what is missing for Paris to be your paradise?

The sea—and no fascists. But the sea in Paris... then it wouldn't be Paris anymore. No, I'm not missing anything in Paris. I have a wife I love, and she's a Parisian. It's great just the way it is—less police, fewer fascists. It's not about having more things; it's about having less.

What is your favorite motto?

"To be like no one while looking like everyone." That's my anti-hero mantra. I'm sticking with that. It's not your appearance that makes you interesting or not; it's what you work on, what you develop. Trying to be a bit nuanced, not seeing things in black and white. Trying to understand others a little. That's what I like.

That's a bit Parisian, isn't it?

Yeah, the 18th—because in the 16th, they aren't like that!

"Clermont-Ferrand it's a crazy city. They're too loud because they're singing your choruses hat haven't been released yet."



A DOSE OF RAP, A FEW BARS OF BASS MUSIC, BAILE FUNK KICKS, AND A SPLASH OF SHAKIRA NECTAR? THAT'S THE KIND OF MIX BAVARDAGES THROWS INTO THEIR SHAKER TO CRAFT ONE OF THOSE EXPLOSIVE SIGNATURE COCKTAILS THEY'RE FAMOUS FOR. THESE PLAYFUL PARISIANS HAVE COME A LONG WAY SINCE GRADE SCHOOL; THEY'VE MOVED FROM THE BACK OF THE CLASSROOM TO CENTER STAGE, READY TO SWEEP YOU UP INTO THEIR QUIRKY, FUN-LOVING WORLD. COME AS YOU ARE—SOLO OR WITH FRIENDS—THERE'S A SPOT WAITING JUST FOR YOU!

BAVAR DAGES

How did you start?

It's a long and beautiful story. We really started in 2022. Before, we had done events, but in another format, as organizers of student evenings on barges. That's how we got our start. And we all had our own projects. We had a lot of failures at that time! We didn't necessarily have a project that brought us all together and it was a bit of a departure from a date that had been proposed to us. We found ourselves saying, There we have a date, come on, let's have this evening together. We did this event, really, without stress, unlike many When it came to projects, we had very good feedback from all our friends, we had brought together all our groups together. And after that, everyone kept telling us when is the next one? Whereas we didn't expect to launch anything at all. We said to ourselves, why not? We didn't even have a name. At the time we were already 2 DJs, Gouzou, Mezzer, and Sarah in a position of artistic direction and management. We wanted to try to be artists of our own projects.

Why Bavardages ?

We came up with the name Bavardages in early 2023—I think it was Bams who found it. We wanted a name that evoked something rather childlike. Our approach back then was pretty lighthearted. There's a slightly naive, teasing, almost pejorative connotation to the word Bavardages [chatter/idle talk]. It refers to those little... how should I put it? Not exactly little brats, but the kind of people who are a bit of a nuisance to others, you know? We have strong personalities; we don't really fit into those very insular, "cookie-cutter" circles. We've always been the disruptive type, ever since we were kids. It also touched on the feeling of being judged or singled out, and the lack of confidence we struggled with when we were younger. For once, we landed on something that truly felt like us—nothing rigid or structured, just pure self-expression.

What were your first venues?

We started our events in small-capacity spaces, you could say. At one of the Folies at La Villette—on the terrace, which holds maybe 100 people. Once we really started packing the place out—when the crowds got huge—we thought, "Right, maybe it would be cool to try setting up on the lawn below," since there's so much more space there. So we played at La Kermès, a venue that had its own distinct programming and curation; they put 100% trust in us, which really helped us pull off some great early shows. Later, we sought out slightly more unconventional spots; specifically to get that "carte blanche" like we had at the Pavillon du Canal. We also worked with open-air venues like La Cité Fertile... Then we started playing at more established clubs that still suited our crowd, like Pamela Club in Saint-Germain (the 6th arrondissement). They're very house-focused now, but back then it was all about Afro-house and Amapiano. They were kind of feeling things out and just having a blast—they'd just opened, too—so that's when we held our first real big party.

You're a very energetic and eclectic collective—what's your artistic approach?

Artistically, we wanted to shake things up a bit; we wanted to bring together a huge variety of musical tastes and influences, everything from super chill vibes to high-octane, aggressive energy! That's the angle we ultimately took, because the project wasn't about DJs playing solo sets; it was about DJs performing in groups of two or three behind the decks, communicating with each other and being really expressive. It's that "troublemakers at the back of the class" vibe! We don't take ourselves too seriously; we want to bring back a sense of freedom, explosive energy, and even a bit of silliness, you know? We try to convey that energy through our stage performance, too—we're chasing that same kind of energy you get from rock bands. We do a lot of B2B sets with stage setups where the audience surrounds us—no barriers—so the crowd is just as much a part of the performance as we are. There's a lot of playfulness and interaction; that's really where the name Bavardage [Chatter] makes perfect sense. When we get booked, people want the whole group—us, plus the friends who tag along behind the decks: performers, dancers, people on the mic. *Bavardage* isn't just one face; it's a whole community.

What are your main influences?

We all come from different musical backgrounds. We found common ground in the electronic realm—very Skrillex-esque, very "bass music," you could say—but also in the rap scene. Actually, the three of us grew up and evolved within the SoundCloud sphere, immersed in remix culture. What really brought us together was the desire to have no musical boundaries. It's boring to be stuck in one box. We realized how hard it was for us to go to a party and be confined to just one style of music, one type of community, one type of crowd, or one type of format. You rarely find something that brings everyone together. There are so many connotations attached to a musical genre label, and that's partly what we wanted to break down. The truth is, anyone can listen to rap, and anyone can listen to house. The same people can listen to different things, and different people might listen to the same things. We all come from the 2000s era, heavily influenced by pop music, everything that was massive at the time. But we aren't going to limit ourselves to that; hence the remix culture. Bringing together so many different worlds allows us to act as a bridge to other types of music and other communities. When it comes to introducing people to new music, it's much easier and more accessible for an audience to latch onto something they already know—like a familiar vocal from, say, Britney Spears or David Guetta—and then, beneath that, you introduce a musical style that's truly new, maybe even a bit out there. It's this internet culture, of remixing, that we wanted to bring to life through the references we have, pop, queer, rap, electro music, house, UK garage, Brazilian baile funk...

We want to be accessible, in contradiction of a form of elitism that there is in electronic music. We totally refuse to have this side. Elitism is even too serious, something that prevents you from coming and experimenting, or from being accessible, or from being free, or from being different. Something that is meant to be fun, really fun. We want people to have their hands in the air, you see, to sing, to have moments, songs that they know. As producers, we don't want to only be listened to by other producers, we find that it's an elitist vision, making music for people who make music. Afterwards we have our personal fancies you see, geeky but in Bavardages, we want it to be something open. We don't care about putting the latest sound, the most streamed in a given niche, that doesn't interest us.



You do quite a few collaborations, too?

We rely heavily on collaboration because we feel it allows us to reach a wide range of audiences—avoiding the trap of staying insular or just doing the same thing for the same crowd. Sometimes we have a specific direction in mind; for instance, with Walk in Paris, we knew the vibe was going to be pop. Then again, if we collaborate with Noizey Kids—whose sound is really techno-Afro—we bring something fresh to the mix! It's really about showing that electronic music can be queer and can reflect diverse racial identities. The goal is always to shock—or rather, to surprise. We've embraced the fact that we aren't easily pigeonholed. We know we're relevant in specific contexts, and that's what we're fighting for, so to speak. For example, we've done remixes of Britney Spears' "Work Bitch" and Theodora's "Do U Wanna" in collaboration with Akalex, a DJ and producer from Strasbourg. We also make a point of not boxing ourselves in as producers.We might produce a trap, bass, or hardcore track, then follow it up with a remix featuring a cute piano melody, and throw in a house track—something totally unexpected—in between.

We really enjoy that process and end up releasing a lot of remixes. We also have a Blackpink remix with Baby J and Tye Turner—two huge Australian artists who spearhead the Syber project in Perth. They discovered us on SoundCloud—which is the amazing thing about that platform: they were the ones who reached out to us. They played our music at parties and tagged us in their Stories, which was already so cool. You can reach ten million listeners just like that. Even though the scene in Paris can sometimes feel like a small bubble, on SoundCloud—and among the community of producers and music lovers interacting there—we have much greater recognition. Music actually allowed us to break out of that Paris bubble; no single event could give you that kind of reach. That's what really opened doors for us. And now we're heading to Australia! We're actually going to Perth this autumn. When we invite artists, the feedback we always get is that they love it because they know they can play anything—even the most unimaginable tracks. We try to encourage them not to hold back or feel pressured to play familiar hits just to win the crowd over; instead, we want to get the audience listening to new things and broadening their musical horizons. We have a party concept—featuring plenty of B2B sets for the fun and performance aspect—where all our guest DJs take turns playing alongside members of the collective. It's like "speed-DJing," modeled after speed dating. We invite a DJ to play for an hour and a half, but every thirty minutes, they switch B2B partners to play with a member of Bavardages. There's a really joyful vibe to it. Basically, you have 30 minutes to give it your all—there's intensity and energy involved. Our goal is also to ensure real diversity. Leaving one person alone for five hours—that's a monopoly. We really want that element of a challenge and dialogue—where you build on what was played before or after, and really listen to what's happening. It's our way of connecting with other artists, both as a collective and through our events. It opens the door to unexpected pairings and allows everyone to showcase different facets of their artistry. That's also how we—well, "cleaned house" (which is a bit of a blunt way to put it)—but we naturally filtered the crowd based on the music. It happened organically, and most of the people who stick around are our loyal fans. They'll come up to us saying, "It wasn't hard enough." We love hearing that! We're incredibly lucky; our community has made everything possible for us. They've really enabled us to play the music we want and just be ourselves. Now we have a regular night at Badaboum—an opportunity that exists entirely thanks to the audience that keeps us going. It used to seem impossible.

Have you played any shows abroad?

We toured Asia last year. We started in Paris and headed to Seoul, South Korea. We also went to Japan, came back to Seoul, and then went to Thailand. We played quite a few sets—almost twenty shows in total across those three countries—and honestly, it was an amazing experience. We're heading back out there this year, in late September, to do it all over again. That said, our main goal has always been to conquer—in quotes—Paris and France (laughs). Since we organize events, we've always wanted to establish ourselves firmly in Paris before branching out; the idea was to build connections, bring other artists to Paris, and then expand our reach to a wider audience. That's the dream. We have a show scheduled for October 3rd in Perth, Australia, for the "Syber" event; it's our biggest international date of the year. It's a project created by the Australian production duo we mentioned earlier—Baby J and Tye Turner—with whom we released a remix for Blackpink (a K-pop group that's huge in Asia). We worked on that track in the studio when they visited Paris. When the remix was played at a club for the first time, it generated a massive buzz—it was incredible, probably partly due to the group's fame. Once the remix was officially released, it got a lot of airplay, so we thought, "It would be amazing to bring this collab to life on stage!" Having the chance to first collaborate on a production and then do a show together is fantastic. For us, it's a huge deal because these are major events—filmed for broadcast, that draw massive crowds and really align with our musical style. They've actually never had European artists perform before; we'll be the first French artists to play this event. It's amazing for us to already have a foothold abroad—to gain recognition in that scene is really cool—and hopefully, we might even be able to bring them to Paris. We can see how the club music scene is really opening up—something that might be lacking in Paris right now. We're going to Asia to tap into that openness; there are more resources there, and a sense of renewal.

Are you all originally from Paris?

All Parisians—Parisian through and through! We studied in Paris, grew up in Paris, and were born in Paris. That's why it was important to have a project in Paris that allowed us to contribute something, even though we also want to travel. Paris is an incredibly interesting place because there's always so much going on. It's impossible to run out of things to do in Paris. If you have the drive and a project, being in Paris guarantees you'll find an opportunity. It can be a bit daunting or overwhelming at times, but for creative people—or anyone looking to meet others and form collectives—it's a scene that really offers endless possibilities. Honestly, it offers just about anything and everything. That's a real advantage of being in Paris. In Paris, people often tend to be jacks-of-all-trades, too. We do a lot of different things because we're lucky enough to be immersed in such a rich cultural environment.

Do you think there are any downsides to the Paris scene?

There used to be a bit of rivalry in that scene. That's less of an issue now, I think, because people realize there's room for everyone. Still, there's a stereotype that the scene is different—a bit elitist—compared to Belgium or other nearby scenes. Even though there are venues everywhere, some are accessible only to certain people. There's a certain insularity—a lack of accessibility, openness, and connection. There's a sort of machine-like dynamic that crushes small venues trying to hang on, because they can never manage to secure the same lineups. And in Paris, I think there's a major issue with clubs demanding local exclusivity from DJs; that's a huge problem. If you play at a certain club, they might ask you not to play anywhere else in Paris—or even within a 50km radius—for two weeks or a month. How are you supposed to survive, you know, if you're part of a local collective? These restrictions are often imposed based on the model of big, legendary, iconic clubs. It's tough for a DJ to have to agree to those demands sometimes. It's a deal that makes sense for big names, but we have to fight back and refuse it.

What is a Parisian?

I would say that a Parisian is someone who has been immersed in diverse cultures. To me, it's someone who has spent time hanging out in Belleville, Jaurès, and Montmartre alike, amidst Black, North African, and various French regional cultures! It's someone who has had to adapt to and rub shoulders with different cultures—whether in terms of food, music, or art. You develop an eye that is—or should be—sensitive to diversity.

What's the most unusual place you've ever played?

I once DJed at a rave in the catacombs. Right under the Luxembourg Gardens! We got attacked by "cataphiles"—the self-appointed guardians of the catacombs—who started throwing smoke bombs. You couldn't see a thing, and everyone was wasted. There was so much smoke you couldn't even see your own hands. Since the space is completely sealed off, everyone started to panic. There was a massive crowd surge. They were well-organized, so there was no tragedy, but it was definitely a terrifying moment. You had about 150 people filing out of the catacombs in a single line. On a different note, there's a place called Silencio des Prés; it has a restaurant with a jazz stage, but there's actually another stage in the basement. There's a huge movie theater with a bar behind the screen—right up on the stage—and you just sit in the theater seats. It's totally surreal, but fun.

"It's impossible to run out of things to do in Paris. If you have the drive and a project, being in Paris guarantees you'll find an opportunity."





STRAW DOGZ



> "The English really know how to party, visiting them is a lesson in itself. It's less about watching the spectacle and more about truly enjoying. The English are real party animal. They taught us everything."

THE CAPITAL WOULDN'T EXIST WITHOUT ITS SUBURBANITES OR THOSE FROM THE PROVINCES—AS PROVEN BY THIS BRETON DUO NOW BASED IN MONTREUIL (IN THE 93 DEPARTMENT). PARIS AND ITS SURROUNDING REGION BOAST THE COUNTRY'S HIGHEST CONCENTRATION OF SCHOOLS AND TRAINING CENTERS, WITH SOME INSTITUTIONS RANKING AMONG THE BEST IN THE WORLD. BEN MOVED THERE TO STUDY SOUND ENGINEERING, WHILE SIMON PURSUED DRAMA; TOGETHER, THEY FORMED STRAWDOGZ AND NOW REPRESENT THE NEW DUB STEPPER SCENE WITH THE RELEASE OF THEIR FOURTH VINYL RECORD.

Where were you born, and did you grow up with vinyl records at home?

