

PERRINE BOUREL

FROM

LA NÒVIA

You thought the hurdy-gurdy was spicy, mate, try plugging it into a pedalboard! The La Nòvia collective based in Le Puy-en-Velay in the Haute-Loire department of France are experts in melting consciousness from such antics. Spanning 15 odd musicians and multiple ensembles, theirs is a clash of kosmische drone and American minimalism wrought out of traditional Auvergne instruments and ballads. As sublime and heavy and transcendent as the Alps themselves. Or the Bleu d' Auvergne. Criminally underrated outside of Francophone Europe, I had a chat with fiddle player Perrine Bourel about her most recent record for the collective, and what dishes power their monstrous bals and sessions.

For those who don't know about it, could you tell us a little bit about La Nòvia collective?

La Nòvia is a collective based in Haute-Loire featuring musicians spanning from Auvergne, Rhône-Alpes, Béarn, Cévennes, Hautes-Alpes and Alsace. We reflect, reconsider and experiment with the traditional musics of the region (along with more modern avant-garde and minimalist musics), and the range of what we do in the collective - either playing music, or composing, or teaching music or art, or working in graphic design - creates a strong and dynamic overall aesthetic.

And could you tell us about yourself and your practice?

I'm a fiddle player (*violoneuse*) and I've played traditional music for about 20 years. I discovered experimental and contemporary music when I met La Nòvia's musicians. It was a shock! Likewise when I discovered the sound of collected fiddle players!

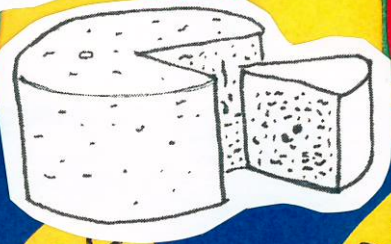
You've just put out a solo record. It's fantastic! Could you tell us about the recording and some of the techniques you used and explored?

Yvan Etienne (from La Nòvia) recorded this album, at the place where I live. I wanted to play tunes in different places to interrogate the acoustics of different surroundings. We recorded in my house while there was building work, in my cabin in the middle of the woods, in a little chapel and outside. The mix was very important - I didn't want a kind of guided tour of my place! It's all subtle wanderings. For this record I explored the intimate sounds of my fiddle in conversation with intimate parts of the space. I play pure traditional music from Alps as well as contemporary pieces wrote by Guilhem Lacroux and Yann Gourdon (also from La Nòvia).



How do you and the collective approach the traditional musics and instruments of the Auvergne and wider Occitan?

I think we approach it in the sound. We almost all play for bals (dances). When we play, we are all listening to collected players and we love those drones and rhythmic sounds. That type of sound speaks to us. We go inside of the collective sound and explore it. For me there is no difference between Auvergne or Southern Alps. The substance is the same. For my part - and I think for all of us in La Nòvia - I chose this music for its aesthetic beauty over an engagement related to a minority language and music. Although that is important, and I love to embody the idea of those oral music traditions, of this autodidact way of playing. It's a political engagement in that way

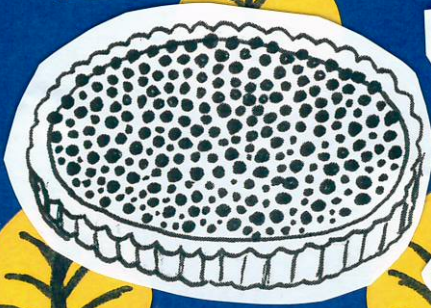


Would you say you explore the culinary traditions of the Auvergne and Haute-Loire in the same way? Either individually or as a group? How so?

It is difficult to say. For me, cooking is a both a creative act - from the heart if you like (as is music and, indeed, life - I'm trying to get better at it every day!) as well as a daily, practical act. It is very important for me to cook very good quality and simple basic products (local, organic...). I worked on farms a long time ago and I know how to grow vegetables, cereals, produce meat. It's a huge thing! So it is natural for me to support people who do that. Also, it is very important to take the time to cook. I think we all agree with that within the collective!

Does the collective rehearse/practice together regularly? How does food play a part in these sessions?

It depends, but each band has its own practice sessions. We also have a creative residency and we organise ourselves so we cook for each other, or sometimes somebody (a friend) comes to cook for us. To eat and drink well is essential for us, even if we have a lot of music work to do. It can get mad at big group sessions and parties when everybody brings their speciality for food and drinks. It is orgiastic!



