



Mr Diagonal
PRIME MINISTER OF POP

mr Diagonal (Glasgow/Brussels) aka Lord Hypotenuse aka Dan Barbenel is a multi-faceted pianist/singer-songwriter at the frontiers of pop, cabaret and theatre music.

In true diagonal fashion, he always cuts a dash and declines to cut corners.

Variously compared to 'Noel Coward on mushrooms', Kurt Weil and Divine Comedy, he has a loyal following in Japan, and has featured on BBC radio 3's Late Junction and in the UK Guardian.

He has released 4 albums under the name Black Light Orchestra / mr Diagonal / Dan Barbenel, mainly on homerecords.be

"clearly a Genius" - Momus

website

mrdiagonal.com

bandcamp (words and music)

<https://blacklightorchestra.bandcamp.com/>

tartan dinosaurs (video by Momus)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EF47NxqB_LA

Rockstar (super 8 video by Isabelle Wuilmart)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqxGI_qhDUw

What do you do with a Manioc? (new North Pacific video by Ken Nishikawa)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEP3-BUI388>

BIOGRAPHY

Dan Barbenel was born in Dundee, Scotland, 2 feb 1970.

Studies

Music (Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, 1987-8).

Social anthropology (MA, Cambridge University 1988-91).

Collaborations with: Momus, La Fabrique Imaginaire, Theatre de Galafronie, Theatre de l'Incendie, Laurence Vielle, Geneviève Voisin, Denis Mpunga, Philippe Tasquin, Monique Gelders, René Bizac, Mathieu Ha, Zahava Seevald, Isabelle Wuillmart; Surnaturel Orchestra (Paris), Kodomokyojin Theatre (Osaka), Chris M Allport Productions (LA).

Professional Experience:

Singer/Pianist

with Black Light Orchestra (since 2005) and one-man-show mr Diagonal.

Concerts in Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto, Nagoya, London, Bath, Glastonbury, Edinburgh, Paris, Montpellier, Marseille, Lyon, Bruxelles, Gent, Liege, Anvers, Thuin, Poznan, Gdansk, Vilnius, Berlin, Vienna, Tel Aviv, Buenos Aires.

Tango pianist with the Bruxelles-Aires Tango Orchestra since 2007.

Creation 'au Café du Port' with Yves Hunstadt and la Fabrique Imaginaire (théâtre Varia Bxl, nov 2012)

Accompanist for Sonja Kristina, Geneviève Voisin, Madiha Figui, Joseph Clarke, Noemi Tiberghien.

Cave musician for les Amis de Sabartez, Arrière. France (2004-5)

Cocktail pianist at Awashima hotel, on a private island in Japan '92

Costumed guide at Hampton Court Palace, England (1995-97).

Composer of film music (Isabelle Wuillmart), radiophonic works (Vincent Matyn, Melanie Godins) and musicals (René Bizac)

Co-director and star of psychedelic film (with Isabelle Wuillmart, 2012)



PRESS

Momus

<http://imomus.livejournal.com/324787.html>

Momus' blog

"Let's start with the Black Light Orchestra. From the name, I expected them to be super-trendy electro-disco formalists of some kind, but the reference points that sprang to mind when I played material from their forthcoming album (and a DVD of their appearance on a Japanese TV show called Music Tide) were Brecht and Weill, Noel Coward, Frank Zappa, The Tiger Lilies and The Residents. This is a deranged, wide-ranging theatre music, with song titles like My Life is a Broken Bicycle, Midnight Milkman and A Happy Kangaroo Upon the Moon. It's far too clever and disturbing and creative for pop or dance or fashion audiences but I predict that Black Light Orchestra will have great success (on the scale of the Tiger Lilies, I mean) if they can find a literary property (something like "Under Milk Wood") and adapt it for the musical theatre. At the second Brussels concert I met the Black Light mainman, Mr Diagonal, self-described "last living survivor of the great Scottish-Jewish music hall tradition". He's clearly a genius."

Holly Moors <http://www.moorsmagazine.com/muziek/live/homerecords-festival-2016-fraaie-staalkaart-avontuurlijk-label/>

Vaudeville, comedy, black humor, by a more than excellent pianist and outstanding singer with great timing.

Mattie Poels

<http://www.mixedworldmusic.com/nieuws/newsItem.php?n01ID=17629>

Scottish pianist Ben Barbenel plays excellent piano, with a confident touch. As a singer, he has his qualities. We hear it in the opening song with a timing that is so laid-back it's like listening to two musicians. This is not only pretty, but also refers to him to the popular music of the twenties of the last century, and the vaudeville tradition. In the final song he even sings a kind of musical-like melody. On his own, he takes care of the complete orchestral score with gears, recitatives, modulations etc. Good work for sure.