Ben : OWe're both from Vannes, in the Morbihan region of Brittany. I didn't have vinyl at home as a child, but I bought my first turntable when I was 15, and that's when my passion for records began. I bought a lot of them and spent over ten years practicing scratching.

Simon : I have faint memories of my father playing vinyl, but a flood in our basement unfortunately destroyed his entire collection. It included the complete Rolling Stones discography, and the collection leaned heavily towards American rock. As for me, it was only about ten years ago that I got a turntable from an uncle and developed a voracious appetite for vinyl—a strong desire to have reggae and dub records, in particular, close at hand. That passion was born out of sound system culture.

When did you get hooked on dub?

Simon : In the early 2000s, dub was being played live a lot; I discovered bands like Improvisators Dub, Manutension, Brain Damage, Zenzile, and High Tone. Their basslines very quickly captivated my mind. A few years later, I discovered the sound system scene through Legal Shot, which hosted acts like Stand High Patrol and Aba Shanti-I. That's when I'd say I really got hooked.

Ben : I also listened to those French dub bands briefly during my teens, but I was mostly into hip-hop, and our conversations centered mainly on rap. In 2013, Simon suggested we go to the Télérama Dub Festival, and discovering sound system culture there completely blew me away. The very next day, we were in the studio composing our first riddim.

How long have you known each other?

Ben : We have known each other since childhood in Vannes and we met again a few years later in Paris. Simon had a theater company and very quickly he asked me to do the soundtracks for his shows.

When and why are you coming to Ile-de-France?

Ben : I arrived in Paris to study sound engineering after my baccalaureate and I have lived there for more than twenty years.

Simon : As for me, I went there to study drama after finishing high school. And after sixteen years in Paris, I recently decided to return to Brittany and settle in Vannes.

Why did you choose the name Strawdogz?

Ben : Simon's company was called Les Chiens de Paille, so the English version Strawdogs, appealed to us immediately. We actually came up with the name while looking at the back of a DVD case for the Sam Peckinpah film. It's a very violent movie that leaves a lasting impression. From th emovie, the Straw dogs were small puppets that were decorated and revered during a ceremony, only to be cast into the fire once the festivities ended. This ritual dates back to the time of Lao-Tzu. Strawdogz is a duo, but we've always brought in other singers male or female for our productions.

What are your influences?

Ben : There was a festival that was pivotal in shaping our shared musical references: the UNOD (United Nations of Dub Weekender) in Prestatyn, Wales, back in 2014. The entire UK sound system scene was there—crews like Mungo's Hi Fi, Iration Steppas, and Dubkasm, all of whom were immediate sources of inspiration. Today, looking at more contemporary acts, there's the New York-based label Dub-Stuy. And here in France, we keep a close eye on producers like Telly*, Rico from OBF, and Pupajim. At the same time, we're big fans of the UK bass/post-dubstep scene and labels like Deep Medi Musik, White Peach Records, and System Music, as well as the Italian collective Numa Crew.

You are setting up a first studio then a second, more advanced one in 2024, explain to us...

Ben : I had a studio in Montreuil that I shared with Lightmotiv where Strawdogz started. When we had to stop the adventure because we were reaching the end of the lease I rebuilt a small home studio, still in Montreuil, but at home, in 2017. Then following a move I rebuilt the Lighthouse Studio but bigger and better equipped. We have a lot of synths and drum machines, a lot of effects and especially now we have more and more peripherals to the mix. Strawdogz's last two Eps were produced and mixed there.

You've released four vinyl EPs over the course of several years. What was your approach—was it 100% intuitive? And do you see an evolution in your production style between the first one in 2018...

Ben : We did indeed release a series of four EPs under the name "Dogstepperz", partnering with Patate Records for physical distribution and, more recently, with Evidence for digital distribution. These EPs feature stepper instrumentals and tracks with vocalists from all over the world, along with their corresponding dub versions. There's been a clear evolution in our production; we've learned how the tracks perform on sound systems and have constantly refined our work, always aiming for the best possible sound on that kind of rig. As time goes on, we're running more elements through analog circuitry, which creates that slightly distorted, warmer sound. The early tracks were mixed in the box, so they sounded a bit colder...

Does having a deal with Patate Records make it easier for you to distribute your music abroad?

Ben : First of all, the deal with Patate Records allows us to release our music in physical format—which was a goal in itself—and we certainly benefit from their international network. It's fun to see on Discogs that our records are being sold in Japan, South America, and across Europe—on a modest scale, of course. As for the digital side, the Geneva-based label Evidence Music handles distribution, giving us visibility on streaming platforms.

What is your best memory of a live DJ set?

Ben : Definitely our gig at L'Echonova—the contemporary music venue in Vannes—sharing the bill with Stand High Patrol and Marina P on our buddy Kurun's sound system. The setup was an island in the middle of the room, the place was packed, and the atmosphere was absolutely electric. Those are the kinds of settings where we get the most enjoyment out of revisiting our own productions and sharing them with the crowd.

Do you go still diggin, and what are you obsessed with?

Simon : I don't really have time to go digging for records with my current work schedule—and being far from the independent shops in big cities—but every now and then I'll take a quick look on Bandcamp or Discogs... It's funny, this vinyl obsession; sometimes I discover a sound and instantly know I want it in my collection or want to play it in my next DJ set! It feels like the record chooses me, rather than the other way around. Do I have a top 5 list of new tracks? Today I've had Koffee's "Summer Fruits" on repeat; that track is going to be stuck in my head for a while. I've also been playing Telly*'s latest track, "Bodyguard," to death. And "Bitume"—featuring Booba on the latest Nèg'Marrons album—took me right back in time; I'd never felt nostalgia for a brand-new song before!

And I won't end with a piece but a show, the B2B of Fred again and Thomas Bangalter, I can't get over it. First of all it's very beautiful to look at, the Sceno and the lights are incredible, never seen an audience so happy to be there and listening, damn what a walk.

Ben : I've been buying fewer skeuds in recent years, a few some from time to time, because it still takes up space and weighs its weight. On the other hand, I buy a lot of music on Bandcamp, it allows me to have the waves to play them and of course to support the artists. On a daily basis I don't listen to too much dub but mainly hip-hop and sound system music in general, like dubstep, kuduro, baile funk or more recently UK garage.

At the moment the pieces that I am sanding would be Gafacci "Copacaghana". A kind of mix between traditional Ghanaian rhythms and dubstep production, it's killer. For the UK side I'm on Mala x Magugu "Militant Don", the production is very very heavy, and "Calypso" by Bowser, for the more groove side. Hyper agree with Simon on the Fred Again and Thomas Bangalter show, and generally for the work of Fred Again in recent years and which puts the English scene at the heart of the mainstream without making compromises.

> **"I'm living in Montreuil that's not Paris. And as Fabe used to say: "Paris isn't New York, either."**

In your opinion, what defines a Parisian?

Simon : The caricature would paint a picture of a slender figure in a plaid shirt, jeans, and Veja sneakers, pedaling a cargo bike to pick up the kids from school. That caricature is the only way I can answer this question with a bit of irony. On a more serious note—since I don't live in Paris anymore—I'd say what unites Parisians is the good fortune of having such great access to culture, concerts, theaters, and museums; having amazing restaurants on every street corner; and living in a place with great social diversity. But all that comes at a price: being packed into public transport and often living in cramped, spartan apartments, far removed from wild nature.

Ben : (laughs) I don't own a cargo bike and I only wear Air Maxes, but I admit I recognize myself a bit in your description—it's hilarious. Yeah, the concentration of culture is generally cool, a s is the access to major tours that focus on capital cities—especially for American hip-hop acts. Then again, you know, I'm living in Montreuil; that's not Paris. And as Fabe used to say: "Paris isn't New York, either."

Did you frequent Parisian clubs, or just sound system events?

Ben : Together, we mostly went to sound system events. There were some great nights, like the Télérama Dub Festival at the 104 and the Docks de Paris. And, of course, the essential Dub Station nights at Le Trabendo—which are still going on today, by the way.

Simon : But no, life doesn't stop at sound system sessions; places like Glazart, La Machine du Moulin Rouge, Le Globo, Moon, Concrete, Showcase, La Bellevilloise, and Folies Pigalle aren't unknown to me—they allowed me to really embrace Parisian nightlife.

Ben : Yeah, exactly—great nights at Glazart and Batofar, not to mention the golden age of Le Tryptique and certain bass or drum & bass nights at Cabaret Sauvage! Quite a few good memories of Parisian nightlife, all in all!



Do you notice a difference between dancing in the provinces and in Paris?

Ben : The provinces covers a lot of ground. A dance in Marseille is different from one in Rennes, which is different from one in Nantes, and so on. And each one also depends on the vibe the DJ puts out. To me, the more interesting comparison is between two capitals: Paris and London. And that's a real eye-opener. The British are amazing at partying; going over there to see it is a real lesson. It's so spontaneous—people are less self-conscious; it's really about enjoying the moment. The British are party pros. They taught us everything (laughs). And those huge festivals in the UK and then in Spain, especially the International Dub Gathering—are something else. Massive sound systems, but going for three or four days straight. A unique atmosphere.

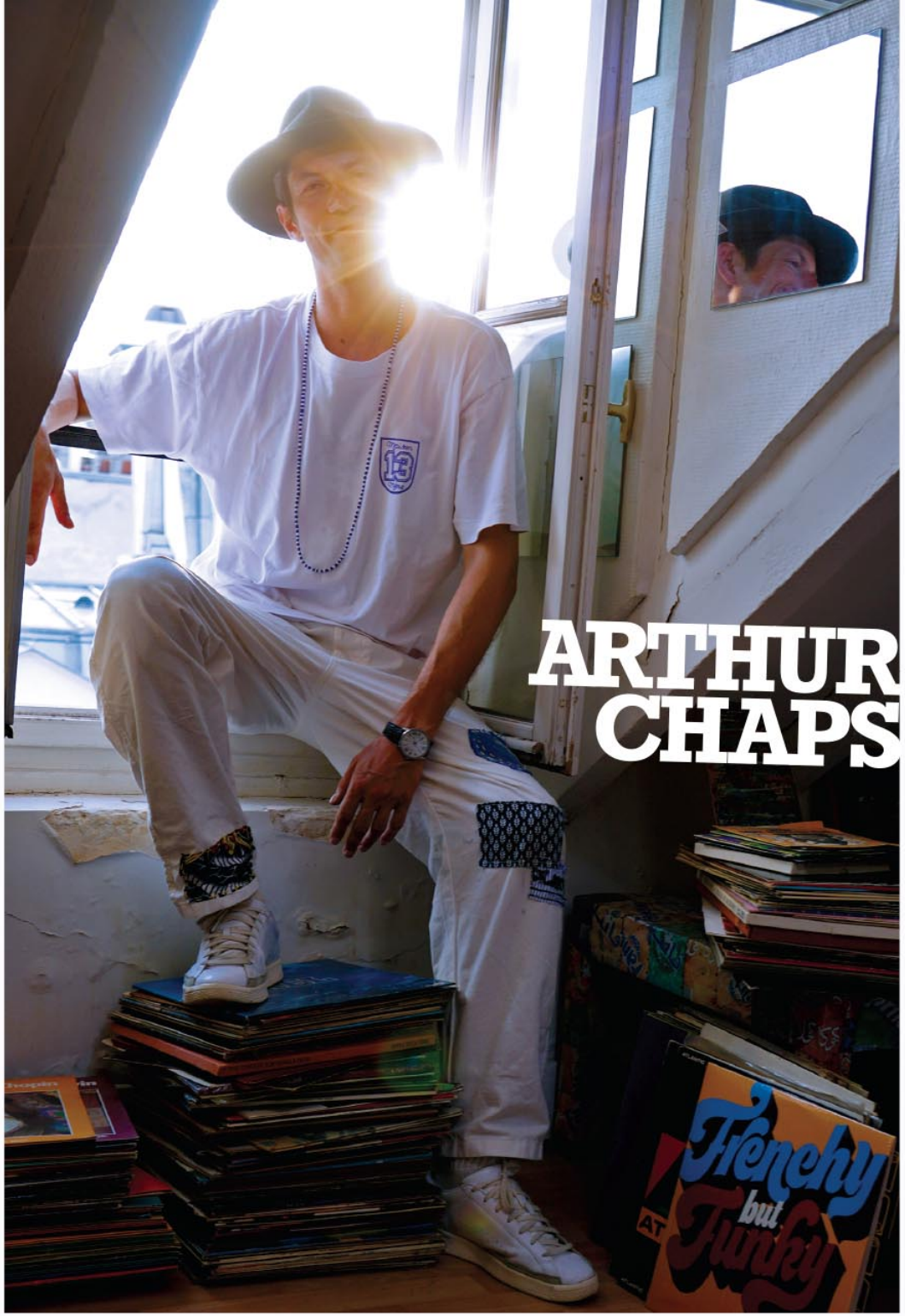
What is Paris missing to be your paradise?

The sea, no doubt—we both agree on that!

What's your favorit adage ?

Simon : Just because someone lands you in deep shit doesn't necessarily mean they wish you harm, and just because someone pulls you out of it doesn't necessarily mean they wish you well (This quote sums up the famous moral of L'oisillon, de la vache et du renard – Editor note).

Ben : « Come what may».



ARTHUR CHAPS

WITH A WARMTH IN THE BODY EXHIBITING DEMAND AND RIGOR, CHAPS PUSHES ECLECTISM TO ITS PAROXYSM. FUNK, HIP-HOP, AMAPIANO, HOUSE, ROCK, BAILE FUNK, SOUKOUSS, BOUYON, SHATTA? TURN BY TURN, HE WILL MAKE YOU DO THE OLA OR SING OPERA. ITS PRODUCTIONSSOMETIMES SHIMMERING, SOMETIMES MINIMAL. AND ITS MIXES ALWAYS DORAISE THE TEMPERATURE BY SEVERAL THOUSAND DEGREES. FOLLOW THIS FUNNY BIRD WHO HAS IT UNDER THE HAT!

What kind of musical environment did you grow up in?

Soul music—my mother was passionate about it. My maternal grandfather was a huge jazz enthusiast; he was friends with Frank Ténot—who hosted the definitive jazz show on Europe 1, and collected records. As for my grandmother, she was into opera. The moment I really fell for music was when my parents discovered the effect a Walkman had on me. It was a Beatles compilation. I still remember the frenzy it sent me into when I was just a little kid. Then came the visceral shock of seeing Michael Jackson at Longchamp. I was about ten years old; it was my first concert, in front of nearly 100,000 people...

What was the first club where you spinned?

It was L'Enfer—around 2002—which later became the Red Light. Antoine M, who had taught me how to DJ, was playing a gig near my business school. I'd been practicing in my bedroom for two years, and that day he told me, "You're ready; you're doing this with me." Suddenly, I found myself in front of 1,200 people. Many of my idols had played on those decks like Carl Cox, Jeff Mills, Richie Hawtin, Derrick Carter... To me, that venue was an institution. I remember the lighting guy asking me how much I practiced. Very proudly, I replied, "At least half an hour every day!" He looked at me and said, "If you want to reach the level of the people who've played here, it's not half an hour. It's four hours a day." That remark stuck with me. It made me realize the high standards and the amount of work required to build something solid.

So, you started ramping up your workload... It was all vinyl back then...

