



Les Primitifs du futur : Les Crimes du musette

Les Primitifs du Futur: Musette Crimes

It was in 1986 that the adventure of this band – quite unlike any other — began. It was the day Dominique Cravic met Robert Crumb, the celebrated American underground cartoonist, whose reputation had already spread to France when his drawings had first appeared a decade earlier, in the libertarian monthly magazine *Actuel*.

The name Primitifs du Futur, and their slightly quirky music, seem to have been borrowed from some offbeat novella by Jorge Luis Borges; and where the musical landscape is concerned, the group itself could almost be accused of breaking and entering. In addition, the format of this band has resembled variable geometry for many years, except for Dominique Cravic, who remains its conductor.

While the band's early strains of musette were quick to provide us with heartening swerves into blues and gypsy music, their "style" never stopped evolving – they brought in touches of tropical and Latin music, one after the other: beguine for example, waltzes that echoed salon music, or folk music from the Maghreb dating back to the 30s. The Primitifs varied stylistically without a care in the world for the obstacles of time.

That approach continues with this new album, *Les Crimes du musette*, a title that refers to the reservations expressed – sometimes condescendingly – by many people concerning musette, a genre that was celebrated and, at the same time, considered to be not quite as noble as bebop, free jazz, rockabilly, popular song, or even rock.

In this exhilarating, new Crimes opus, the material again draws water from new wells. One title recalls Chet Baker, while another gives a nod in Henri Salvador's direction; and let's not forget a tribute to the piano-bars found in grand hotels, and one piece that resembles a postcard from Africa. While on the subject of the album's content, we should note two delicious adaptations, in French *s'il vous plaît*, of the standard "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes", which makes you think of Django Reinhardt, and Paul Desmond's *Take Five*, inspired by Richard Anthony's own French version of it, plus a pair of songs whose lyrics we owe to Emmanuel Guibert, a writer who in 2024 was installed as an official member of France's Académie des Beaux-Arts.

Several threads underlie these Crimes, which you might care to listen to as if they were a suite of illuminating little pastels. First, like the scent of eternity, comes the Primitifs' elegant manner of dressing all this yesteryear music in contemporary suits – and the tailoring defies all labels. There are also these strolls through Paris that Patrick Modiano wouldn't disown: the path takes in the Jardin des Plantes, the banks of the River Seine, the Luxembourg Gardens, Saint-Germain-des-Prés and the Porte d'Orléans, with pauses in bistros where all the tablecloths are chequered, in a Chinese restaurant in Belleville and, as a bonus, on a trip to the suburbs and Chatou...

They follow this by restoring the accordion to the place where it belongs, thanks to a line-up of virtuoso musicians hailing from different universes: Raúl Barboza, Daniel Mille, Daniel Colin, Grégory Veux, Christophe Lampidecchia, Francis Varis and Seppe Vande Walle have all added to the credentials of their popular "squeezebox" and helped to make it the noble instrument it really is.

Les Crimes du musette constitutes a goldmine for scholars, a genuine treasure-hunt where, squeezed in between authors, composers and inspirations, we can also find some great names other than those already

mentioned: Pierre Barouh and Allain Leprest, Juliette Greco and François Truffaut, Jerome Kern and Tino Rossi, Paul Verlaine and Gino Bordin, Christophe, Joséphine Baker, Johnny Mercer and Ernst Lubitsch, Sanseverino and Alain Jean-Marie, Vincent Segal, Jean-Jacques Milteau, Fats Waller, Gunther Schuller, Glenn Miller... One can say the same for the instruments: a frame-drum called a bendir, a clavietta (aka melodica), a marimba, a musical saw, a Vietnamese đàn bầu (a one-string zither), plus Hawaiian guitar, theremin, ukulele, Japanese sanshin, woodblock and castanets... All of them play a part in the success of this recording that is a synonym for a happiness lost and found again.

“Kids have fires, but old folks can see the light,” smiled Dominique Cravic, quoting a customer in the bar called Le Bon Coin, in Dreux, where Dominique was born. What he had in mind was, “It’s an album made by old guys and we accept the consequences. Colin, Barboza, Milteau, Huck, Crumb and I, we’re all past seventy.”

Tracklist:

Accordéons de Paris et d’ailleurs; Ta femme m’a quitté; Dans le Jardin du Luxembourg; Les petits musiciens; Les enfants de João; Le balcon; Cool Paradis; Momo Mandole deligh; Boude pas; La Grande Serre; Fumée aux yeux; L’aquarium du Sébasto; J’fé pas canaill; Quand j’étais mort; Impressions d’Afrique; M’bube; Evergreen; Le colibri; N’oubliez pas Gréco; Ne tirez pas sur le pianiste; New moon dreams; Ukulélé Lady; Privé d’amour; Samedi soir Porte d’Orléans; La valse douce d’Henri Salvador; Patrick et Gino; Le tombeau de Monsieur Gino Bordin.

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