Do you cook much? What's your specialty?

I have a family so I have the chance to practice cooking every day! I really like to cook for people who come here. Recently I organised a solo concert at home and I cooked a meal for everybody that we ate after the concert. It was a lovely experience, and I enjoyed getting into a relaxed condition for the concert while cooking. I have several specialties: *bœuf bourguignon* (cooked for 3 days!), pistou soup, einkorn/spelt soup, sweet and savoury tarts, French and Italian pasta, various cakes and pastries desserts. And I also do homemade lemon curd and mincemeat! I'm very curious of the food and cooking at other places I play, and when I go on tour I love to eat specialities of those places. And to bring home some food, or some recipes.



What do you tend to cook/eat before a bal or a performance?

Before performing we prefer to eat something light (fruits, cheese, bread, sausage) but afterwards we enjoy a good homemade meal.

You frequently perform *In C* as a collective too, yes? Is there something that powers that?

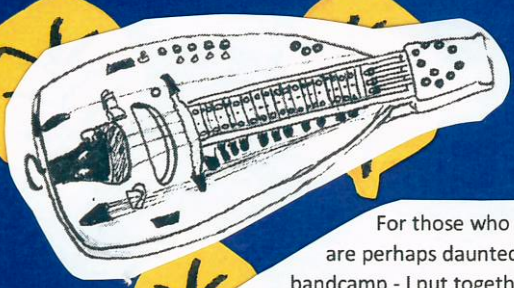
I don't think so! (I should invent something...haha)

Thanks for the talk! Any big plans for yourself or the collective coming up?

Maybe a Jericho tour in the UK in December [*please book this, don't make me beg - ed*].

perrinebourel.com

la-novia.bandcamp.com



For those who are new to the La Novia collective - and are perhaps daunted by the amount of stuff on their bandcamp - I put together a little primer of some of their best groups for you to sink yer teeth into over the page. There isn't really a food connection in this bit, I'm just using this platform as an excuse to shout about this lot. I dunno, make some bread while listening or whatever.

PEUCH GOURDON BRÉMAUD

My introduction to the collective, via a tip from Mike and Cara Gangloff in a list for Dusted Magazine. Overlapping layers of hurdy gurdy, cabrette (bagpipes) and violin build into head-spinning cacophony. All while the hypnotic stomp of feet keep root. The best of the American minimalists souped up in ecstatic frenzy and pumped direct into yr skull.

Check out: Their 2015 record. A 10 minute starter, then a 30 minute rampage.

VIOLONEUSES

Perrine Bourel's duo with Mana Serrano sees a thrillingly anarchic treatment of Occitanian fiddle tunes. Scraps and fragments threaded together irreverently, shot through with giddy song and deft experimentation - luminous drones, creaking bass, hovering screech and splattered plucks. A refreshing and unpredictable flight away from the weightier, hurdier-gurdier end of the collective.

Check out: The 15 minute collage/suite of seven tunes from their 2015 record

JÉRICHŌ

The jewel in the crown. Two singers spin classical ballads of the Occitan which dominate hefty, sidelong suites broken up by harsh ululations, laments, bals and pipe-led pastoral interludes. A sublime and dramatic clash of lofty, imposing hurdy-gurdy drones with the rhythmic, bardic momentum of the banjo. A proper tour de force!

Check out: The 2015 record. All of it. Then come see them when they visit in December.

FAUNE

This duo is perhaps the most sonically explorative in the collective - mining tunes and ballads or the Cantal with cabrettes, organs, synthesisers and even the glass harmonica! Guilhem Lacroux's guitar playing is best on show here for it's textural inventiveness and versatility. Dreamlike sweetness snaps into lead-tipped riffing with alarming suddenness! Gripping stuff!

Check out: I love their 2017 release, although their 2013 disc has a satisfying bite and distortion to it!

TOAD

Ugh. Toad take the bal to new extremes in by far the most brutal ensemble here. Amplified hurdy-gurdy, guitar and bagpipes push up harsh, sweaty tunes and possessive dances. Everything mushed together in claustrophobic suites. Everything intermingles - clash and buzz, swelter and buckle. Ferocious! Dare ya to dance!

Check out: Their 2014 release. Or their nastier kosmische 2018 release if yr feeling brave. And then the Baracande records after that!