Oh, definitely. He put real pressure on me... and he was right. Back then, everything was on vinyl. I liked that constraint. You'd show up with your bag, a hundred records inside, period. The musical direction was set right from the start. That very evening, before heading out, I called my mentor, DJ Gregory, to tell him about my first gig and ask for advice. He simply asked what my big tracks were. Among them was his remix of Masters At Work's "Work." He said, "It should go well." And sure enough, it went really well. I even remember kicking things off by taking over from my buddy, who was starting to get stressed. I played Masters At Work's "I Can't Get No Sleep," followed by "Talking All That Jazz"—specifically the Torti version that Dimitri From Paris had included on his "Playboy Mansion" compilation.

And did things just flow naturally from there?

Yes. One thing led to another—experiences I never would have imagined having. In 2004 and 2005, I was lucky enough to DJ at Le Queen, which was a true legend. At the time, Le Queen was one of Europe's major clubs; its sound system, programming, and atmosphere were exceptional. I played there notably for Mickaël Canitrot's 'So Happy In Paris' nights—events that leaned more toward vocal house and disco than the hard house that was also part of the venue's identity. Then came a great residency at Maxim's, before Favela Chic completely revolutionized my approach to spin. Jérôme Pigeon taught me that you could play any kind of music, provided you had a genuine perspective. You could tell a story, hold a dancefloor for hours, and maintain high standards for every single track. Sometimes I'd play for nine hours straight... and I loved every minute of it. I learned so much during that period. In 2011, I launched the label Sun Is Coming with Jean-Jacques B. I took on the roles of DJ, manager, and executive producer. We produced our own records and organized festivals spanning France and Cameroon. Encountering the continent totally redefined my approach. Immersing myself in African music—in all its radiance, grace, and breadth—led me to approach music with more meaning, more respect, and a much richer perspective. That was also when I started getting interested in dancehall and performing at venues like La Cigale for the Africa Unity Experience, as well as at the Paris Tropical Carnival and the Notting Hill Carnival. That said, my vision for managing the label was more pragmatic than my partner's. We eventually had to part ways. And without Jean-Jacques who carried the spirit of Africa within him right alongside me, I thought I would stop playing this kind of music. In reality, that's where it all truly began for me.

In 2017, Wattsmyname reached out to me to play at the Bum Bum Tam Tam and Dancehall Queen parties at Wanderlust, and they were a massive hit—a new sensation. It wasn't just about the DJs; people were coming for the concept itself. The crowds were so huge that I remember playing there in front of 4,000 people... on a Tuesday. That was the era of early Wizkid tracks, the dawn of shatta, and a time when baile funk was churning out hit after hit. People from all over the world came to these parties, and everyone was struck by how they managed to bring so many different communities together. That is the true beauty of the mix Paris has to offer.

You were born in Paris, yet you've truly taken root in Marseille. How did you pull off that miracle? Did you go straight for the goal?

Marseille is a deeply human, warm city, with a much freer attitude toward music and partying than Paris. It all started with Kamel Night, who contacted me to play at his club, Bounce. There was already a connection: DJ Soon, the club's resident DJ, is Uncle T's cousin... In 2018, it was for funk; then Kamel got back in touch for baile funk (laughs). After that came the encounters, the conversations, the nights out, and—above all—shared values. Bounce is a family before it's a club. That's one of the reasons I wanted to get involved there. Paris and Marseille are very different. Paris compresses people on a global scale, so Parisians need a way to let off steam. Clubs play a vital role in helping to burst that bubble of stress. That pressure deeply shapes the music, the DJs, and the club scene in Paris. It really defines the approach to music.

What musical environment did you grow up in?

I really got into music when my parents discovered the effect of the Walkman on their child. It was a Beatles compilation. I still remember the frenzy it threw me into, when I was very little. Then there was the physical shock: Michael Jackson at Longchamp. I had a ten years ago, it was my first concert, in front of nearly 100,000 people...

What does the Fête de la Musique mean to you?

It was a pivotal moment for me, as I landed my first residency thanks to an impromptu Fête de la Musique set I played right outside my building—just two speakers and a couple of days' notice to my friends. I was spotted by the organizers of the "electro-chic" parties held at Le CAB. I had formed a duo called Muse Family with Antoine M, who had taught me how to DJ...

Your fans say you have a unique gift for playing mainstream—even borderline clichéd—tracks in unexpected and surprising ways. How do you do it?

First off, I believe that to offer an alternative, you have to know the standard material inside out. So, you could say I study the classics... DJ culture involves a specific approach; to really make a hit track shine, you have to know how to set it up. That usually means understanding the scene that spawned it in the first place. That's why I might play a song everyone knows, just as you might hear me play a dub or an instrumental track for eight minutes straight! It's all about finding the right balance. I also make a point of playing alternative versions whenever possible, as they offer an interesting perspective on the original. Among other things, this helps maintain a sense of continuity—a legacy of electronic music. By layering new elements over existing tracks, you can create a sonic texture that ties everything together and sustains the trance-like state.

To me, that is what distinguishes a DJ set from a mere playlist of hits. Even when playing well-known tracks, there is a sonic thread that keeps the audience immersed in a continuous experience.

You created "Opéra Bouyon"—how did that come about?

It all started when I met Marka Music. He used to come regularly to the parties where I was performing in Marseille, and we hit it off right away. What I was doing there had really caught on, and the "French Riviera" parties were bringing in the whole Shatta scene. Everyone, from Natoxie to Kalash, passed through Marka's studio. One day, he was looking for an idea that would offer a counterpoint to Bouyon music. We thought opera might provide a fun contrast. I played him an aria I had in mind, and that became the starting point for *Opéra Bouyon*. We've kept producing together ever since; we complement each other really well, and we've got some great tracks in the works.

You're also deeply knowledgeable about music of the African diaspora, which has earned you recognition from people who share those roots… Where does this musical connection come from?

I've always felt at home at the intersection of hip-hop, Afro-diasporic music, and electronic music. And ultimately, that trajectory makes perfect sense: both hip-hop and electronic music have deep roots in the African diaspora. In a way, I simply dug deeper and went straight to the source. Whether it's house, hip-hop, baile funk, bouyon, or kuduro, I'm always looking for that meeting point between the organic and the electronic—between repetition, trance, and the physical connection to the music. That's actually a question that fascinates me today: how can music that is deeply organic and rooted in a specific locale take on a global dimension? I love Nyabinghi, for instance—a genre inextricably linked to a specific context, practice, and community. Electronic music, without erasing those roots, can become a vehicle for giving that music a broader scope and helping it circulate.

What does "Global Warming" mean?

"Global Warming" is a name that came to me a few years back. At first, I liked the idea of talking about heat—of bringing some warmth back into the music, into DJ tracks. I was fascinated when electronic music arrived in Angola and gave rise to *kuduro*. It was the same feeling when Brazil started producing *baile funk* using the very same MPCs that had been used for hip-hop. What really excites me are the similarities that emerge between musical styles created thousands of miles apart. They don't necessarily share the same history, yet they find common ground in their rhythms, the gear used, the energy, and the way they get people dancing. And sometimes, they seem to be speaking to one another, even without any tangible connection.

The "Global Warming" events originated in Côte d'Ivoire. The idea is to foster a dialogue between African and European music scenes by facilitating the movement of artists in both directions. At Le Rooph in Abidjan, we host French and international DJs. In Paris, we are building a community and showcasing artists with African, Creole, or Brazilian roots—such as FON FON Soundsystem, Bendovaa, and Mac Hartley. The goal is to build bridges between scenes that have a lot to share with one another. And, of course, there is the double meaning behind "Global Warming." Global warming itself has become impossible to ignore. While globalization has enabled extraordinary exchanges—particularly in culture—it has also created significant imbalances. I find it interesting that a single name can speak to both realities: the amazing things that emerge from cultural exchange, and the aspects of how we globalize the world that we are now compelled to question. "Global Warming" allows us to encompass all of that.

What is Chaps Music all about today?

Chaps Music is the parent entity: my label, my creative platform, and the artistic project that brings together everything I'm currently developing. The name "Chaps" has always amused me. In English, they're riding chaps. In Douala, it means something like classy, stylish, or super cool; I've even been told that in Finland, it evokes a shaman who uses music. I love that coincidence. Today, I want to be the architect of the project from start to finish: producing the tracks, releasing them, performing them, creating the events that bring them to life, and—eventually—developing a venue that embodies this vision. I believe that's the only way to truly express and fully share my unique identity.

What still drives you after a twenty-year career? What values do you want to champion in your projects?

Creating that moment where strangers share the exact same emotion for a few hours and end up connecting. To me, a DJ is an architect of those moments. What I find fascinating about the club world—the club ecosystem—is how it allows us to rethink so many things and values. In my view, a club is a space open to everyone, a place where people who face the hardest lives during the day can come together and shine brightest at night. I find that perspective—flipping the script like that—really interesting. Above all, it's a place of maximum freedom. And freedom brings immense responsibility. Interpersonal dynamics—whether romantic or social—are both re-examined and intensely heightened. These are moments when the values a venue stands for are placed under a powerful magnifying glass. In reality, we are generating the most intense physical friction possible; for that to work, there has to be a certain purity in everyone's approach—from the crowd and the clubs themselves to the staff and management involved. This inevitably raises questions of respect and consent. Without wishing to sound preachy, I would say that the club environment is a place where human values are—more than ever—essential.

The pros and cons of the Paris scene?

On the plus side, there's its eclecticism—you can find nights featuring zouk, techno, Latin music, and so on. Plus, given how strong house and hip-hop have been in France, the standard in Paris has always been high. On the flip side, there's the insularity that also exists. I think we need to keep nurturing curiosity and openness to others in general.

> **“ Marseille has a much free approach to music and partying than Paris. ”**

What is a Parisian to you?

It's someone who understands the city's codes.

Three songs that represent Paris?

1- Stardust “Sounds Better With You” - The French Touch in Paris is one of the fundamentals.
2- NTM “Paris Sous Les Bombes”- Hip-hop in France has become an essential part of the culture.
3- Théodora “Kongolese Sous BBL” - At the risk of upsetting the purists, this title could not have come into existence in any city other than Paris. It is a fine example of the blend of genres that only this city can bring to the world.

What's an unusual Parisian venue where you've performed?

59 Rivoli, a building dedicated to art right in the heart of Paris. It started out as a squat, but over time they managed to gain the support of Paris City Hall, and it became an established institution. They celebrated their 20th anniversary in 2020. I shared a passion for music—especially baile funk—with Pascal Foucart, one of the founders. Pascal, who often painted on vinyl records, used to buy them in bulk. So, we started doing "Flying Vinyls" sessions. We'd discover the records live: if the track was good, we'd play it; if not, we'd send it flying into the audience! If you're walking along Rue de Rivoli, you can't miss it—the façade is always decorated. It's the building right next to the Radio FG studios.

D'JULZ



BEFORE LAUNCHING HIS "BASS CULTURE" NIGHTS AT THE REX CLUB IN PARIS IN 1997, D'JULZ CUT HIS TEETH ON DJING AND RAVE CULTURE UNDER THE MENTORSHIP OF JÉRÔME PACMAN AND GUILLAUME LA TORTUE. THEN HE SPINNED AT LEGENDARY CLUBS SUCH AS L'ENFER, LE CONCORDE ATLANTIQUE, AND L'ÉLYSÉE MONTMARTRE. IN 2009, BASS CULTURE ALSO BECAME A RECORD LABEL. STAYING TRUE TO A MUSICAL IDENTITY ENRICHED BY AMERICAN HOUSE AND TECHNO, HE ALSO LIGHTS UP DANCEFLOORS ACROSS THE GLOBE. IN 2027, D'JULZ WILL CELEBRATE THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS RESIDENCY AT THE REX—A REVERED INSTITUTION OF PARISIAN NIGHTLIFE THAT COMMANDS RESPECT.

What kind of environment did you grow up in?

I grew up in the Paris suburbs, in an apartment filled with books, beautiful photos, and art—but, paradoxically, with very little music. That came to me all of a sudden, around the age of ten. I found my own world when I discovered funk and hip-hop.

What were your first experiences with Parisian record stores?

I remember Champs Disques from my childhood, but I really started frequenting record stores obsessively once I discovered clubs and electronic music, around 1990–1991. There were legendary shops like USA Import, Rough Trade, and BPM Records (formerly Bonus Beat—Ed.). Before buying house 12-inch singles, I collected Prince's music. I bought all his albums on vinyl or CD, but also picked up plenty of bootlegs at the flea markets, as well as live recordings that we'd trade on cassette tapes on the down-low. That's really when my passion for music—and my collection—began.

Which artists did you enjoy seeing DJ before you became a DJ yourself?

Among the Parisians, I'd say Guillaume la Tortue, Jérôme Pacman, and DJ Bertrand... They took me under their wing very early on and brought me along in their cars to the raves where they were playing. There were also club DJs like Laurent Garnier and Erik Rug. As for international DJs, the ones who influenced me the most were the Italian Francesco Farfa, the Dutchman Dimitri, and Derrick May from Detroit.

Do you remember your early days as a DJ?

I started making my first mixtapes in 1991, and I used to play on Radio FG from time to time. My first rave bookings date back to 1992. Club gigs came a bit later, around 1995–1996.

Did you went to L'Enfer in Montparnasse, Le Palace…

Yes. The first clubs I frequented regularly—alongside the rave scene, before I started DJing—were Le Boy, Le Rex, Le Palace, Power Station, and La Luna. And towards the end of the 90s, I was DJing at L'Enfer, later renamed Redlight.

As well as at Le Batofar, Les Folies Pigalle, Studio 287, L'Élysée Montmartre, Les Bains, Le Queen, Le Gibus, Le Bataclan, Le Pulp... It was a golden age for Parisian clubbing, when you could play at three clubs in a single night!

What were the equipment, DJ booth, lighting, and dance floor like in 90s clubs, and where was the DJ positioned?

Each club had a different style, but the DJ was rarely at the center or on a stage like today; this allowed the crowd to dance with one another rather than facing the DJ as they would at a concert. At clubs like the Queen, the Bataclan, or L'Enfer, the booth was perched high up on a mezzanine or balcony overlooking the dance floor. At the Rex, the Boy, or the Gibus, the booths were enclosed spaces featuring just a small opening or window to look out at the crowd.

Why did you leave Paris in 1993? Did you bring a French touch to the US, and conversely, bring American influences back to Paris?

I was finishing my advertising studies and had the opportunity to do a paid internship there. I didn't hesitate for a second. I hadn't expected to get the chance to play at New York raves so quickly. The French Touch didn't exist yet in 1993, but I undoubtedly brought a personal, European flair. On the other hand, discovering New York's legendary clubs had a huge influence on me and enriched my sound.

> **“ The late 90s were a golden age for Parisian clubbing, when you could play in three clubs on the same night! ”**

When you returned from the US, what struck you the most about the Paris scene?

Upon my return from the United States, what struck me most about the Paris scene was that the rave scene was dead. Certain promoters and DJs from the house scene—myself included—began migrating to clubs.

You went from raves to clubs—how did that transition happen?

Coming back from New York really helped. There was an element of curiosity, and New York music was at its peak in 1994—very much in vogue in Parisian clubs. The timing couldn't have been better.

If I mention "Rave Master Mixers," what immediately comes to mind?

That mix CD series was advanced for its time. Back in 1993, mixes were still circulating unofficially on cassette tapes. For the first time, DJ mixes were available in major retail chains all over France. There were even TV commercials. It played a major role in the growth of the national electronic music scene and introduced the DJs featured in the series to a much wider audience.

