

Mathias Delplanque

Ma chambre quand je n'y suis pas (Montréal)"

(Mondes Elliptiques 2006)

Press review

Heathen Harvest

Today I'm going to behave. For the first time, in a very long time, I'm not going to swear in a review. Nor will I be sarcastic or use any childish humour to gloss over the fact my writing skills are non-existent. There will be no abstract layouts or references to any artists living or dead. This I promise you. But I'm not doing this for you the visitor to these words. I'm not even doing it for myself. I'm doing this out of respect. I'm doing this for Mathias Delplanque. The artist who participated in the creation in one of my favourite pieces of music ever to have been released. I am, of course, referring to the supremely sublime 'Hidden Doors' CD release. A recording that anyone who dare calls themselves a music lover must own.

'Ma chambre quand je n'y suis pas (Montreal)' is essentially an experiment in sound. I'm not good at the technical side of how these recordings are made so, with your approval, I'll use the press release supplied with this recording to explain all. 'The piece is based on the recording of "silences", i.e. the recording of sound produced in spaces with no human presence. The sound of an "empty" Studio Cormier was therefore used as the material for the production of this piece. The sound takes were done during the quietest moments of the day, by means of microphones placed strategically throughout the Studio by the artist. The sounds gathered were then amplified, and their frequencies, accentuated to the extreme. In the installation itself, the sound was broadcast in multi channel mode over 11 loudspeakers, including a subwoofer, in four Studio Cormier spaces ("Hall", "Living room", "Bedroom", "Lab").

What the press release cannot do though is let you hear the end results. Which is where I come back into the frame. And it is here that I fear for the worse. For how can one so inadequate and inarticulate as I do justice to a work of this magnitude. If I stumble or fall over the words then forgive me. There are times when I'm not worthy of the title reviewer...and this is one of those times. Over the 45+ minutes of this recording that Mathias Delplanque has created I was left completely bewitched by the music. Here was a striking form of ambience that I have rarely encountered in all of my 38 years of collecting and listening to music. This one collective sound structure / sculpture almost defies description. The captured sounds are like a living, breathing entity. They seem to mutate and dissipate in every direction possible whilst still remaining a cohesive whole. The sheer fluidity of the ebbing and flowing aural landscape creating the illusion of vast voids of space. The spectre of apparitions apparent throughout adding an unseen depth not fully expected. You are alone. You are not alone. You are nowhere. You are everywhere. The contradictions are there for all to hear and experience first hand. The Industrial toned throbbing throughout adding a sinister glow to the shimmering highly charged sounds that cascade and abound.

I cannot fully describe this any more for the words elude me. This incredible release deserves better than I. Hypnotic and magnificent will have to suffice. For it is greater than that. Far, far greater. This is an essential purchase and make no mistake. It will take, quite literally, your breath away with its scope and vision.

Alan Milne

Vital Weekly

This release was handed to me when being in a clothing store in Montreal. I never heard of Angle Records/Mondes Elliptiques, nor from the artist. Delplanque was artist in residence in the Studio Cormier, which is an art gallery (I believe). Here he recorded the silences of the four different spaces during the most silent periods of the day and then treated the recordings, the frequencies of silence into a powerful forty-five minute piece of music. Silence does not exist (as John Cage already found out), so why not treat the silence as music. Not exactly a new idea of course, but Delplanque does a great job. It hisses, makes rhythm via low bass hum, and throughout these forty five minutes, there is a lot of variation in sound going on. The sound of emptiness and silence as ambient music. It's by no means a soft work: throughout it's highly audible and sounds like buzzing insects and has creepy undertone. A great work.

FdW

Sonomu.net

This high-concept album twinkles, glitters and hisses its way over three-quarters of an hour. It is the handy CD version of an audio installation created for Montreal's Studio Cormier almost two and a half years ago, recording and challenging the idea of "silence" in four spaces around the city while no human activity was currently present.

The result is mixed into a single long suite of non-movement and non-events, enhanced by the odd computer- or synthesizer-generated "bee-oop" or dampened "clang" and ominous heartbeat bass. There are strange currents and eddies afoot in this soundscape, a reminder that silence is never actually silent and that the inanimate actually does make sound, even when we are not there to hear it.

Mathias Delplanque is a member of The Missing Ensemble trio, whose "Hidden Doors" debut was a masterpiece of dark ambient drone, if you are to believe the review I wrote in this space about a year ago. This solo effort reinforces the notion that Delplanque is certainly one of the stronger links in that chain; it is ambient music of the more surreal, and also paradoxically more real, variety.

Housed in handsome heavy stock paper stuffed with six sides of artwork by Dove Allouche and limited to five hundred copies.

