

RONE "Tohu Bohu"

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Interview: Rone talks inspiration (Berlin, Nietzsche and abandoned airports)

By DJ Pangburn 5 days ago

French-born artist [Rone](#) (Erwin Castex) makes his home in Berlin, crafting a beautiful and complex brand of electronic music with a lineage more in line with '90s heavy-hitters [Orbital](#), Chemical Brothers and [Underworld](#) than the famous though tired French Touch genre of his homeland. Rone's first release, "Spanish Breakfast," gained him a lot of attention, especially when his track "Flesh" made its way onto Sasha's "Involv2er" mix alongside [Apparat](#) and [M83](#). Since then his reputation in electronic music circles has only grown more intense.

Now, three years later, Rone is releasing the brilliant LP "Tohu Bohu," one of 2012's best albums, which finds the producer gliding through various seas of synaesthetic electronic sound. It's a masterful recording, to the say the least. No hyperbole, just pure truth. One need only hear the two opening tracks, "Templehof" and "Bye bye macadam," to realize Rone is one of the shining lights of electronic music in a decade of micro-genres and artists that burst brilliantly then fade into internet obscurity.

I recently talked to Rone about the process of creating "Tohu Bohu," his move to Berlin, and the greatness of Underworld.

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Can you talk a bit about your personal background in electronic music, such as the first memories of hearing electronic music and when you attempted your own recordings?

My First memory of electronic music was "Oxygène" by Jean-Michel Jarre. I remember hearing that track when I was about 8 years old... I really wanted to get the record for my birthday but I didn't know who it was so I started humming it to salesmen in various record stores before finally finding it.

Were you in any way influenced by early to late '90s electronic artists like The Orb, Orbital, Underworld, etc?

Indeed, I listened to a lot of Underworld as a teenager! I was fascinated by the energy they delivered on stage. The way they could put the audience in a state of trance. In the nineties I also listened to Aphex Twin, Boards Of Canada, Amon Tobin... I really entered the world of electronic music through labels like Warp or Ninja Tune. I was also listening to more techno stuff like Jeff Mills, Laurent Garnier or Fumiya Tanaka, for example.

You moved from France to Germany, specifically Berlin. How has the electronic music community in Berlin influenced your music? Or has it not, really?

Indeed, I don't think I would have made the same record if I'd stayed in Paris. What's surprising is that this album doesn't sound Berliner at all. In fact I wasn't influenced by the Berlin scene, but by the city itself, its space, its rhythm. Actually I probably wouldn't have finished my album if I'd stayed in Paris, the fact of moving to Berlin made it easier for me to make music. I recovered a kind of freshness and distance from my music.

Berlin is a brilliant city, I'm really happy here even though I finally realised that the important thing was to move. It really feeds creativity. Right now, for example, I feel like I've grown roots in Berlin and maybe it will be time I move to make the third album.

What's your songwriting and recording process like?

The opposite of the first album, which I produced nearly entirely over nights. This one was made in the mornings. I was getting up early and, just awake, I started making music without thinking, without knowing which way to go, just letting myself ramble. And when suddenly something interesting came up, I tried to grasp it and develop it to make a track out of it.

Are you strictly laptop in approach? That is, strictly software, or do you combine keyboards and other hardware effects to craft your sound?

I did my first records with a simple computer. But for "Tohu Bohu" I used a lot of hardware. One day when I was in Berlin, my studio neighbour, who is a genuine synth collector, came to

me and said, "I'm off to Australia for a couple of months, could you look after my synths?" I answered, "Yes, of course... if I can use them!" And that's how I got my hands on a massive collection of machines (Korg MS20, Roland SH101, TB303, etc.). I used them a lot on my album.

On "Templehof" I sort of sensed an Ulrich Schnauss-esque sound. It also reminded me of one of the really unheralded American electronic duos Freescha. It's an incredibly beautiful and well-engineered song. Can you talk about its creation?

Thank you very much! I don't know these musicians but I will listen their work. "Tempelhof" is an airport that's not in use anymore. I love this place. I decided to come live in Berlin while I was walking on this gigantic empty runway in the snow. So it was logical for me to open the album with this track.

On the single "Parade," the main synth line almost has an indie pop hook. It's quite beautiful. Did you hear that line in your head because it sounds infinitely hummable. I find myself walking around humming the tune, and wondered if that's how it came to you.

Actually, for that track I was playing with the dials on a synth when suddenly that particular sound came up, close to the sound of an electric guitar. I sat behind the keyboard, played a while, and that little melody quickly took form. It's as simple as that.

Any big plans for visuals when you play live?

Yes, Studio Fünf—who directed the video clip for the track "So so so"—and I developed a scenography for the live shows. While I'm working on the music, he works on video and lights.

What artists are you really digging right now internationally?

I really like the work of people like Caribou, James Holden and Four Tet. In another genre, I also really like Pantha du Prince, Jon Hopkins and Clark.

With "Icare" there's a bit of a Vangelis vibe going on. Is that mere coincidence, or were you attempting to update that sonic palette to your own style.

At some point when I was working on that track I realised I was doing something very epic, a bit grandiloquent à la Vangelis. For a moment I was concerned it would turn out ridiculous. Then I thought I should undertake the making of a very cinematographic track. And I went to the bottom of my idea by adding a symphonic orchestration.

Are there any films or books that particularly influence your music?

I think of philosophers like Nietzsche, Deleuze or even my friend Alain Damasio who changed my vision of the world, my life, and by consequence the way I approach music. Cinema has probably considerably influenced my work; I watch more DVDs than I listen to records. I like so many different things (the French Nouvelle Vague, Asian cinema, Hollywood classics and the latest blockbusters) that I can hardly name just a few titles.

Any plans to tour the US?

No firm plans at the moment. But I hope it's going to happen very soon. I played in Washington and in NYC a few months ago and I totally loved it. In NYC I played Le Bain, that amazing club located at the top of the Standard Hotel. Tim Sweeney invited me in his radio show "Beats In Space." Then I ended up in an improvised concert in Brooklyn, with my friend the cello player Gaspar Claus, Sufjan Stevens and members of The National. A very memorable trip! I would really like to discover the rest of the United States... the West Coast for example.

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