What were your first residencies?

What were your first residencies? Le Rex, starting in 1997 with my "Bass Culture" night, which will celebrate its 30th anniversary—without interruption—next year. For a few years, I was also a resident DJ for the "Scream" nights at the Élysée Montmartre, "Strictly House" at Le 287, "DeLaHouse" at the Concorde Atlantique, and the Wagg back when the London club Fabric was running it. I also held residencies in Barcelona, Madrid, and New York, but the most recent one was for Circoloco in Ibiza, where I played every summer for seven years.

In 1997, you launched the Bass Culture night...

Promoters of Parisian rave parties had launched the Temple nights—held every Saturday—and asked the French DJs they liked to play once a month. When they stopped those nights, Rex asked me to keep playing monthly and to start my own night... And that was it!

Any great memories to share about your Bass Culture nights?

So many magical moments over the course of 200 parties... I remember legendary, inspiring DJ sets and live performances by artists like Terry Francis, Kenny Hawkes, Mr. G, Lil' Louis, Octave One, and Derrick May... And memorable back-to-back sets with Daniel Bell, Raresh, Cassy...

Did you have an exclusive arrangement with Le Rex, or could you play elsewhere?

No, there was no exclusivity, because early on, the crowds could vary significantly from one club to another. And from 2010 onwards, my nights there were less frequent, which gave me the opportunity to play at other major clubs of the era, such as Concrete, Les Sundays, or, more recently, Badaboum, Cabaret Sauvage, FVTVR, and Mia Mao.

You once said in an interview: "Sometimes, I wish there were less amnesia and that people would look back a bit..."

I can't recall exactly what I was referring to when I said that, but I think that for many people, the French electronic music scene began with French Touch. Perhaps that's true in terms of media coverage and international recognition, but there was already a very rich scene back in the late 80s, and many influential DJs or promoters from that era have unfortunately vanished from the history books of electronic music.

Which Parisian collectives or clubs did you love that no longer exist?

There were some legendary parties and clubs between the 90s and the early 2000s that are no longer around. Off the top of my head, I'd say: Open House, Scream, Kwality, le 287, le Redlight, ou le Pulp.



“ For many people, the French electronic music scene began with French Touch, but there was already a very deep scene back in the late 80s. ”

In 2009, you launched Bass Culture Records…

It was a time when techno and minimal dominated. I couldn't find enough raw, deep, funky, hypnotic, and organic house music. So, I sought out young artists—who were virtually unknown at the time, like Alex Picone, Lemos, and Anonym, working in that style, as well as more established artists who had somewhat faded from the scene, such as Mr. G, Chez Damier, and Dan Curtin, to release their music on my label. The label's philosophy is an extension of my club night, both in terms of musical style and open-mindedness, whether regarding genres or generations of artists.

Has the way your label is managed changed significantly over the last ten years?

It's become increasingly hard to make money with a label since the advent of streaming. So, I'm forced to do everything myself.

In 2017, you launched JV Recordings; what is the spirit behind the label?

Bass Culture was primarily a platform for other artists, whereas JV is dedicated solely to my own music. It gives me the freedom to release tracks whenever I want—tracks that might not necessarily fit other labels.

By the way, "JV" is really groovy! Which track on the album represents you the most?

C'est un album qui représente plusieurs de mes facettes - pas toutes - donc c'est compliqué de choisir. Je dirais que les morceaux "J'y vais" et "Triumphant" sont sans doute les plus personnels.

If I mention Circus Company, what comes to your mind?

A great French label that I had the chance to work with or three EPs.

And what if I mention Phil Weeks?

A great guy—a DJ and producer who has never altered his house music style, regardless of trends. He masterfully runs the Robsoul label, with which I've also had the chance to collaborate.

Who are the key artists that truly reflect the Parisian scene today?

There are many, and they are very diverse—I don't know them all. But among those close to my own musical world, I'd mention collectives like Imagine Family, Automatic Writing, SOL-R, Distrikt, and my agency Pieces; distributors like Yoyaku and Syncrophone; and venues and promoters like Rex, Badaboum, Essaim, Fvtvr, and Mia Mao...

Could you describe the philosophy behind your "Home Diggin'" residency on Rinse FM?

It started out as a live stream from my home during Covid. I would dig through my record collection—spanning all eras—and focus on rare or obscure tracks. The show has continued on Rinse Radio since then; the concept remains the same, but I now include more new releases and promos.

In 2020, you produced "Technopolis" for Arte Radio with Antoine Molkhou—a heavy documentary where DJ Deep, DJ Gregory, and you reveal the inner workings of the DJ profession through your respective career paths and daily lives. The nine episodes are vibrant! Then, in 2023, you released a beautiful photo book titled "Bass Culture by D'Julz". What was the goal behind this book?

My friend Antoine—the artistic director at Rex—came up with the idea of creating a book series with the publisher Classic Paris. He suggested I do one that would summarize my career to date, as well as my club night, through images. I handed over all my photo archives and old flyers, and they did the rest, bringing a perspective that was both precise and contemporary. It's a bit of a hybrid object—a carefully curated mix of things —and I'm proud of it. Only 200 copies were produced, and they're already sold out, so it's already a collector's item.

Left Bank or Right Bank?

I've always lived on the Right Bank, but I love feeling like a tourist when I venture to the other side of the Seine.

When you're digging, what do you look for, and how many records are in your private collection?

I've always gone by feel when it comes to digging. I have around 20,000 records, but I stopped counting a long time ago.

Some DJs even measure their collections by the meter! What is the record you've been looking for for ages and would love to finally get your hands on?

I have over 1,000 records on my want list, but right now, I'd say: "Renegade Escort" by Active Service Unit.

What are your top 5 spots in Paris to chill after traveling or playing gigs abroad?

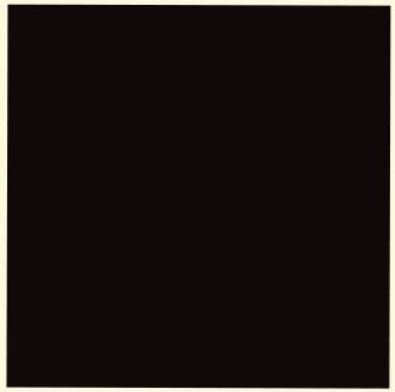
The Luxembourg Gardens, the banks of the Seine, the Palais-Royal, the Bois de Boulogne, and my sofa.

You've performed all over the world, yet you've remained loyal to Paris. Do you have a favorite Parisian adage?

I can't think of one off the top of my head... but I'd love to know some! I'll leave it to the readers to come up with them... I lack a bit of perspective on that.









ACID ARAB

IN 2016, THE GROUP ACID ARAB RELEASED THEIR DEBUT ALBUM, "MUSIQUE DE FRANCE" — AN ELECTRO-ORIENTAL MANIFESTO CHAMPIONING CULTURAL FUSION OVER INSULARITY. SINCE THEN, GUIDO MINISKY, HERVÉ CARVALHO, PIERRE-YVES CASANOVA, NICOLAS BORNE, AND KENZI BOURRAS HAVE TOURED THE GLOBE, ENGAGED IN NUMEROUS COLLABORATIONS, AND BUILT AN EVER-EXPANDING FANBASE. WE CAUGHT UP WITH GUIDO—AN ARTIST FOR WHOM MUSICAL INTEGRITY HAS NEVER COME AT THE EXPENSE OF THE DANCEFLOOR, EVER SINCE HIS EARLY DAYS AT PARIS'S PULP CLUB.

Did you grow up in Paris?

No, I lived in the United States, then in the Hauts-de-Seine, and later in the Yvelines.

Did your parents listen to music?

Yes, there was music in the house; my father loved music and played the flute. Sometimes he would have friends over, and they would put on little classical music concerts in the living room. There were vinyl records lying around—mostly classical, plus a few pop albums. They were just gifts people had given them. Those were my first records, so to speak.

You started out DJing with gear that might seem like a hodgepodge by today's standards.

Back then, there were club DJs and those who weren't part of that circuit. Everyone used a mix-and-match setup. I had a four-channel BST mixer, a turntable—a belt-drive model, obviously, not direct-drive—a standard home CD player, and a tape deck (laughs). That was my gear...

Did you go clubbing in Paris when you were a teenager?

I never went clubbing as a punter. It's the great paradox of my life: I'd always wanted to be a DJ, and then one day I went to a club in the Yvelines. I didn't enjoy it. Years went by before I set foot in a club again—and that club was Pulp, in Paris. In the meantime, though, I did play at dozens of parties.

You used to DJ at private parties.

Exactly. I played at rallyes (social dance parties for the upper crust – Ed.), house parties, the "Yvelines connection" (laughs).

When you moved to Paris, did you take your record collection with you?

There was an initial attempt to leave at seventeen that ended in failure—I moved back in with my parents—and then I left again at twenty-three. That time it stuck, and I took my records with me. I had an apartment in the 10th arrondissement.

Have you always been a record digger?

Absolutely. I used to hit the flea markets.

You can find good records in the Yvelines.

Especially back when I was younger. With the arrival of the CD, vinyl prices dropped drastically. Suddenly, you could buy records for fifty centimes, a franc, or two francs at most. You could find absolutely anything—incredible records for next to nothing. That's not the case at all anymore; now, at any flea market, some guy will try to sell you a worthless record for ten euros.

When you arrived in Paris, as you just mentioned, you quickly found yourself at one of the iconic venues of the early 2000s: Le Pulp.

A friend had told me, "I have a friend who works at EMI; he loves music—you two should meet, you'll get along really well." It was Fabrice Desprez; we met, and he invited me to come and play at Le Pulp. It was crazy, because I had never even set foot in a club before! It went really well—the night was fantastic—and the following season, Fabrice asked me to co-organize a monthly night there with him.

Before that first night, had he heard you DJ?

No, he had simply gone by our conversations.

What was the atmosphere like at Pulp?

The atmosphere was extraordinary, and looking back, I realize I didn't fully grasp just how extraordinary it was. I had no point of comparison. As a reminder, Pulp was a club started by lesbians, and it was practically the only lesbian club in Paris. There was also Chez Moune, but that place retained the image of an old cabaret with music that was—for lack of a better word—a bit cheesy. Pulp, on the other hand, wanted to have one foot in the present and in the true spirit of clubbing. The women—since the club was run entirely by women—came up with the idea of hosting a night open to everyone on Thursdays. That's the context in which we ended up organizing a monthly Thursday night event. At the same time, I learned so much from Mimi (Michelle Cassaro), the owner; Sophie, her partner; the women at the bar; and Fanny Corral, who handled the programming. I learned a huge amount about life from them, though, again, I didn't realize it at the time. They instilled wonderful values in me. Pulp was a wild place—tiny, a bit grimy, and the sound system wasn't great—but the vibe was insane. During the nights, I'd spin tracks like Antonelli feat. Miss Kittin's "The Vogue" (Freestyle Man remix), Herbert feat. Dani Siciliano's "The Audience," Greenskeepers' "Should I Sing Like This," and Pépé Bradock's "Ghost," as well as music by Fischerspooner or Vitalic. Fabrice and I experienced something incredible: suddenly, the night really took off, and it was packed every Thursday. We had guest DJs—I specifically remember one night with Béatrice Ardisson and Pedro Winter. Daft Punk even showed up that night. The club could hold about two hundred and fifty people, and more than a thousand would show up each time.

Did you know Sextoy, one of the resident DJs at Pulp—who, sadly, left us too soon?

There was a whole crew of brilliant DJs at Pulp, especially Sextoy. She was an extraordinary character. Mimi, who ran the place, set the tone. She was from the South and brought that bodega spirit—the party vibe—with her. Mimi lived in a large house with a number of housemates, including Sextoy and Rachid Taha. Mimi is incredibly open-minded. Right now, she's working on a project for a cool senior citizens' home called Les potes âgé.e.s.

There have always been clubs in the 2nd arrondissement: Pulp, Rex, and later, Social. What makes this arrondissement stand out?

The Pulp and the Rex were neighbors. There was no competition between us; we'd end the night at their place, and vice versa. Sometimes we'd all meet up at Chez Carmen... I can't quite put my finger on what makes the 2nd unique. I spent more time in the 10th, even though it's only three streets away. What fascinated me about Paris in general—and the northeast in particular, was the mixing of cultures, people, and genres; it was far more pronounced back then than it is today. In any case, that's no longer the case in my neighborhood.

> **"Pulp was a wild place, a bit tiny and grimy, and the sound system wasn't great, but the vibe was insane."**

In 2010, you took charge of music programming at Chez Moune and created an edit of Serge Gainsbourg's "Sea, Sex And Sun" that met with great success. Sébastien Merlet (see Star wax issue 54) explained to me that a hard drive containing multitrack recordings was circulating at the time. Did you have access to it?

I'm not entirely sure, but as I recall, a friend named Olivier Marguerite was the one who got his hands on it. My idea was to create a fake demo of "Sea, Sex And Sun" using Logic. Afterward, I circulated it around Paris, letting people believe someone had dug it up. I used every part of the vocal take, including the bits that didn't make it into the final song. There's a really funny story about this: a friend of mine at a record label called me one day and said, "Dude, I've found something insane—listen to this, it's incredible! I got my hands on the demo for 'Sea, Sex And Sun.' We're going to try to clear the rights and release it." He played it for me, and when I told him I was the one who'd made it, he couldn't believe his ears. That edit was never officially released.

Around that same time, you co-founded Acid Arab with Hervé Carvalho. How did you come up with the idea of fusing club culture and Arabic music?

It was 2012. For my part, I had worked at Le Neuf Billards, alongside my time at Le Pulp and La Flèche d'Or.

It was a bar run by Kabyle owners; they had taken me to Algeria once for a wedding. I'd brought back some CDs and enjoyed playing Algerian tracks at Le Neuf Billards as a nod to the staff. I was already moving between Michael Jackson and Mohamed Allaoua. In the 2010s, this kind of music began to attract a wider audience. Compilations and reissues started appearing, notably Turkish disco, such as the work of Barış K. Victor Kisswell, a record dealer with a keen interest in world music, also introduced me to many artists. So, in 2012, a friend named Kamel organized a festival in Tunisia and invited Hervé, Gilb'R, and me to DJ. For the set I was to play there, I had the idea of seeking out electronic tracks that featured Arabic-style samples. That was really the starting point for Acid Arab; I spent months hunting down tracks like that, and mixing them together told a truly incredible story. At the end of the festival, there was a massive back-to-back session where Hervé played acid tracks while I played songs featuring Arabic music samples. The blend worked so well that, the very next day, I started working on a concept.

The concept began with a party at the club Chez Moune, in the 9th arrondissement.

That's right. Hervé and I went to see a DJ from Chez Moune, Naïla Guiguet, alias Parfait—to ask her to design our flyer. She listened to our idea, and with her sharp mind, she said: "If I understand correctly, you want to throw an Acid Arab party." I stopped her right there and told her that what she'd just said was incredible. I grabbed a piece of paper and wrote down: Acid Arab. The eight letters, the two A's—I thought it was perfect. So, we changed our name.

So, you had come up with another name for the party.

Yes—let's just say it was a bad one (laughs)! It was supposed to be called Oumt Souk, but Acid Arab was a perfect fit for our project. Clearly, the name made all the difference. But initially, Acid Arab was the name of a party; it wasn't a stage name. We weren't Acid Arab.