Stephen Fruitman

Gothronic

A seemingly simple cardboard cover, with a drawing on it. And as you slide the CD out of the cover, four cardboard cards also come out of it. The different shades of grey with the drawing stare at you, and you know you're holding something special ... But what? The drawings seem to be made through mathematical formulas on an XY-plotter. Variations on space and depth within a 2-dimensional field.

The music is from Mathias Delplanque who is unknown to most of you, but his activities show up more often than you thought. He is one of the minds in the collective called The Missing Ensemble whose "Hidden Doors" was recently reviewed on Gothronic. That CD is Mathias together with Tamarin and John Sellekaers (Xingu Hill and others). So you just about know what you can expect from 'Ma chambre quand je n'y suis pas'.

Bzzzz Wrong. 'Ma chambre quand je n'y suis pas' is one big soundscape / drone from 45 minutes. Musique concrete, ultra minimal ambient layers, high frequencies ... All recorded during the silent moments (read: not too much audience) at a sound installation presented in Montreal's Studio Cormier in december 2004.

The second release on Mondes Elliptiques (The Missing Ensemble being the first) which turns out to be a side lable from the Canadian Angle.Rec (with amongst others releases from gkrzgl, Vromb, Visions, Aidan Baker and much more). It gives us very high expectations for the future and one more reason to visit Canada.

Bauke

Sothzine

In *Ma chambre quand je n'y suis pas* (literally my room when I'm not in it), Mathias Delplanque uses a curious method of creating his soundscapes and drones. As the title of the release clearly says it, the artist recorded the ambient sounds in his empty room during the most quiet times then accentuated the harvested frequencies. The result is very expressive and quite gloomy, leading to think of what is hidden inside his room. According to the sounds it seems more like a strange place where witchcraft marries technology than a simple square room. An impressive release that wakes up your imagination.

Yassine Maaroufi

Musiques et cultures digitales

Raccord avec l'énoncé, ces ambiances délétares - émanant d'une installation et basées sur un processus d'amplification/concrétion/palpitation - évoquent un espace vide mais paradoxalement "habité"...

Laurent Diouf

Tokafi

You first have to tune in to the work, before feeling at home.

I am, again and again, fascinated by the fact how art (be it film, literature, paintings or music) can bring thoughts to the fore which had been lingering on my mind, unable to make it through the brain-barrier for some particular reason. Take this release by Burkina Faso-born French composer Mathias Delplanque, whose body of work oscillates between the sweetly humming bass lines of atmospheric Dub and the humming sweetness of deep Ambient. On this occasion, he tends towards the latter with an album dealing with a set of simple questions: What would his room sound like, if he wasn't there? In which way does his mere absence change the room's aural parameters? And, on a more general level, of course: Can spacial qualities be put to tape at all? As *"Ma chambre quand je n'y suis pas"* proves, they can and with some astounding results to boot.

From July to December of 2004, Delplanque lived and worked in Montreal, being part of the "Les Inclassables" program kindly set up by two of Quebec's most important art-sponsorship organisations. During this time, the music to this disc slowly took shape, culminating in a sound installation at the "Studio Cormier". That very location also served as the only source of material to be used for the composition. During the most quiet moments of the day, Mathias would set up a network of microphones in the Studio, then clear the place of human presence and simply start recording. The results were naturally close to the threshold of audibility, but thanks to the use of a little amplification and frequency enhancement (stressing the extreme ends of the spectrum), suddenly a microcosm of intense richness opened up: Hissing and sizzling noises, choral drones, poundings and digital cuts and thumps, washes of long-drawn sighs and glistening bell-like tone-drops blended into a heaving and breathing painting of 45 minutes duration. There are very much "sound"-related elements, which take on "musical" importance (such as the recurring theme of a mysterious creaking, as from the planks of a ghost ship sailing foggy waters on a windless day), while "musical" motives, like minuscule melodies and harmonic chord clusters are accorded the function of colouring the room between the lines. The basic building blocks of the piece stay intact for its entire length, only their relation to each other changes constantly, as do their volume and the intervals between their occurrences, lending an effective flow to an otherwise peacefully rocking track. There are two distinct semblances, peaks of some sort, with the crackling suddenly taking on rhythmical qualities on one occasion and a short moment of total rest, with the music revelling in absolute tranquility after a long period of gradually slowing down. But the warm embrace of *"Ma Chambre"* always returns. At first, I thought the opening to be a little unsettling and disturbing and believed the piece to become brighter, more friendly and

warmer in its course. As it turns out, this is an illusion and its great strength: Just like with a good book, you first have to tune in to the work, before feeling at home.