Holly Moors

Moors Magazine

A man and a piano. Songs that sometimes make you think of English vaudeville. Texts that put the listener on edge. A song about Diana that brings you to the edge of your seat because it is at once an exciting story. A song about himself that begins with a list of the things he likes about himself, but ... a little black humor, with vaudeville mixed with Satie and Schubert, some tango, rock and cabaret and you have Barbenel.

The Scottish singer, composer and pianist Dan Barbenel does not need more than a piano and his voice to address your full attention. There's the intriguing songs, but also the packaging and the urgent way of singing. Little Black Book is a fascinating, timeless album. We already know Barbenel from his other incarnations, as Mr. Diagonal example, and Black Light Orchestra, but here solo under his own name, he is at his most intimate and actually perhaps at his best.

Jazzques

<http://jazzques.skynetblogs.be/post/7411264/mr-diagonal-and-the-black-light-orchestra-au->

"Comment définir la musique du groupe? Humm... pas facile car celui-ci mélange les genres avec un malin plaisir. Mais heureusement, le plaisir est aussi pour nous.

Les compositions, aux propos souvent surréalistes («Sunshine In A Nuclear Power Station» par exemple) sont riches et surprenantes. Ciselées harmoniquement et rythmiquement.

Chacun des musiciens passe d'un instrument à l'autre: le batteur (Yannick Dupont) se fait bassiste; le flûtiste (Quentin Manfroy) s'improvise guitariste électrique; le claviériste (Eric Bribosia) se mue en percussionniste; la joueuse de viole de gambe joue de la paille dans un verre d'eau et le saxophoniste (Grégoire Tirtiaux) tripote la basse. Ça bouge tout le temps. Et comme si cela ne suffisait pas, tout ce petit monde chante et participe à des chorégraphies farfelues.

Musique, théâtralisation, chorégraphies dérisoires, poèmes surréalistes («La conspiration reptilienne») ou questionnements *philosophico-dadaesque*, («La nature observe-t-elle le sabbat? Que faisait Dieu avant la création?»), tout fait farine au moulin. Et le plus étonnant, c'est que ça fonctionne. Du coup, on passe un trop court moment avec ces excellents musiciens qui se moquent des genres et qui brassent toutes les idées qui flottent dans l'air du temps.

Ce groupe est insaisissable et, à mon avis, il nous réservera encore d'autres belles surprises, drôles, intelligentes et tellement rafraîchissantes. Qu'on se le dise."

Dani Heyvaert - Mazzmusikas 093bis MAZZMUSIKAS HATS OFF
(review of debut abum BBB, translated from the Dutch)

Musically this translates into a cocktail of cinematic and vaudeville-esque songs and fragments, floating on the piano and the evocative voice of Barbenel, which reminds us of Tindersticks more than once, but also evokes images from ragtime and Monk- jazz.

Mr. Diagonal's lyrics are pretty over the top. I suspect him of being raised on a diet of Broothaers, Duchamp and Magritte. On this record nothing is what it seems and every time you listen to them, you hear something new. All in all, that leads to a surprisingly consistent masterpiece. Once you pierce through the shell whimsy, you discover pure musical splendor (such as in On The Station with its delicious flute arrangement) and textual delights (such as in opener My Life Is A Broken Bicycle or A Happy Kangaroo Upon The Moon) . Variation is key: from cosmic surf rock (Zarrinx), to the live accompaniment of a silent film (River Of Light).

Look, I know that this is a dangerous comparison, but I dare to state here and now that Mr. Diagonal is nothing less than the rightful heir of Van Dyke Parks. Anyone who knows his Tokyo Rose or Song Cycle is pretty close to this beautiful album. Incidentally, congratulations to the 'young dogs' of the Black Light Orchestra: they let Mr. Diagonal sound as he should sound: fresh, surprising, eccentric and adventurous.

Absolutely indispensable for those who have ears on his head!

TECHNICAL RIDER

Mr Diagonal solo

Grand piano (preferably Steinway B with 2 Neumann KM184).

Or professional quality electric piano.

2 vocal mics (sure beta 58)

1 line for acoustic guitar

Lighting requirements on demand.

North Pacific (trio)

Piano if available

3 vocal mics (sure beta 58)

Bass and guitar amps + mics if needed.

Percussion: 3 overhead mics for percussion /marimba

3 line inputs

CONTACT

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Websites

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Words and music

blacklightorchestra.bandcamp.com