How did the transformation come about?

We recorded one or two tracks, and then Hervé reached out to Pierre-Yves Casanova—a musician friend also from Nice—to ask him to create a signature track for our party. The result matched our vision so perfectly that we soon asked if he wanted to join us. That's when we started to become a band, in a way. Acid Arab's early days were defined by recording sessions at Versatile Studio, where we brought together Western musicians (Gilb'R, Judah Warsky, Turzi, Professor Genius) and Eastern musicians (Hanaa Ouassim, Adnan Mohamed, Shadi Kries) to create tracks. At the same time, other artists began producing tracks in the Acid Arab style—artists like Joakim, Étienne Jaumet, Krikor, Pilooski, and Junesex. Some of these tracks appear on the Collections CD compilation released by Gilb'R on his label, Versatile Records.

Shortly after, in 2013, you performed at the Transmusicales in Rennes. Was it the festival's programmer who discovered you?

Was it him who spotted us, or did our agent tip him off? In any case, he gave us the best slot—the closing set. Every year, someone has the honor of playing that spot, and it's a magnificent gift. We even ventured to organize a monthly night with him at Le Pulp.

How was the vibe?

Insane. Madness (laught)...

This summer, you released "Resonance", your 4th studio album. Several of these new tracks are already among your most-streamed songs. What sparked the creation of these sixteen tracks?

To exist as a band, you have to record music; it's something that has to be done. That said, we remain very attached to the album format. Even though our management tried to push us in a more modern direction—namely, releasing singles regularly, we prefer to put out an LP. We also need a new record to be able to tour. As for the specific character of "Resonance", that stems largely from the inspirations of Pierre-Yves, Kenzi, and Hervé, who are essentially the musical driving forces behind the project. And then there's the evolution of the music itself... Everything going on around us influences the band. We also wanted to make an album that was even more dancefloor-oriented than the first three. Whenever our previous albums came out, we'd eventually feel they were too slow or lacked energy. Whether at parties or live shows, we'd realize we were speeding up our tracks by two, five, or sometimes even eight BPM. There are a few slower tracks on "Resonance", but the desire to hit the dancefloor is still there.

This is particularly evident on the instrumental track "Sada'a"—which might call to mind minimal techno—or "Zorna Cadenza," a song with a reggaeton rhythm.

There is even a track with trap influences, "La Nada," and others that are more ambient, alongside our perennial favorites rooted in raï.

That was my next question: how do you record the Raï songs with the artists you invite?

There isn't just one method; it's different for every track. But if a pattern does emerge, it usually starts with a foundation created by Kenzi or Pierrot, which is then fleshed out with ideas from everyone. Then, we reach out to a singer. Sometimes, for certain tracks, the melody is already there, and we ask the performer to stick to the established framework.

In other cases, it's an instrumental track, and the singer comes up with a topline, writes the lyrics, or works on the text with Kenzi... It varies every time.

On this record, the listener encounters voices you have collaborated with before, as well as new ones. Among them is the singer Rita L'Oujdia, featured on "Ghzal"—an innovative blend of electro and R&B.

We sent her a message via Instagram, and we didn't actually meet in person until the release party. She is based in Paris now, but the musical collaboration took place remotely. We wanted an urban track and loved her voice and style. We needed someone who could really step into "Ghzal," and it feels as though the song was tailor-made for her.

Can you introduce Zeina Aftimos? She provides the vocals for "Ma7boubi," an uptempo track featuring a break designed for peak-time sets.

We all wanted to work with Zeina. She recorded a song with Ammar 808, our favorite artist. I used to host a radio show a few years back, and we had exchanged emails. I went to see her in Dubai; she's a radiant, wonderful person. She writes songs and sometimes performs with traditional ensembles in Dubai. You should check out her Instagram account.

Quels retours avez-vous reçus suite à la publication de ce nouveau Lp ?

Cet album compte seize morceaux, alors que l'on propose en général une dizaine de pistes par disque. On a des retours éclatés, il n'y a pas de titre qui ressort, c'est agréable d'ailleurs. La diversité du disque est appréciée, chacun fait son marché. Faire un disque long était risqué, mais pour l'instant, cela semble plaire.

What kind of feedback have you received since releasing this new LP?

This album has sixteen tracks, whereas we usually offer around ten per record. The feedback is varied—no single track stands out, which is actually nice. People appreciate the album's diversity; everyone picks out their own favorites. Making a long record was a risk, but so far, it seems to be going down well.

Does Rachid Taha's vocal on this track come from a live recording?

Exactly.

The sound is clean—it's incredible.

It took a lot of work to achieve that result, but if you listen closely... Well, obviously, since I have the vocal track myself, it's even more striking, but if you listen closely, you can hear Gilb'R saying "ooh," "eh," things like that, behind Rachid.

On January 30, 2027, Acid Arab will perform at the Zénith in Paris; what kind of live show do you have in store for your fans?

For the moment, nothing is set in stone yet, as we are facing budgetary constraints. We dream of a concert featuring numerous guests—singers, specifically—but we don't yet know if that will be possible. Getting Parisians to attend won't be difficult, but as for the rest, we'll see. The opening act hasn't been decided either; again, that will depend on the budget.

Should we expect new versions of your standards, like "La Hafla," "Stil," or "Gul l'Abi"?

Absolutely. We decided to start from scratch for this show. I don't think we'll be keeping much from previous live performances. It's tricky: we have four albums now—there are so many tracks we need to perform, plus new material we want to play. Since time is limited, we have to figure out how to approach it—what to keep and what to cut.

Are we going to try creating medleys, like Daft Punk did on their Alive tour? That's under discussion. We'll start working on it in September, and in December, we'll have a residency to wrap things up.

I suggest we wrap things up with an acid set (laughs). Lords of Acid or Acid Mothers Temple?

Lords of Acid! I interviewed them when I was a journalist, and it was an incredible moment.

Acid Pauli or Acid Washed ?

I prefer Acid Pauli. Acid Washed worked with Chassol, an artist I really like.

Finally, two classics: Maurice Joshua's "This is Acid" or Choice's "Acid Eiffel"?

"This is Acid" without hesitation. It was one of our reference points when Acid Arab was just starting out.



"Whether at parties or live shows, we'd realize we were speeding up our tracks by two, five, or sometimes even eight BPM."

PATATE RECORDS

PATATE RECORDS, LOCATED IN PARIS'S 11TH ARRONDISSEMENT, IS A TRUE INSTITUTION. SPECIALIZING IN REGGAE AND DUB, IT IS THE OLDEST RECORD SHOP OF ITS KIND STILL IN BUSINESS. PIERRE, THE SHOP'S OWNER, IS SO BURIED UNDER PILES OF VINYL THAT HE NO LONGER KNOWS WHERE TO PUT THEM. A CHARACTER WITH A STRONG PERSONALITY, HE STANDS OUT IN THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE. WE SPOKE WITH THIS NATIVE PARISIAN, WHO STARTED HIS CAREER AS A FISHMONGER IN THE LATE 80S, NEVER IMAGINED HE WOULD BECOME A HEAVY REGGAE VETERAN BASED ON RUE DE CHARONNE. PULL UP AT NEARLY FOUR DECADES OF HISTORY.

Where were you born, and did you grow up with vinyl records?

I was born on Rue de Pali-Kao, in Couronnes. My parents weren't exactly music buffs. As I recall, there was a Tépaz record player with records by Pierre Perret and The Platters (laughs). The old-timers will know what I mean...

Are you getting hooked on vinyl or reggae?

Vinyl. I come from a punk-rock background originally. Rock, punk-rock. I was 15 in 1980. That was a time when musical tastes were shifting—moving from progressive rock to hard rock. Back in '79–'80, the charts featured Madness, The Specials, a lot of disco, The English Beat, UB40—it was an unlikely mix. Looking back now, wow, you wonder how that all happened. It's kind of odd—really strange, all of that coming together at once. I suppose there was the Two-Tone Records ska wave; seven or eight of the top 25 tracks were British ska songs, like those by The Selecter.

Did Radio Ivre and Les Panoyaux—Didier Vacassin's sound system—mark the beginning of the Paris reggae scene back in '83?

There were things I missed out on; there was reggae at Givaudan Musique, and a shop in the Champs-Élysées arcade—the late, lamented Total Heaven. There were always underground shops bringing in Jamaican or UK imports. I was too young. There was a guy who had a sound system, a small label and a stall at the flea market. He used to play at Les Panoyaux. I think I went there once and it was awful—let's not even talk about it. Yeah, you could say that marked the start of the Paris scene. Actually, I was hooked on the sounds of the 60s like rocksteady, reggae-pop, and British reggae-soul, stuff like Trojan and The Pioneers, who aren't actually British, by the way. I went from the 60s sound straight to Jammy's "Sleng Teng" in '86–'87, and digital reggae in general—because they were reworking 60s classics using digital production.

Did you go to Blue Moon, at La Fourche?

Yes of course, but not at La Fourche. Before that, they were on a street—I don't remember the name anymore, but it was next to the Institut du Monde Arabe. Later, they took over the old New Rose Records space—the label that launched The Thugs. After that, they had a shop near Les Halles. There were other stores that didn't last long, including one on Rue de Tourtille... We're on good terms; I still see Fanny from time to time. They were the older crowd—we were 17 or 18, and they were 35

What year did you open your first shop?

I think you sold funk music too, right? Actually, back in '86 or '87, some friends of mine went to Jamaica and came back with hundreds of 45s—and that was the turning point. I was like, "What is this stuff?" There were thousands of them, the labels came in all sorts of colors; it was something new, something incredibly vibrant.

In '86–'87, the sound was shifting toward digital; it was a whole new world opening up, and I wanted to know everything about it. Some of the tracks would even become hits. I went wild, I emptied my savings and started buying records. And there it is, the beginning of a vinyl addict and now I must have 2-3 million records.

You're probably overdosing on it now (laughs)!

Yeah, I admit it... Actually, I had a buddy from school, Super Clark. We met at photography school. He worked on the first two or three Malka Family albums and the first Human Spirit one; he had a studio and a band. We had another friend who was selling all his records cheap because he wanted out of the game. There were 600 or 700 records, including ones we really wanted, worth about four times the minimum wage back then, I think, so we bought his collection. We started selling them out of an apartment, and Clark kept saying, "Come on, let's open a record shop." Eventually, I caved and said, "Why not?" It took me two years. I was the one holding things back because I didn't believe in it. It wasn't so much that I didn't believe in it, but it was all new—there were no faxes; you had to make phone calls and go buy stock in England or Jamaica, and hardly anyone was doing that back then. Even Fanny only went once or twice a year. I couldn't see the business model, but he kept working on me - I was a fishmonger at Monoprix at the time (laughs). He pushed me into it, and I said, "Let's give it a shot." He tried for two or three years, but dealing with customers wasn't really his thing. He's been playing in the marching band call Ceux qui Marchent Debout for about 35 years now—just as long as the shop has been around. We started in an apartment, and in 1992 we opened a tiny, crummy shop in Belleville where we cut our teeth. And yeah, the funk bins were his doing. Clark eventually left, and at one point, when the lease was coming to an end, I asked myself, "What do I do now?" Belleville was great. It was my neighborhood, but there was no future there; you need tourists and a place where people actually want to come... I've been here since 2000; there was nothing at the start, and as you can see, there isn't much space left now.

"I come from punk-rock. In fact, in the early 80s, I was hooked on the sound of the 60s — rocksteady, reggae-pop, and British reggae-soul..."

Did you frequent Parisian clubs or just the sound systems?

Sound systems, yes, but clubs were never really my thing. Sometimes it was downright sketchy—you never knew if you'd make it home with your shoes or your wallet (laughs). No, there were some great stories, though... There were sound systems all over the suburbs, especially in the North and East. And at one point, they hired some hardcore security; the guys at the door would say, "If we find a knife, we're gonna smack you around. You can get it back at the end..." I think out of 700 admissions, they confiscated 400 knives—that's a hell of a lot. And you start thinking: if there were 400 knives, what was in the cars? Say no more. I laughed a lot, drank a lot, too. There were very few women, one woman for every ten guys... no, I'm exaggerating, I'm talking nonsense (laughs). I remember the Théâtre Mogador around 1981, during The Clash concert Futura 2000 was painting live and the place reeked of paint. Otherwise, I remember the Stadium Squash. It was a joke. They'd set up these massive sound walls in mono just to blast the hell out of people.

Apart from you, who helped spread the reggae, ska, and dub culture in Paris?

Oh, there were loads of us. Wow, so many people did that. I can't give you names because there are hundreds of them, and if I leave someone out, they'll be mad at me. And it wasn't just Paris. In Paris, over the long haul, there were a good fifteen shops or so—and then came the internet. Back in the late 70s, there was José—he's passed away since—ah, I can't remember now... He used to organize concerts...

When a person enters your store, can you recognize right away if they are Parisian, from the provinces or from foreign countries?

It's summer at the moment and being here I have clients who come across each other. That is to say that there are former Parisians who come to Paris to see their family or their friends, those who are passing through, many tourists. If you see a little according to the look, the way of moving, of everyone. Each country has its own specificities. The English are tattooed everywhere, with their football jersey...

Did you dig records in dusty warehouses?

I had people who used to hunt on my behalf back in the day. I'm not a record hunter myself; it wears me out fast. My knees hurt and I prefer it when the hunting's already done (laughs). I own more new records than used ones. That said, there was a time when I used to buy up whole stocks. There was this one guy who'd go to Jamaica, buy up whatever was lying around, and come back with 3,000 singles spanning all different eras. So I got access to that without having to hunt for them or go there myself. You can hunt for records in England, but not really in France, because there's a very limited second-hand market. The music only really became popular there starting in the 80s, so it's hard to find records released before then.

You also run several labels like Belleville Hill, King Patate, Belleville Internationale; does your catalog feature Parisian artists, or only Jamaicans?

We've got it all! Actually, I cover every style of reggae. I love all styles. I've got UK dub with Ras Mykha—a sound system MC originally from Paris, though he moved away now. I've done instrumental UK dub with Mr Zèbre, who's really blowing up right now; we made two albums together, and he's from Aubervilliers. Then there's David Barbes. He lived in Lille, Paris and Marseille. And have gone back home to Lille; he made analog dub, played live but with an electro edge, using old 90s gear. I've also done dancehall. I released two singles by Manu Digital—initially on Boom Shak Records—featuring Sizzla and Perfect back in 2012. Later, I did some old-school dancehall series with Sisko, from Montreuil. And then Azrock, right to the very end! We started about a dozen years ago. It was his big project to turn his life around, and it worked while he was working on it because he stayed out of trouble. He pretty much finished the project, but it took us ten years to release it because we hit some major setbacks; we wanted it to be perfect, and it was a tough time for everyone. I also worked with Jim Purple, a Montreuil local band and Memorial. At one point, I produced some elegant traditional ska revival CDs featuring female vocalists. I worked with Aspo from Bordeaux; they all had conservatory awards—they could really play. The Vikings were a mix of Paris and Normandy. There's also Western Specials, a ska revival band from Reims. I only worked with the ones who could play well, not the ones who played badly (laughs). I also did Les Soucoupes Violentes—a rock record—after a surf rock band with the guitarist from Les Wampas...

Do you have as many vinyl records at home?

