

**SWARMING PARIS** presents

## Métro Pré Saint-Gervais

**REISSUE**

Jean-Luc Guionnet, alto sax

Dan Warburton, violin

Eric La Casa, microphones

**Recorded live**

**in Pré-Saint-Gervais metro station, Paris**

**July 10th -11th 2001, between 22:30 and 00:30**

First edition : Chloé (USA), 2002

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ISBN 9782955958131

**AVAILABLE October 15th 2018**

REISSUE



**CD audio** [2 tracks | 64:00]

[digisleeve] 300 copies

***"10 Juillet 2001, station de métro parisien Pré-Saint-Gervais, Guionnet (sax alto), Warburton (violin), et La Casa (microphones) explorent les particularités acoustiques du lieu - le quai, l'ascenseur, les escaliers... - et expérimentent une musique en temps réel, au plus près du quotidien. Une référence, entre improvisation musicale in-situ et art sonore."***

*"On July 10th 2001, Guionnet (alto sax), Warburton (violin) and La Casa (microphones) explored the acoustics of the Pré Saint Gervais Metro station in Paris, riding the elevators, taking the stairs, experimenting real-time music in daily life. A reference, between site-specific improvisation and sound art."*

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## Reviews (selection)

*J'ai la mémoire de ce son, celui du métro parisien, bruits de portes qui claquent, sirènes, ce son lourd du métal on métal qui écrase plus sûrement qu'il emporte. Toujours ces mêmes sons, porteurs de cette angoisse du départ et de l'énigme de l'arrivée. Sons associés à la nuit, tout au moins à la lumière des néons concentrationnaires, au bout du tunnel les jours se ressemblant. Le souvenir aussi de quelques musiciens y faisant la manche, jouant rengaines ou répertoire classique, la distraction qu'ils apportent ou support à nos rêveries d'un ailleurs. La musique comme un autre transport. Curieux comme le temps se rétrécit alors.*

*Ce disque est porteur d'histoire, mais à la façon des Histoire(s) du cinéma de Jean-Luc Godard, image temps dépliée dans les différents " points de son " d'Eric La Casa, mixage entre métro, ces infimes histoires individuelles qui passent, happées par les micros et ces deux putains de grands instrumentistes qui creusent dans le son. Creusent et ne jouent pas, comme s'ils ne voulaient pas rapporter d'autres histoires, leurs anecdotes à celles des passants, s'imposant de rester immobile dans le son, de mettre en vibration ces zones d'ombre qui voient le passage des hommes. Il y a dans ce disque comme un montage cinéma, sans doute dû à la richesse de la vie et du surgissement de ses hasards, aux intuitions du trio, à la musicalité des microphonies de LA CASA. GUIONNET et WARBURTON tiennent des notes longues, maintiennent des unités de temps, y retiennent des voix, parlées, criées, stridences aussi. Curieux comme les micros redessinent l'espace, abolissent les plans pour les redistribuer autrement, devant/derrière, inversant les focales d'écoutes, des pas prenant autant d'ampleur que les souffles et les couacs du saxophone, instrumentalisés ou chosifiés à leurs tours. Voix d'annonces de la RATP, diva sans visage récitant sa poésie administrative, ritournelles inquiétantes, comme accompagnée par les intonarumori du métro disparaissant, reste quelques notes mourantes du violon et du saxophone. Ce disque parle de passage plus cruellement que beaucoup d'autres, il y aura forcément une fin au bout de cette nuit inversée, la poésie s'éteindra, les néons clignoteront seuls, les musiciens partis.*

*L'histoire ne dit pas s'ils ont fait la manche et ce qu'ils auraient eu pour salaire de leur belle besogne.*

