

## **MR DIAGONAL'S MIDLIFE CRISIS**

**(after-dinner rock 'n' roll)**

**Mr Diagonal (aka Dan Barbenel) is a Scottish-born pianist/singer-songwriter currently based in Brussels.**

**Mr Diagonal's Midlife Crisis is the latest mutation of Black Light Orchestra, pioneers of Belgian's Sprout Rock scene. Rooted firmly in the anglo-saxon freak scene with a nod to music hall and uncool jazz (ref: Noel Coward, Kurt Weil, Harry Nilssen, Divine Comedy).**

**This new album, with a pronounced retro flavour, is a parenthesis in the discography of the Black Light Orchestra to highlight some of the hidden facets of mr Diagonal's tortured soul.**

### **PRESS**

#### **Jazzques**

**"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 sont riches et surprenantes. Ciselées harmoniquement et rythmiquement.**

**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."**

#### **Momus**

**The reference points that sprang to mind were Brecht and Weil, 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. 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."**

#### **Dani Heyvaert**

**De teksten van Mr. Diagonal zijn redelijk ver over de top. Ik verdenk hem ervan opgevoed te zijn op een dieet van Broothaers, Duchamp en Magritte. Op deze plaat is niks wat het lijkt en elke keer je ze beluistert, hoor je weer wat anders. Al met al leidt dat tot een superverrassend blijvende topplaat. Eens je door het pantser van de grilligheid heen bent, ontdek je zuivere muzikale pracht (zoals bvb. in On The Station met zijn heerlijke fluitarrangement) en tekstuele hoogstandjes (zoals in opener My Life Is A Broken Bicycle of A Happy Kangaroo Upon The Moon). Variatie is troef: nu eens wordt er stevig gerockt (Zarrinx), dan weer denk je aan de live begeleiding bij een stomme film (River Of Light).**

**Kijk, ik wéét dat dit een gevaarlijke vergelijking is, maar ik durf hier en nu hardop stellen dat Mr. Dia-gonal niks minder of niks méér is dan de wettige erfgenaam van Van Dyke Parks. Wie ooit diens Tokyo Hotel of Song Cycle aanschafte, zit met deze prachtplaat aardig in de buurt. Overigens alle lof voor de 'jonge honden': zij laten Mr. Diagonal klinken zoals hij moet klinken: fris, verrassend, excentriek en avontuurlijk.**

## **A BRIEF HISTORY of MR DIAGONAL & the BLACK LIGHT ORCHESTRA**

- 2001**                    **mr Diagonal born. First concerts in the Brussels squats.  
Support act for Orange Kazoo.**
- 2005**                    **Black Light Orchestra presents their esoteric musical  
'the Red Rabbit Revolution' at Theatre Mercelis, Bxl,  
funded by the Commune d'Ixelles.**
- 2006**                    **BLO make music for the film «Atomium In/Out»  
(Marie-Françoise Plissart, RTBF)  
2 tours of Japan (Toyko, Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe).  
2 documentaries of 45' broadcast nationwide by BSI Japan.**
- 2007-9**                 **Concerts in Brussels (Theatre Marni, Brass, Recyclart, Ateliers  
Claus) Liège(Manège, Festival Emulation), Ostende (Theatre  
aan Zee festival), Paris (Java, Centre WBI, l'Ermitage, guests of  
Surnatural Orchestra)**
- 2008**                    **Launch of debut album «BBB» on homerecords.be**
- 2009**                    **3rd Japanese tour in association with bigstream.co.jp  
BLO guests on Peter Barakan's national radio show.**
- 2010**                    **Fusion and Bremen festivals, Germany**
- 2011**                    **Launch of 2nd album «Late Victorian».  
auto-prod supported by the Communauté Française de Belgique**
- 2012**                    **BLO chosen for Propulse-on (Botanique, Bxl)  
Centre Culturels de Thuin, CC du Centre, CC Jacques Franck  
1<sup>st</sup> English tour: London, Bath, Glastonbury.  
mr Diagonal plays solo in Tel Aviv and Vienna.**
- mr Diagonal represents Belgium in the Guardian:  
video shot in Bxl for their video-blog 'Sounds of Europe'.**
- 2013**                    **mr Diagonal's releases Scotch patriotic hit Tartan Dinosaurs:  
video by Momus starring Sean Connery on youtube.  
One-man show 'Dawn of the Teddy-Bears' at Edinburgh fringe.  
Premiere of psychedelic film 'Children of Another Sun' (Mr  
Diagonal, Isabelle Wuilmart) at festival Asymetrique, Marseille.**
- 2014**                    **Recording and mix of 3<sup>rd</sup> album 'mr Diagonal's Midlife Crisis'.**
- 2015**                    **As of jan 2015 pre-released album receiving airplay on  
Klaus Fiehe's shows on German public radio.  
Album launch and tour, date to be confirmed.**

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

**Dan Barbenel** aka mr Diagonal was born in Dundee, Scotland in 1970.

**Studies: music (Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, 1987-8), social anthropology (MA, Cambridge University 1988-91).**

**Collaborations with: La Fabrique Imaginaire, Geneviève Voisin, Denis Mpunga, Philippe Tasquin, Monique Gelders, René Bizac, Joseph Clarke, Mathieu Ha, Madiha Figuigui, Zahava Seevald, Isabelle Wuillmart; Surnaturel Orchestra (Paris), Kodomokyojin Theatre (Osaka).**

**Professional Experience:**

**Singer/pianist with Black Light Orchestra and one-man-show mr Diagonal: concerts in Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto, Nagoya, London, Bath, Glastonbury, Edinburgh, Paris, Montpellier, Marseille, Lyon, Bruxelles, Gent, Liege, Antwerp, Poznan, Sopot, Vilnius, Berlin, Vienna, Tel Aviv (2005-)**

**Tango pianist with the Bruxelles-Aires Tango Orchestra.**

**Accompanist for Sonja Kristina, Geneviève Voisin, Madiha Figuigui.**

**Cave musician for les Amis de Sabartez, Arriège. 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, radiophonic works and musicals.**

**Co-director and star of psychedelic film with Isabelle Wuillmart, 2012.**

### **Quentin Manfroy**

**Polyvalent flautist and self-taught bassist.**

**Studies: first prize of the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles.**

**Collaborations with Musiques Nouvelles, Orange Kazoo, Frederick Rzewsky, Peas Project, da Wang Gang. Winner of Strade del Cinema festival (Italie, 2007).**

### **Yannick Dupont**

**Drummer, guitarist, actor, composer.**

**Studied percussion and composition at the Havana Conservatoire Cuba.**

**Collaborations with Jawhar, Antoine Chance, La Fanfare du Belgistan, Marie Laure Béraud, Mathieu Boogaerts, Samir Barris, Les Vedettes, Opération Dupont, Ivan Tirtiaux, Black Light Orchestra, Recyclart In-Vitro Xperience, Matthieu Ha, Anja Kowalski. Composer of music for television (TV5-RTBF).**

### **Benjamin Clément**

**Born in Brussels. Self-taught guitarist playing in various rock, blues and jazz groups (his father Michel was a pioneer of psychedelic rock in Brussels).**

**Collaborations with Nicolas Hauzeur (Zongora), Toine Thys (Rackham), Tcha Limberger, Ballets Contemporains de la Belgique. Frequent travels in Hungary, Slovakia, Roumania, Bulgaria, Greece,...have honed his knowledge of local traditions and musicians.**

## **CONTACT**

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