No—it'll blow your minds, but my turntable hasn't been plugged in for twenty years. I mean, I probably have 1,500 LP and 1,500 singles that I don't listen to. I don't have the time. I spend more time at the shop than at home. Right now, I'm listening to Chopstick dubplates—jungle on loop (laughs). I love it.

After all these years, have you ever tried being a selector?

Oh, yuck. Nah, that's kind of stupid. I don't know—I have too much respect for the craft, and I just don't think I'm up to the task. There are plenty of hacks out there just playing records, but that's not what being a selector is about; it's about knowing how to read the crowd, and so on. The thing is, I used to drink heavily back then; I did it two or three times and it was pathetic. I was wasted. People would tell me, "What you played was good." I'd give away my records. Then I'd think, "Shit, I gave that to him? I never should have" (laughs). It wasn't for me. I never should have done it; it was horrible.

If I'm not mistaken, you started out singing in the band Marabunta. How long did that adventure last?

Oh shit! Where did you dig that up? It lasted five or six years; that was before I opened the record shop. It involved a buddy from high school—just our little crew and all that. I was a huge music fan and used to go see this 60s-style band called Les Responsables all the time; they covered Dutronc and The Kinks, and they were really good. I was a fan and acted as a roadie—I used to lug around their Leslie cabinet, which, as anyone who knows will tell you, weigh 50 kilos. A couple of friends and I gave it a shot ourselves, but it didn't work out. They tried again on their own, and I managed to worm my way back in. It was a vocal trio, a bit like The Paragons. We tried to get our harmonies tight, emulating the Tamla Motown sound. That was the mid-to-late 80s, and we had our moment of glory: we opened for Lee Perry at the Élysée Montmartre. I think it was '86—his first show in France. The name was a nod to the movie "Marabunta".

What do you consider to be the first French reggae record?

Carlos made some; everyone did. Gainsbourg's "Aux armes et cætera" was the first album to gain international recognition. It wasn't the first one, though—he didn't exactly reinvent the wheel. That was from around 1980, right? But is it a French record? Yes and no; it was produced by a Frenchman, but it featured Sly and Robbie and all of Bob Marley's musicians backing him up. The thing is, at one point, reggae became mainstream. Every band had a reggae track on their album. Every soukous band had a reggae track. You know this better than I do: in African music, there are tons of bands that did just one track. Just as you had to include a slow ballad, a merengue, and something salsa-esque, you had to have a reggae track because it was the trend.

How many times have you been to Jamaica?

Never; I have afraid of flying. I went to Russia when I was younger, and it traumatized me. On the way back, we landed at Beauvais during a snowstorm. You might say there are no snowstorms in Jamaica! No, actually, I just don't see the point. It doesn't appeal to me; I have no desire to go, and I couldn't care less. The first French dancehall record was with Zeljko and I can't remember the other guy's name. It was pretty rubbish, but the lyrics were funny. It started with, "Jamaica isn't the country you dreamed of..." The truth is, it's ghetto over there. There are other nearby islands that are calmer and less ghetto, and I'm not into the whole pilgrimage thing. It's like saying to me: "I'm going to the Bronx for hip-hop." It's less ghetto now, but back in the day—if you look at footage from the 80s—it was terrifying; it was just a massive wasteland, a garbage dump. It wasn't exactly glamorous. When you look at images of Jamaica, it's similar—though not quite the same, since there weren't five-story apartment blocks...

Who are the composers and studio of Parisian mastering who matters to you?

Serial P—the guy we made our first two riddims with. Sisko, who produced the next two riddims and, more recently, Azrock's album. Uh, there are hardly any of them in Paris. For mastering, I've got a buddy who's been there from the start; he handles all the mastering now, and the quality is right up there sometimes even better. That's Manu, it's not his day job. He does it because we'd had too many crappy results. Early on, I worked with Dédé in the 17th arrondissement. I think I did some mastering with dK, too. Nowadays, we sometimes work with Parelies François Terrazzoni at fair rates. He'll explain everything to you for two hours; he loves his work.

What do you think defines a Parisian?

What? I'm not a Parisian; I'm from Belleville—simple as that. Actually, there isn't just one type of Parisian; there are loads. It's too easy to say, "A Parisian is like this." You know, the newspaper Le Parisien used to divide the city into three zones: the Northeast, the West, and the South. It's a bit of a caricature, but that's how it is. When you go to Montparnasse, it's mind-boggling, you wonder where the ethnic minorities are. Plenty of people have told me, "You're not a Parisian because you don't look down on people." I used to hang out in the squats in Montreuil; I didn't go to Le Palace. There were the punks from Le Palace and the ones from Montreuil—the politicized punks from the squats. At Le Palace, there was whisky and coke—which cost a fortune back then—whereas in Montreuil, it was heroin and beer. It's a caricature, sure, but the drugs weren't the same...

Do you feel nostalgic for the Paris of the 80s?

More nostalgic for the 70s (and he starts singing "Le Petit Jardin" by Jacques Dutronc—one of the first environmentalist songs to speak out against rampant urbanization back in 1972 – Ed.). Otherwise, I have a saying: there used to be "mornings that sing," but now it's "mornings that bring disillusionment," and you get the feeling that everything is going to shit—which is somewhat true. Back then, things were getting better for people; now, they're getting worse.

You've got a modern outlook for a vinyl lover, that's why you distribute dub-stepper releases like the "Omen" LP or the Strawdogs EPs...

Is that a question? Actually, it's usually my mates or people I know who bring me stuff. It's all about personal connections. I don't produce anything myself. I don't sit around dreaming up grand schemes like, "Hey, I'm going to do something with so-and-so." Sometimes they really wear me down—keep coming back at me for a while... I won't name names; they'll know who they are.

I know you love cream puffs; where do you go for Ital food in Paris?

At home. How do you know I eat Ital? Ital food is essential! Actually, I've been a vegetarian for thirty years. I don't eat "Ital", it goes deeper than that; they don't use salt, etc. eggs, fish, cheese...

What does Paris need to be your paradise?

It would have to be like the Balearic Islands. One man for every seven women. That's right, I think that's how it is in the Balearics and Jamaica. Haha, no, I'm kidding! More reggae!

What's your favorite adage?

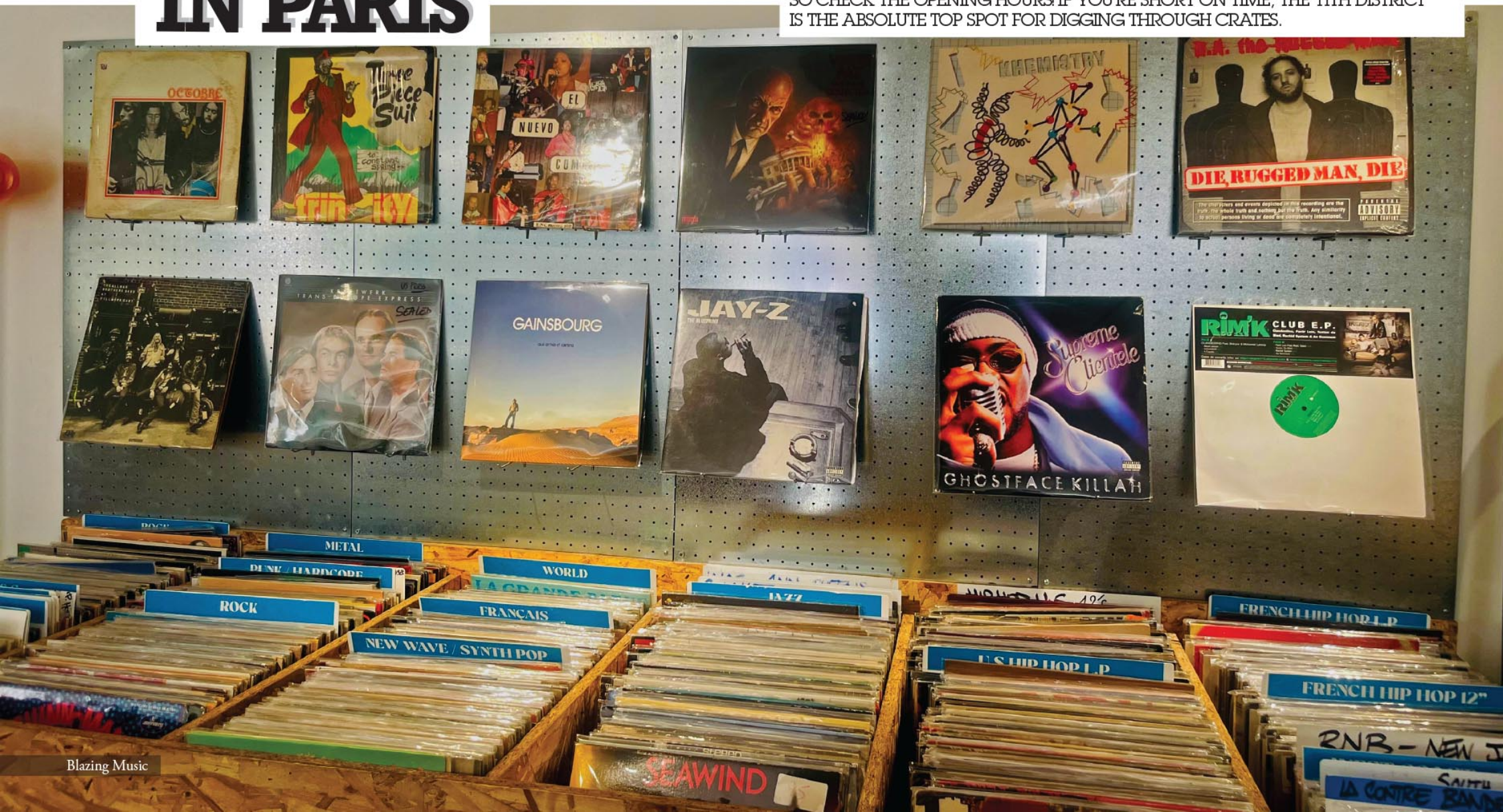
"Jah Help Those Who Help Themselves". It's the title of a song by B.B. Seaton.

"Jah Help Those Who Help Themselves. It's the title of a song by B.B. Seaton."



DIGGIN' IN PARIS

ALTHOUGH RECOGNIZED AS AN ESSENTIAL BUSINESS DURING THE PANDEMIC, THE RECORD-SELLING TRADE IS STRUGGLING. YET, THE NUMBER OF SHOPS CURRENTLY IN PARIS PROVES THAT VINYL STILL HOLDS A MAGICAL APPEAL—IT HAS EVEN BECOME A LUXURY ITEM. PARADOXICALLY, SHOP OWNERS HAVE TO BE INCREDIBLY RESOURCEFUL. FROM 2,500 INDEPENDENT STORES DURING FRANCE'S GOLDEN AGE TO A PROJECTED 300 BY 2026. PARIS IS HOME TO AROUND THE FIFTY SHOPS OFFERING A DELIGHTFUL SELECTION OF RECORDS. MOST ARE CLOSED ON SUNDAYS, SO CHECK THE OPENING HOURS! IF YOU'RE SHORT ON TIME, THE 11TH DISTRICT IS THE ABSOLUTE TOP SPOT FOR DIGGING THROUGH CRATES.



Blazing Music

DIGGIN' IN PARIS

Central Paris

> Parallèles / 47 rue Saint-Honoré - 75001
Book and record shop specializing in rock culture since 1972, located a two-minute walk from Monster Mélodies.

> Monster Mélodies / 9 rue Déchargeurs - 75001
Eclectic, but no electronic music. Established in 1985, it's the Paris shop with the most record crates... Photo attached.

> Big Smile Bazaar / 6 rue du Ponceau - 75002
Just a few crates, but a good selection of soul, funk... Founded by the boss of Big Cheese Records.

> Superfly / 53 rue Notre Dame de Nazareth - 75003
Well-stocked with new and used items, especially world music. Certified phat by Star Wax.

> Lucky Records / 66, Rue Verrerie - 75004
Mainly pop and rock.

> Crocodisc : 42 rue des écoles - 75005
Depuis 1978, spécialisé en occasion aux genres variés...

> Le Club k7 : 2 rue de Sommerard - 75005
Specializing in audio cassettes featuring various styles and mixtapes.

> Paris Jazz Corner : 5 rue de Navarre - 75005
Specializing in asecond-hand jazzy records since 1978...

> Gibert : 34 Boulevard Saint-Michel - 75006
One fo the biggest indie shop in Paris, second-hand and new releases of all kinds. Also a bookseller... Five minutes away from Crocodisc.

> Music House Paris : 6 rue de la Boule Rouge - 75009
Launched in 2023 by Jérôme (aka Dj Jee) and Franck (formerly of Topplers Distro), the label focuses on electronic music but aims to branch out into other genres in the long run.

> Sam Records : 22 rue Taylor - 75010
Opened in 2021 by Fred Thomas, exclusively focus on jazz and blues. Also a record label.

> Record Station : 13 rue des Récollets - 75010
Charming little shop specializing in African-American music, featuring imports from the US, UK, and Japan.

North-East Paris

> All Access : 3 rue Brochant - 75017
A small shop but very well stocked with music from the 60s to today and other accessories.

> Shelter Records Store : 39 rue Boursault - 75017
Second-hand crates of jazz, soul, funk, hip-hop, and other Afro-Latin music. Founded by the Digger's Digest.

North Paris

> Dizonord : 9 rue André Messager - 75018
Funk, jazz, rap, world, and electronic music...

> Soul Ableta : 47 rue marcadet - 75018
Afro-Caribbean music: rumba, soukous, kompa, biguine, as well as jazz, funk, reggae, hip-hop, and Latin music. Check their rare wax selection.

> Yoyaku : 14 Blv de la Chapelle - 75018
Located at the back of a building's courtyard. Specializing in electronic music. Also features a gallery with superb design.

> Exodisc : 70 rue du Mont-Cenis - 75018
Opened in 1980 by a couple passionate about jazz, rock and pop...

> Balades Sonores : 8 rue Pierre Picard - 75018
Located on a street parallel to the following address, deep shop with wide selection... Certified phat by Star wax.

> Le Rideau de Fer : 12 rue André Del Sarte - 75018
Established in 1982, the shop covers various genres—jazz, blues, garage rock, punk, ska, 80s film scores, and more. And if you appreciate Parisian designer brands that offer well-crafted, limited-run collections, just cross the street—almost directly opposite, you'll find Isakin. Highly recommended.

> The Mixtape : 32 rue des Trois Frères - 75018
In the heart of the Montmartre area. Various pop crates...

> Kanaga : 30 rue de l'Ourcq - 75019
The second go-to reggae and dub record store in Paris. Highly recommended.

> Ground Zero : 114 rue du Fbg Poissonnière - 75010
Very eclectic, mostly new release.



East Paris

> A-One Paris : 42 rue de Montreuil - 75011
Run by the owner of the New York shop of the same name, which is well-stocked with second-hand.

> Music Avenue : 10 rue Paul Bert - 75011
The oldest hip-hop vinyl shop in Paris.There's also some dancehall and soul-funk. Francesco, the owner also repairs amps, mixers, and the like. A seven-minute walk from A-One.

> Music Fear Satan : 4 rue Richard Lenoir - 75011
Specializing in rock, metal, punk, hardcore music...

> Patate Records : 57 rue de Charonne - 75011
A specialist in reggae and dub since the 90s, read Pierre's interview in this mag.