If you really think about it, Delplanque has of course not truly captured the essence of his idea. The mere use of amplification changes the nature of the experiment and by allowing visitors to walk through the sound installation, the unavoidable paradox of a room full of people listening to a room void of anyone rears its head. So, "Ma chambre quand je n'y suis pas" is less about recording absolute silence, than about exposing the sounds behind it and the musical qualities of emptiness, as well as substantiating thoughts, images and a fantasies on the matter and bringing them out into consciousness. In the end, we all have to find the answers to our questions ourselves anyway: I may still not know what my room sounds like when I'm not there, but at least now I know how to start the search.

Tobias Fischer

Trax

Plage climatique hybride chère au label Bip-Hop, "Ma chambre quand je n'y suis pas" (initialement une installation sonore) est une inquiétante composition, imaginant la vie cachée de votre demeure le dernier tour de clef effectué. Mathias jette le trouble à travers cette montée brumeuse happée par des sonorités métalliques avant de laisser passer les rayons de soleil à travers les persiennes. Pour mieux anéantir les résonances de cette litanie obsédante, il détourne l'attention en présentant son coléoptère de compagnie vivant au plafond.

Laurent Guérel

Dmute

Après 6 mois de résidence à Montréal, Mathias Delplanque présentait en décembre 2004 une installation sonore: Ma chambre quand je n'y suis pas (Montreal). Après avoir enregistré l'atmosphère d'endroits vidés de toute présence humaine, Delplanque traite son curieux matériau et lui donne les atours d'une pièce d'ambient discrète autant que riche.

Légères, les déflagrations s'amoncellent d'abord - vagues roulantes ou aiguës minuscules déroulées, bâtons de pluie électronique et chocs infinitésimaux. Pris dans l'engrenage d'une réverbération vorace, l'ensemble accueille ensuite reverses et larsens légers, jusqu'à défendre un droit soudain à l'uniformité.

Mais de nouvelles oscillations désagrègent l'intention comme quelques coups sur tom rompent les rangs. Diverse à nouveau, la composition trouve une quiétude occasionnant, satisfaite, l'envie d'en finir. Alors étouffé, ce que Delplanque aura pu capter dans sa ou ses chambres. Après lui avoir laissé le temps de fantasmer de manière élégante les conséquences possibles de sa propre absence.

Grisli

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Besides making music on his own, Mathias Delplanque is also a member of the trio The Missing Ensemble, who have released their album 'Hidden Doors' on the same label Mondes Elliptiques. On this new CD, Delplanque continues with the music in the similar areas as before, only now there's only one piece on the album, which is 45 minutes, while on 'Hidden Doors' there are more pieces with shorter length. The music on this album is a part of a sound installation which is based on 'the recordings of sound produced in spaces with no human presence'. Then the recorded sounds were amplified, with their frequencies accentuated to the extreme. There are layers of hissing sounds on this cd, there's also the occasional bass sound appearing as a background. The music with the sounds altogether are carefully filling up the space, creating a longer drone piece made of many layers of shorter and longer sounds that are spreading in space. It's interesting in the approach and in the execution of the music, which is curious for listening on this cd, apart from the installation

where it was originally presented. (BR)

Morpheusmusic

MUSIC

Sound installation - beatless, free of melody and imposed structure. The sound emerges instantly on this CD with no build up - hisses and shiftings swell and drop, low droning layers groan below, dull booms resonating through the low frequencies, remote and vast. Coruscating tonalities twinkle and pulsate sounding somewhere between a bell and a whistle. Other noises faintly explosive or reminiscent of air movement occur at irregular intervals - whining pitches arise and tonal build-ups that bleed away into the omnipresent aural haze. This creation has no discernable musical progression, no obvious sign of composition - comprised instead of amplified found sounds presented gallery fashion.

ARTWORK

A textured board sleeve holds both CD and art cards - all presented in grey with a hint of olive. Elegant line art - the drawings of Dove Allouche appear on the front cover, on the CD and on three of the internal cards - the fourth contains an explanation of the project in English on one side and French on the other. Two photographs of the gallery wherein the music was originally installed accompany the wording. Text on the outer cover is minimal - nothing on the front, a simple title on the rear.

OVERALL

Mathias Delplanque here delivers an esoteric recording that was initially a part of the artist's residency at Montréal's Studio Cormier in December 2004. The sounds are gathered 'silences' from the studio - that is, the empty spaces of the studio were recorded without human presence at the quietest parts of the day. Once recorded, the results have been greatly amplified revealing a surprising variety of sound. A ghostly emptiness alive with magnified minutiae, eerie and otherworldly shifts constantly in the ear - at once both familiar with displaced normality and strangely alien and intriguing. This is a CD for fans of experimental sound - consider Lithophonia for something vaguely within similar territory.