

The Young Gods

By Olivier Noël

Since more than 20 years, the Swiss « power trio » has been successfully mixing hypnotic electronic atmospheres, pounding drums rhythms and powerful rock sound. Born at the beginning of the sampling era, this band quickly learned to use machines to create original sounds, and by the same way to create their own music style. After having been exploring many musical paths, they recently came back to a harder sound, full of tough guitars, with the release of their new album “Super Ready / Fragmenté”. The impressive concert they performed at the Botanique, Brussels this May 12th was the perfect opportunity to meet the frontman Franz Treichler and the drummer Bernard Trontin...

For this new album, “Super Ready / Fragmenté”, why did you want to come back to a heavier sound, including more guitars than your recent recordings ?

Franz : Well, for the last 5 years, we’ve made a lot of electronic sounds experiments, in albums such as “Music for Artificial Clouds” which was purely instrumental, experimental and ambient. After that, we needed to continue the cycle, to come back to a sound we’ve been a bit neglecting during the last years. It’s also a matter of social and political context, that leaded us to play some more violent music.

Bernard : Yes, it’s a mix between the way our environment inspired us and the need we felt at the time of the recording. We also wanted to come back to something more adapted to the live shows.

What does the album title mean to you ?

Franz : It’s about the way a person fits into the society... The word “Fragmenté” means his brain is fragmented, he suffers from the information overload all the time. The words “Super Ready” express the way this person has to react to these facts : we have to react positively, to stand and to scream what we think. Globally, this album brings more questions than answers.

What about the lyrics ? They seem to be as enigmatic as in your past albums...

Franz (laughs) : I’ve never been very explicit in my lyrics, indeed... They’re more of a poetic, abstract type. In the song “Freeze” for example, I sing : “I’m 1, 2, 3... 4 tons of TNT”. It means that statistically, if you compare the number of human beings and the quantities of explosives on this planet, there are 4 tons of explosives for each person. Many songs on this album can be interpreted two different ways... It’s kind of our trademark (laughs).

How do you feel concerned about the way the audience will react to this album ?

Franz : I guess some fans of our old albums such as “TV Sky” will be pleased by our return to the guitars. On the contrary, people who liked our recent electro oriented records such as “Second Nature” will maybe be disappointed by this one. The advantage of playing various music styles is that you can reach various audiences, and that’s what we like.

How did you get the idea to play some acoustic concerts as you did a few weeks ago ?

Franz : The idea comes from a magazine based in Zurich, called “Truce”. They wanted to publish a kind of logbook of the band. Then we came with the idea to punctuate this concept with an event, and we decided to play an acoustic live, in which we used percussions, sitar-guitar and a very few electronics (only one loop). We played in front of sitting audiences, in a quiet atmosphere, very different than what we’re used to at a Young Gods’ concert. After we

finish touring the new album, we will release a record with these acoustic versions of our old songs.

How did you get in touch with the members of the rap band Dälek, and how did you get the idea to share the stage with them by performing as “The Young Gods versus Dälek”, as you will at Dour Festival this summer ?

Bernard : Actually, we first started it on request from the festival “les Eurockéennes de Belfort”. Personally, I’m not a big rap fan, so I didn’t know much about Dälek before... So we met, we saw them live, they saw us live, and finally we discover that those guys are very open-minded people playing a very interesting music.

Franz : We’re not quite sure yet about the way we’ll perform these shows, but it will probably be a big mix, the people on stage will be changing all the time... The result will be quite experimental, as I see it.

I heard that you also performed another type of one-shot concert, at the Montreux Jazz Festival... How did it work ?

Bernard : We performed with a symphonic orchestra, and a live DVD is up to be released, we don’t know when yet. We cannot tour with this kind of concert, we do it only when festival organisers order it.

Bernard, let’s talk a bit about your side-project November... I know that in the studio you’re just two members, Simon Huw Jones (singer from And Also the Trees) and you, but how does it work for the concerts ?

Bernard : Actually, we performed live only once, in Geneva at the “Festival de la Bâtie”, in front of a sitting audience. The album we composed wasn’t meant to be played live in the first place, but then we got some concert proposals and we accepted this one. The line-up was : Simon at vocals of course, me playing with a sampler and a few cymbals, and two live members, one of them playing guitar, bass and keyboard, and the other one playing with a laptop.

The Young Gods’ keyboard player Alain Monod also has a solo project, doesn’t he ?

Franz : Yes, he has. He plays under his nickname Al Comet ; his music mixes electro and ethnic influences, and on stage he’s got two live members : one of them plays sitar-guitar, the other one is a VJ. Al is playing with his machines as always.

What kind of machines and equipment do The Young Gods use these days ?

Franz : Alain recently bought a new machine, an Akai sampler called the Z8. It’s very polyvalent, so we replaced several devices by this one. Besides, we mainly use software and numerous plug-ins. One of my favourites soft is called Super Collager. In addition, since we use guitars again, we like to combine guitar sounds with textures, insects noises for example.

I read that the famous producer Roli Mosimann (ex-member of the Swans) was back to work with you after 10 years of absence... Franz, why don’t you produce your own music and other’s anymore ?

Franz : Just because I want to focus only on the music and the band now. Producer is a full time job, it can become too demanding if you’re already working as a musician.

Are you connected to Swiss electro bands such as Bak XIII, and to the events they organise in Geneva such as the Elektron Festival ?

Franz : Yes, we know Damien from Bak XIII very well, and we really appreciate his work. He’s got a good state of mind, and puts a lot of energy into his projects, not only his bands, but also the work he does in “L’Usine” (a great place for music and concerts in Geneva).