> Syncrophone : 4 rue Taillandiers - 75011
Mainly techno and house new releases, plus breaks, electro-funk, or, for instance, Star wax compilations.

> Pop Culture Shop : 23 rue Keller - 75011
Comic book specialty store with record crates.

> Born Bad Records : 11 rue Saint Sabin - 75011
Specializing in rock and vintage culture since 2006...

> Hark Records : 76 rue Léon Frot - 75011
A creative house with an eclectic selection...

> ToolBox : 30 rue Saint-Ambroise - 75011
Electro hardcore, techno, DnB, UK garage, dub, dubstep... A cavern filled with vinyl, located here since 1998 it's the most British shop in Paris.

> Babaluma : 72 rue Jean Pierre Timbaud - 75011
A very eclectic selection of new and second hand...

> Betino's : 32 rue Saint Sébastien - 75011
A very eclectic selection of new and second hand...

> Blazing : 14 rue de la Folie-Méricourt - 75011
Mostly secondhand Black music. Seriously dope!

> Listen : 47 rue de la Folie-Méricourt - 75011
Very eclectic, with Japanese pressings... Vintage style.

> Miniwax : 11 Avenue Republique - 75011
Mainly new releases across many genres...

> Hands & Arms Music : 72 rue Crozatier - 75012
From the 60s to soul, funk, pop, and metal...

> Modulor : 28 rue du Surmelin - 75020
Highly eclectic; also a distributor.

> Cypher : 49 avenue Gambetta 75020
Jazz, soul, downtempo electronica... Not many crates.

> Le Bar à Lot : 18 rue des Haies - 75020
Opened in 2025, it is a bar and record store with around ten second-hand crates and a few new releases...

> Souffle Continu : 22-22 rue Gerbier - 75011
Jazz, indie rock, dark metal, hip-hop, and unclassifiable music... Also a record label. Photo below.





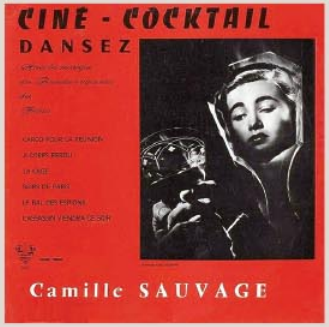
> Techno Import : 16 rue Taillandiers - 75011
Specializing in electronic music. Photo above.

Located between Porte de Clignancourt and Porte de Saint-Ouen—in the heart of the Saint-Ouen flea market—and open weekends and Mondays, the first floor of the Marché Dauphine offers the chance to dig through crates at fifteen record shops, including French Connection, Dig Dug, Panorama, Give Me 5, Basement Records, and Rocket Records. There is also Les Disques du Yeti at 54 Rue Jules Vallès, 93400 Saint-Ouen-sur-Seine. They stock exclusively second-hand records, with very little electronic music.

Irregularly, vinyl conventions or stock clearance sales take place at various locations across Paris. Additionally, the O'CD chain has three stores offering second-hand vinyl records, CDs, and films. Then there are the Fnac stores at Les Halles, the Champs-Élysées, and Montparnasse, which still have vinyl crates alongside washing machines and computer equipment. Alternatively, there are several websites that list vide greniers, such as www.brocabrac.fr.

RARE WAX SPECIALE PARIS PAR SOUL ABLETA

A SPECIAL PARIS-FOCUSED VINYL SELECTION FEATURING ARTISTS AND LABELS BASED IN PARIS. IT IS BUT A SHORT STEP FROM PARIS AND ITS SUBURBS—TO THE CARIBBEAN. FROM CLASSIC HARMONIES TO CREOLE RHYTHMS AND THE SPIRIT OF JAZZ, EMBARK ON A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME, SPANNING THE 1950S TO THE 1970S. SPECIAL THANKS TO DJO AND OLIVIER—GOLD DIGGERS FOR OVER 25 YEARS AND OWNERS OF THE SOUL ABLETA RECORD SHOP. OPENED IN 2017 IN THE HEART OF LA GOUTTE D'OR, THE SHOP IS LOCATED IN ONE OF THE PARIS'S KEY HUBS FOR AFRICAN DIASPORA;



Camille Sauvage Et Son Orchestre / Ciné Cocktail Lp (Paroles Et Musique – 1964)

Camille Sauvage is a unique musician. Graduated in composition classical sition of the Paris Conservatory and originally a violin player, multi-instrumentalist he also played the vibraphone and the piano. Following a trip to the USA he turned to the clarinet and jazz. He first approached Parisian jazz orchestras like Loulou Gasté or Eddie Warner who had the French specificity of incorporating song, strings and exotic music. Then he turned to film music and experimented sound variation including electro-acoustic with Nino Nardini and Roger Roger. This album is a collection of Camille Sauvage's first film scores from the 1950s, a gem of the genre, a jazz with a French sound mixing melancholic melodies with dramatic cinematic orchestrations, we can already sense in this disc the experimentation and sound treatment of the composer which will lead to electronic jazz discs like "7 Drum Concerto" sampled, among others, by Amon Tobin.



Ginette Neveu / Poème & Sonate - 78 Rpm (La Voix De Son Maître – 1956)

An exceptional violinist from Parisian musical circles, she was the grand-niece of Charles-Marie Widor and a student of the esoteric composer and violinist Georges Enescu, as well as Nadia Boulanger. A true embodiment of the "French sound," Ginette stands as a leading figure in French classical music. Yet, she distinguished herself from most classical artists through a lyrical tone and superb technical mastery combined with a raw emotional intensity that captivated a vast international audience —including Edith Piaf. Her renown began at age 15 when she won the Wieniawski Violin Competition in 1935, beating out the then 26-year-old David Oistrakh. This recording, made in the 1940s, is spellbinding; it reminds us that few artists have succeeded—as she did—in popularizing classical music while performing profound, sophisticated works with such fierce, impassioned commitment, as seen here in Ravel's Tzigane and Debussy's Violin Sonata recorded at the recommendation of Herbert von Karajan.



Valérie Lagrange/ Valérie Lagrange (Philips - 1966)

Valérie Lagrange is a singer who has spanned the French pop and rock scenes and can boast of having performed with the likes of Gainsbourg, Francis Lai, Alain Goraguer, Pierre Barouh, Gong, Téléphone, Alice, and even Benjamin Biolay. Her debut record is little known but stands as a gem of French pop; its sound is quintessentially nonchalant, capturing the spirit of the pre-1968 Parisian underground—a time that heralded free love, psychedelic pop, freakbeat, and more. Lyrically, the record is reminiscent of a young Brigitte Fontaine, while the tracks embody the "French New Wave" jazz-pop style of the mid-1960s. A magnificent album.



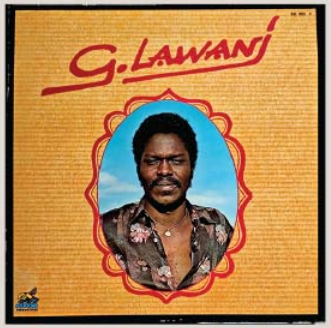
Claude Nougaro/ Plume d'Ange (Barclay - 1977)

Claude Nougaro was not born in Paris, yet he launched his career in the Montmartre. This album exudes a certain Parisian sophistication—thanks in no small part to arrangements by Ivan Jullien and Jean-Claude Vannier (the "arranger of arrangers" for the Parisian elite) and production by the capital's own Eddie Barclay. Picture a manifesto seeking magic within a harsh modern world, narrated through Claude Nougaro's poetry and set against Vannier's string arrangements—reminiscent of the "Melody Nelson" era. A highlight of the record is "Le K du Q," a jazz-fusion/jazz-funk track arranged by Maurice Vander. The album never achieved the commercial success it deserved, largely because the tracks were too long—some running up to fifteen minutes—and the lyrics were politically charged. Here, we find a magnificent example of quintessentially French jazz, blending the string sensibilities of Django Reinhardt, the poetry of Léo Ferré, and the cinematic genius of Vannier. Long live poetry.



Voodoo Family / Voodoo Family (Vogue – 1975)

A little Afro-soul gem! It was released on Soukous, a fledgling and short-lived Parisian label that closed the year after its inception. The label had no connection to the musical genre of the same name, other than specializing in modern African music from the mid-70s. This record is a soul masterpiece featuring solid arrangements, fierce and enveloping basslines, liberal use of the wah-wah pedal, and superb Hammond organ and electric piano backing that evoke the groove of the cult act Afro Lafayette Rock Band. Highlights include the deep soul track "To Forget the Time," the soulful "We Have to Build a Nation," and the Caribbean-flavored soul song "Oh Kibino." The project brings together various musicians from the Afro-Caribbean diaspora in the Île-de-France region, with vocals and artistic direction by Rasta singer-songwriter Hugues Onestas-best known for the killer soul track "Yes Give Me Your Love" from the LP "Sing the Gospel Reggae". On drums is the young Sydney Thiam, a future member of the jazz-fusion project Zaka Percussion and the famous Parisian world-pop group Les Négresses Vertes.



Grégoire Lawani / Grégoire Lawani Lp (BBZ Prod. – 1977)

This is the only album by Togolese singer Grégoire Lawani, released in 1977 on the Parisian label Big Bazar Productions —better known by the initials BBZ. The parrot perched atop the label's blue lettering will be a familiar sight to crate diggers in the Paris region. The label was founded in 1973 by French pop star Michel Fugain. The album is a solid Afro-soul production that will delight fans of the genre; it was produced and arranged by guitarist and orchestrator Slim Pezin, known for his collaborations with the likes of Claude François, Manu Dibango, and Johnny Hallyday. It features eight tracks recorded at the CBE studio in Paris's 18th arrondissement—co-founded in 1971 by the avant-garde figure Bernard Estardy, known as Le Baron. Highlights include "Africa Land of Soul," with its hypnotic groove; the Afro-tribal soul track "Tayata"; the infectious pop-soul song "Habie"; and the sublime soul ballad "So," which evokes the work of Manu Dibango with a finale featuring soaring saxophone and brass solos.



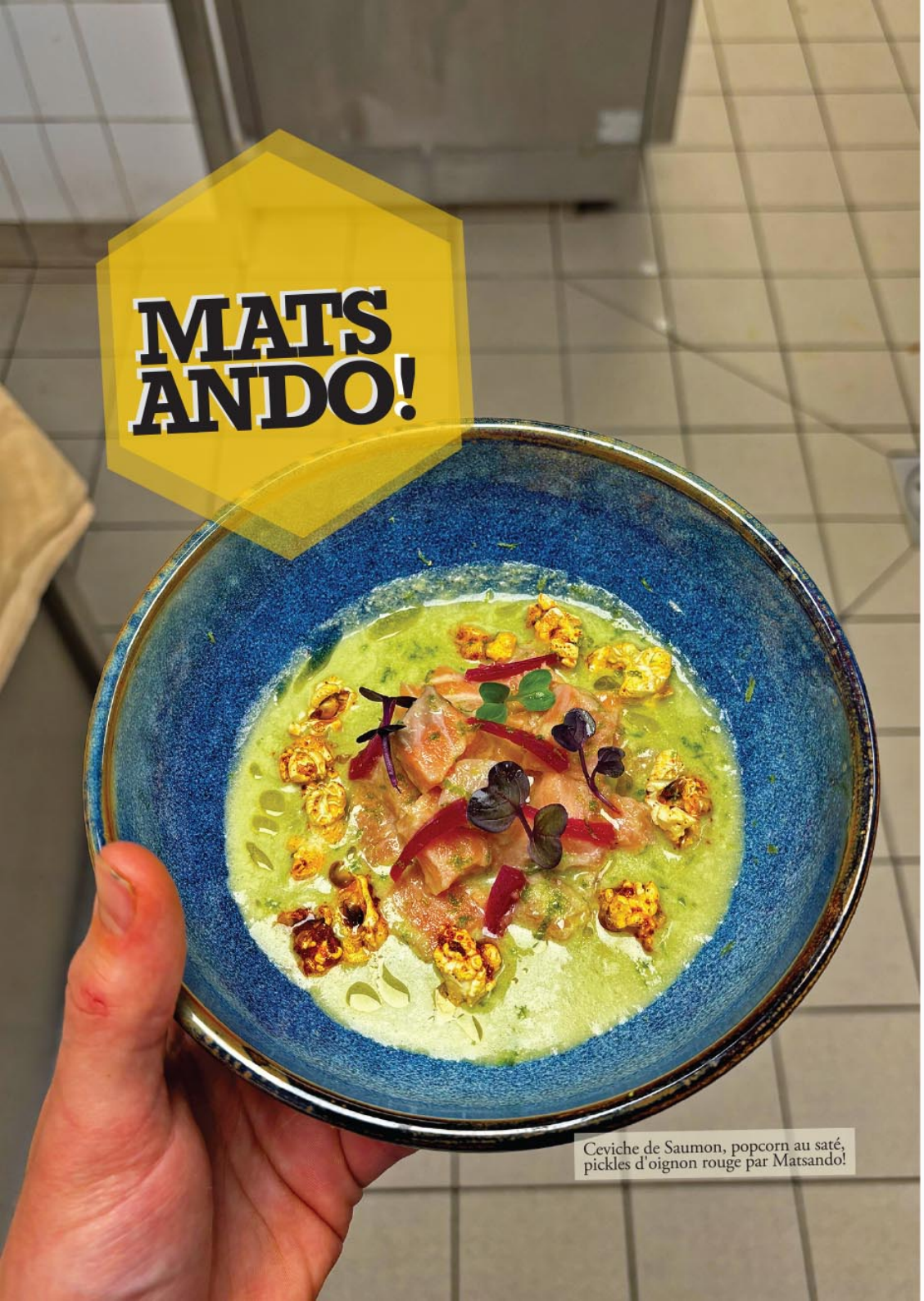
Voltage '8'/ Cosaque 1978 (Capriccio – 1978)

A tropical groove production! Released on the Parisian label Capriccio, little is known about its origins other than that it alludes to bateau-mouche boat trips along the Seine, where various orchestras would play to entertain tourists. This is the debut album from the group Voltage '8', founded by the charismatic and impassioned Erick Cosaque—a Guadeloupe native and gwo-ka master drummer who blends traditional rhythms with jazz, soul, and funk. It is a fusion that will delight rare groove crate-diggers. A special mention goes to the deep soul track "Guadeloupe Ile de Mes Amours," in which Cosaque sings in French about the loss of his island, accompanied by Edouard Labor on saxophone and Avenant on synthesizer. The Afro-tribal dance track "Ingaingo"—mixing gwo-ka with funk bass—also really resonates with me! Highly recommended.



Grégoire Lawani / Grégoire Lawani Lp
Paul Louis et ses Cumbéléros / Soukou Loukou (Ebonia disque – circa 1974)

An Afro-Caribbean production from the mid-1970s led by Guadeloupean flautist and dialogue writer Pierre Louis, accompanied here by his group, Les Cumbéléros. The lineup also features his brother Roland Louis on synthesizer, percussionist Serge Marne, and saxophonist Marcel Louis-Joseph. The band delivers delightful biguines that will appeal to fans of the genre. Highlights include, above all, the sublime soul-jazz track "Yasmina" and the Latin jazz piece "Impro Cubano." It is a record that is becoming increasingly rare. Released on Ebonia Disques, another short-lived Parisian label with only two releases to its name.



MATS ANDO!

Ceviche de Saumon, popcorn au saté, pickles d'oignon rouge par Matsando!