**Michel HENRITZI**

*Another animal entirely is "Metro Pre Saint Gervais", recorded and performed in the Paris train station of the same name. English violinist Warburton (also a writer for the Wire and Signal to Noise) and the omnipresent Guionnet (here on alto sax) wandered around the train station with their instruments for an evening while Eric La Casa actively recorded the interactions between the duo and the station. In truth, the subway station itself makes this a quartet, since its peculiar gestures determine the nature of the sounds generated within. On this album, it can be heard interjecting bits of people's conversation, as well as its own strange acoustics, implacable bells and clangs, incidental noises and (of course) the occasional train in such a way that it is playing exactly as much as the "players" are. One tone seems to reoccur, echoing through the space as a sort of chorus to unite the piece's several sections. This odd tone is subtly quoted in Warburton and Guionnet's playing, which La Casa uses to underline serendipitous moments (like when an escalator drone matches the saxophone's pitch, or footsteps suggest a subtle rhythm, etc) into tense and concise compositions. La Casa is very conscious of the stereo field, as demonstrated in his pitting of violin against saxophone in opposing speakers, gradually pulled into the center just as a train arrives to obliterate the moment. Both instrumentalists play into their environment, blending with and accentuating aspects of the found acoustic space, rather than simply overlaying improv onto environmental noises, which would have been obvious and boring. There is a danger in this kind of sound work that the subject matter might be so opaque that it overshadows the music, but this trio seems to be aware of that. They have created a pure listening experience, in which the elements add up to a complete and thoughtful whole.*

**Howard Stelzer**

*This release has its unique point: the research of acoustic space of the subway station in Paris. There were some traditional instruments used (violin and sax), but the major part of the acoustic space is occupied by vehicles, movements and humans walking here and there. There are even some dialogues (between musicians and passengers?) If you are interested, I can tell you that I hardly can imagine all this situation. In Moscow, a city with more than 15 million residents, there is absolutely no escape from the crowd and especially in the subway, people get a move on and scurry about in all directions, just like in an ant hill. There are also some street musicians, but they frankly have a different repertoire... Well, back to music, it's haunting and lost in its timeless beauty. Both long tracks sometimes reach the point where the instruments sounding like the amplified squeak of train brake shoes or moving stairways, strained to infinity. It make me feel that instruments are merging into environment sounds and bulding strange combinations you can't identify. It seems that the purpose of musicians was, to dissolve completely in the vast subway space, and you see they were really succeed with it. I think it's the merit of Eric La Casa's unique approach to the environmental recordings - you may be familiar with him since his old band Syllyk. Now, he has devoted himself completely to field recordings, mostly natural. He is an aural photographer of the certain locations, and his main instrument is the microphone, as the performers of his music are water, wind, stones and trees. Dan Warburton plays violin and is going to release "Basement Tapes" album on David Tibet's Durtro imprint, with percussionist Edward Perraud and free jazz legend Arthur Doyle. Jean-Luc Guionnet has contributed to plenty of projects as composer and instrumentalist, the styles of his works range from jazz to radio-performance. As far I know, this is their debut collaboration, and it should appeal to those who like to travel sitting in their armchairs at home.*

*As you might guess from the title, this was recorded in a Paris Métro station one night in July 2001 by violinist and Wire contributor Dan Warburton, alto saxophonist Jean-Luc Guionnet and microphonist Eric La Casa. This "environmental" music makes an interesting (and beautiful) study in advanced counterpoint: a counterpoint of proximities whose reverberant characters announce themselves subliminally yet resoundingly, and the temporal counterpoint between the slow, patient music makers and the spasmodic infusions of commuters and the trains that disgorge them.*

*The first piece is like an overture, introducing us to the sound characters and themes which are fully developed in the main movement. Morton Feldman's ghost hovers for some fifteen minutes, as Warburton continually bows a low A on his violin while Guionnet repeats a multiphonic figure. At the 20 minute mark a train comes in and whooshes all that away, and the calm departs. La Casa parks himself under a nasty buzz, the musicians evaporate into whispers and clicks, and then a raft of industrial noises floods the chamber.*

*The train pulls away and Guionnet very cleverly retreats with it, while slap-tongueing Gustaffson-like thuds. Warburton goes nuts, flinging harmonic filigrees, a troupe of thrushes dancing on his strings. Near the very end the automated announcement reprises, and one realizes what would in real-time have been a tedious wait for a train has been filled by the apparition of these soundspaces in the tunnels, filling the dead time with a poetry of echoes, ghosts, vapors wafting away into the cool Paris night.*

**Tom Djll** The Wire