BY DAY, HE DAZZLES GUESTS WITH A FEAST FOR THE EYES AND THE PALATE. BY NIGHT, HE ROCKS THE DANCE FLOOR BY DELIVERING AN GLOBAL EXPERIENCE. IT TAKES JUST A SINGLE DANCE STEP TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN FINEST COOKING AND CLUB CULTURE. HOLDING A 2020 DIPLOMA IN HOTEL AND CULINARY MANAGEMENT, HE ALSO HAVE A PASSION FOR DJING. FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS, GENRES LIKE GQOM, AMAPIANO, BATIDA, AFRO, AND DEEP HOUSE HAVE BEEN BLENDING TOGETHER ON MATSANDO!'S DECKS. WE MET THIS YOUNG CREATIVE TALENT—A MEMBER OF THE MIEL COLLECTIVE AND A RESIDENT DJ ON RINSE FRANCE—WHO IS DEEPLY COMMITTED TO THE ART OF SHARING.

Were you born in Paris, and was there a collection of vinyl records at home, or rather cookbooks?

I was born in Paris, in the heart of Pigalle, and I've always lived in or around that neighborhood—one of the capital's liveliest areas. I lived with my mother until recently, and I suspect she's the reason I love music; she had an endless CD collection, though I always gravitated toward my own favorites, like Jamiroquai or Justin Timberlake. At my dad's place, we mostly listened to Stéphane Pompougnac's "Hôtel Costes" compilations in the car, and at home, he really focused on educating my palate. No cookbooks, but I spent plenty of time watching him cook.

I believe the best cooking schools are in Paris—is that right?

We are fortunate to have the best cooking schools in France, and even when they aren't located here, they are often established abroad by renowned French chefs. French culinary expertise has long been recognized worldwide, drawing aspiring cooks eager to master the art of French cuisine. This has created an interesting dynamic: students take this expertise back to their home countries and develop their own signature styles by blending it with local culinary traditions. The result is a fascinating gastronomic fusion.

Can you tell us about your journey as a chef—what stands out?

My path as a chef has been pretty classic. I trained in hospitality and culinary management at EPMT, alternating between school and work, which helped me quickly realize what I was getting myself into. It's been 15 years now since I first said "Yes, Chef!" (laughs). Today, I'm lucky enough to work in a kitchen where I have responsibilities, but—more importantly—a balance that allows me to pursue my career as a DJ.

Unlike DJing, cooking is a very old profession, yet natural wines aren't even covered in culinary school curricula…

I would have liked to tell you more, but I imagine that by now they've surely been forced to get up to speed and address the subject of natural wines. They are widely consumed in France, particularly because they are free from additives and pesticides.

There are many French recipes that call for alcohol; is that what defines French cuisine?

I would say that alcohol has a place in cuisines all over the world; it is primarily used to enhance flavor, and each type of alcohol has its own unique characteristics. Wine is the most widely used, particularly in iconic dishes like boeuf bourguignon. In Japan, for instance, rice alcohol is used extensively—notably to bring out umami, often referred to as the fifth taste.

Funny you should mention that—I've heard that pot-au-feu or boeuf bourguignon actually comes from Vietnam. And sauerkraut is supposedly inspired by a Chinese dish…

(Laughs). I've never heard that, but it doesn't even surprise me; ultimately, we all draw inspiration from something to create our own version—and the same goes for music.

Can you recommend three dishes typical to a foreigner visiting Paris?

If I had to recommend signature Parisian dishes, I'd immediately think of bistro cuisine or the fare found in Parisian bouillons. The first thing that comes to mind is the croque-monsieur, made with the best Comté cream sauce and high-quality Paris ham; whenever I can, I like to add truffle shavings for mushroom lovers. Then there's the classic found in Parisian luxury hotels: onion soup. It's the ultimate winter comfort food, provided you use quality ingredients—especially good cheese. I recently tried cooking the soup with a Parmesan rind, which added incredible depth of flavor—thanks to that ever-present umami. And finally, of course, there's the quintessential œuf mayo (egg with mayonnaise). It's very simple, but again, when made with quality eggs, you can easily polish off four or five halves; I love topping mine with toasted sesame seeds and a little chive.

"The classic Parisian luxury hotels: dish is a onion soup provided you use quality ingredients."

Top chefs often act as guardians of culinary heritage, protecting traditions and classic gastronomic recipes—yet today, some chefs speak of chaotic cuisine. And you?

For my part, I believe preserving culinary heritage is just as important as giving free rein to inspiration and interpretation. No matter what we do, we will always need to return to the classics and traditions of French cuisine because it's just so damn good. Everyone has the right to make it their own in whatever way they imagine—I just ask to be invited along to taste it all!

Which French and international chefs inspire you?

I have immense respect for Alain Passard, who treats vegetables with such reverence throughout their journey. He oversees the product every step of the way—from seed to harvest, and from delivery to cooking and plating. He demonstrates that there are countless ways to prepare vegetables, and I hope to taste his cooking at least once. Internationally, I admire the Italian chef Massimo Bottura, who hails from the same region as my family. He inspires me particularly through *Food for Soul*, an organization he founded with his wife; it combats food waste and social exclusion by transforming surplus food into high-quality meals for the needy.

Perfect egg, mushroom and chestnut mousse, pickled mushroom and chestnut, Ibaïama bacon. Is that a signature dish of yours?

And does a "perfect" egg really have to cook for an hour? That's a long time for the customer... (Laughs) Yes, it's a recipe video I posted on my Instagram. It was a bit of an improvisation for a daily starter special, made using whatever ingredients I had on hand. I enjoy setting myself those kinds of challenges. Sometimes I surprise myself by coming up with something really good! Mind you, sometimes it can be a total flop, too (laughs). And no! Fortunately, in the kitchen, we can do the prep work in advance and bring ingredients up to temperature if needed. We still aim to serve the starter in under ten minutes. I can't imagine telling a customer they'd have to wait 45 minutes—which is the cooking time for a "perfect" egg in a steam oven.

Do you have any other recipes to share?

Yes, recipes to find in my potential future cookbook.

Do you have a clear idea of what you'd like to develop? I believe you're really interested in Japanese cuisine?

I'd love to open my own place—a spot that blends food, music, and conversation, making people feel right at home while also connecting with other customers. Yes, Japanese kissaten, traditional, retro-style Japanese coffee shops, are a huge source of inspiration for me. I love the sense of simplicity, not just in the food but also in the décor with the wood, the large bookshelves, the owners' hospitality, the jazz records playing, and the good coffee...

Here are my top 3 to 5 spots in Paris for a healthy meal that won't break the bank—meaning under €30 per person, excluding alcohol...

You should try La Cuisine de Souad; they serve vegan Moroccan food. They don't have a permanent location anymore, so you have to catch them when they have a stall at an event—it's so good. I recently ate at Pochana, a Thai restaurant run by a French-Thai couple, and I was blown away! Everything was delicious, and they have a great selection of natural wines; the place is small, though, so it's best to book ahead. For a lazy Sunday when you want good food and great service, head to Hollybelly—their slogan says it all: "It's good because we care."

"I have immense respect for Alain Passard...

Internationally, I admire the Italian chef Massimo Bottura, who hails from the same region as my family."

When did you start going clubbing in Paris?

I started going to clubs in 2016, back when I was still underage. I had a DJ friend who played US rap in clubs within Paris's Golden Triangle, the area around the Champs-Élysées, George V, Avenue Montaigne, and so on... He'd often take me along, notably to Le Hobo—it's a bit bling-bling kind of place (laughs). For a long time, I only went to those spots to party, but now I only want to go out if I know I'll be hearing DJs who love what they do and can transport you into their world. That said, I do still go out just to party with friends sometimes, without being too picky about the quality of the DJ set.



Greek yogurt, pea purée, bluefin tuna tartare, fresh and pickled strawberries, crisp peas, and salmon roe by Matsando!

What was the turning point that led you to become a DJ?

For a long time, I curated playlists for myself on my streaming platform. Then, little by little, I started sharing them, and the logical next step was to turn those playlists into mixes. That led me to where I am today! I always place musical discovery at the heart of my sets.

What are your musical influences, and which DJs inspire you?

I was heavily influenced by electronic music during my teenage years; The xx was my favorite band, so naturally, Jamie xx became a huge inspiration for me. Kaytranada also holds a special place in my heart. Right now, I listen to a lot of Afro-electronic music—it's incredibly diverse, and I feel there's a genre for every moment of the day. I might go from deep house to amapiano in the morning, while gqom really sets the rhythm for my evenings. For those curious and eager to discover new sounds, I've curated a playlist that brings together pretty much every sub-genre of Afro-electronic music, always highlighting underground artists and trying to give them as much visibility as possible. You can find it on Deezer under the name Deep Kuts.

Tell us about your first gigs as a DJ.

I played my first DJ sets alongside MiEL, the collective and media outlet I've been part of for over four years now. Being a member of that group has really benefited me. Musically, I soaked up everything I could; it helped me grow immensely and also helped me become more professional.

What's your best memory as a DJ?

One event that really left a mark on me—and where I got to play—was Kuraza in Toronto. Having people put their trust in me on the other side of the world so early in my career was an incredible opportunity. Plus, the atmosphere, the musical openness, and the love I received—it filled me with joy!

Are you into vinyl and turntables?

Honestly, I have huge respect for vinyl DJs; it's really admirable. Plus, the massive amount of work that goes into curation is just superhuman (laughs). I'm from the digital generation, but I've been wanting to start digging for vinyl and beatmatching for quite a while now. I'm gradually managing to invest in the gear. I really appreciate seeing more and more events in Paris featuring "vinyl-only" nights. It's undoubtedly a huge skill to have, and it seems to bring a lot of personal satisfaction, too.

Your favorite places in Paris?

Hmm, for strolling in a park, I'd say Belleville Park, it's quite calm and secluded. For food, I really like going to On The Bab near Pyramides; it's a very good, affordable Korean restaurant. I always hang out in my beloved Pigalle. Or I often end up at L'Embuscade, a vegan restaurant. The food is great, the dancing is great—it's my home away from home.

What do you think defines a Parisian?

We're seen as bitter and unwelcoming. I'd simply say: come visit us and we'll prove otherwise. I'd describe Parisians as people with good taste. We're lucky enough to have plenty of great restaurants, we know how to party, we manage to come together when it counts, and we're really fortunate to be where we are. And I realize that whenever I'm cycling along the banks of the Seine in the middle of the night.

What is missing in Paris to be your paradise?

Ideally more freedoms and less oppression. Let us dance when we want to dance, let us take over spaces so that we can express ourselves artistically. Open "convenience stores", please, we are hungry at 4 a.m., We don't all want to go to Pied de Cochon.

"I'm from the digital generation, but I have huge respect for vinyl DJs?"





"Alcohol has a place in kitchens all over the world... In Japan, rice alcohol is widely used, particularly to bring out umami —also known as the fifth taste."



Dj Myst

A glass of
Ice-cold Perrier with ice cubes and a lime wedge

5 songs that represent Paris
- Niska "Paris"
- X-men "Retour aux Pyramides"
- Tito Prince "Paname en Realité"
- U'l Team atom "La Rue Chante"

Your first exposure to DJing
The DJ who inspired me to start mixing and hyping up the crowd was DJ Maseo from De La Soul

Your best memory as a DJ
My first time in Abidjan with Youssoupha. The flight was delayed, so we went straight to the event with our suitcases; there were so many people that we thought it was just the city's usual hustle and bustle but no, everyone over 50,000 people—had come to see the concert. What an incredible feeling!

The pros and cons of the Paris scene
When you play in Paris, your family, friends and people who know you are there. So, you don't want to let them down. The downside is the pressure; it's greater than usual.

Are you nostalgic for the Paris of the 80s and 90s
I think you have to move with time. Back then, it was great. There was the ritual of going to record stores... Today, there are new ways to find music online

What are you obsessed with when you're digging for records?
Finding rare vinyl that isn't available everywhere, and—above all—tracking down the records I didn't buy back in the day to complete my collection

In five words, how would you define a Parisian
Partying, atmosphere, drinks, music, singing

What job would you like to do if you weren't a DJ
My background is in sales; music started as a hobby and became my full-time job. So, if that ever stops, I'd go right back to the grind without a problem.



Dj Mango & Holly

A glass of
Dark 'n' Stormy. And me, a vodka...

5 songs that represent Paris
- MZ "Les Princes"
- Nono la grinta " Paris"
- 6zaye "Les Clés de Paname"
- Niska "Paris"
- Gnanva "Paname"

And Dj Mango playlist :
- Édith Piaf "La Foule"
- Justice "Stress"
- 113 feat. Magic System & Mohamed Lamine "Un Gaou à Oran"
- Daft Punk "Digital Love"
- Phoenix "Lisztomania"

Your first exposure to DJing
Holly: It was a project I'd had in mind for a few years, but it wasn't until May 2025...

Your beginnings in Paris nightlife
Your beginnings in the Paris nightlife scene
Holly: At the G-Five. I fainted before I even started DJing. A great memory.
Mango: The Titty Twister—inspired by the club in Quentin Tarantino's film "From Dusk Till Dawn". I had some pretty epic nights there.

Your maximum BPM
BPM 174 BPM.
And for Holly: 160—bouyon!

If I say L'Embuscade
Cocktails, friends, a raw vibe and lots of Afro-Caribbean sounds.
Holly: The after-party spot after hitting Le Rouge...

A passion other than music
Mango: Dance...
Holly: Art in general, fashion: I have a soft spot for documentaries about everything happening beyond the ozone layer, but also in the depths of the ocean...

Define a Parisian in 5 words
Mango: Rushed, demanding, creative, contradictory, multicultural. Holly: Hardworking, impatient, expressive, lively, fun.

Your favori te adage
Holly : One Love.
Mango : Don't compare yourself—build.



Sidy Seye

A glass of
A beer

5 songs that represent Paris
- J'Mi Sissoko "L'Hymne à l'Amour"
- Démocrates D "Le Crime"
- La Cliqua "Rap Contact"
- Préface "Palace Hôtel"
- Olivier Constantin "Cobra"

Your first exposure to DJing
I saw it in the Parisian underground club. I was a kid with my parents, around '76 to '82...

Your first step in the Parisian nightlife
1984, '85, or '86—La Défense, I don't quite remember. I was a kid, 10 or 11 years old. I used to enter dance contests on Sunday afternoons and sometimes at night—at the Midnight Express, where I'd have to sneak in the back way with the oldtimers from the neighborhood...

The best things about the Parisian scene
The DJs, both in terms of numbers and quality, with real knowledge of vinyl...

And the downsides
Bring back the slow jam. The ladies' choice slow dance—we need to dance together

A place in Paris to recharge
In my neighborhood, Paris's 19th district. We've got everything right here, there's no need to go into the city center. Even the Music Museum and the cinema are right here... We've got a new bowling alley...

Your best memory as a DJ
The Black Soly afternoons at Les Caves du Chapelais near La Fourche/Place Clichy, with live remixes by DJ James (RIP)...

If I say "dance," your answer...
1 Touche 2 Style

A DJ who always blows your mind
Dj Supreme & Dj Undercover d'Hijack

Your favorite motto
Don't pull on the grass to make it grow!

Versatile records présente



Out now on vinyl & digital
Remix Ep coming soon, feat. Dj Sotofett, Beatrice B and Michael J Blood

Versatile

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