

iF1055 Toh Imago – Nord Noir
Release date: October 18th.2019

infiné



“*Nord Noir*” spins a tale as much as it paints a sonic landscape. Its progenitor **Toh Imago** took the time to sharpen his artistic chops under a few different guises, resisting the 21st-century affliction that is instant gratification at all costs, ultimately spending over 18 months to develop the narrative arc underlying his first opus. Using the historical context of the north of France’s proletariat past, he created a dense, hypnotic, haunted album that will sit comfortable alongside the works of Daniel Avery, Efdemin and Blawan.

Giving an idea (let alone *ideas*) the time and space to gestate and take shape in an age marked by urgency and panic is something of a heresy, but this is just another expression of Toh Imago’s contrarian spirit. Taking years to refine his artistic identity is a gift that the young producer, who burst onto the French electronic music scene in 2012, consciously gave himself. In the same vein, taking **eighteen months to craft** the full arc of his first full-length is another feat of patience and dedication – especially in 2019.

This slow simmering translates to the droning, relentless grit underlying the resulting album, which manages to restore a sense of the concept album to techno – silencing the pessimists who believe that the genre has been stripped of its narrative import.

Throughout the dense, hypnotic, portent *Nord Noir* the northern France native thus decided to tell a story – many stories, **the stories of the region’s miners**. Miners such as his grandfather, who suffered not only from the physical fallout from an explosion, but also of the accusations of having caused said conflagration that were leveled against him.

Without focusing on solely that character (and without setting out to create a particular sound), Toh Imago originally drew inspiration from literature, specifically the **Sorj Chalandon** novel “*Le jour d’avant*”, which may or may not be a fictionalization of the events that the musician’s grandfather related to him some years before his death. North of the Channel, he may as well have been inspired by Thatcher-era narratives, such as *GB84*, David Peace’s omnisciently-detailed account of the Strike; *The Litten Path*, James Clarke’s bird’s eye surveying of the era; or Val McDermid’s *A Darker Domain*, which deployed a whodunit as a pretext to examine the day’s sociological backdrop.

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The album, in its own way, serves as a chronicle of a world that has all but ceased to exist, an epoch that has met its demise. Parallels can be drawn between other industrial centers that have declined and have become cradles of electronic music innovation: Detroit, Manchester...

The North's mines, the grave clouds rolling – a darkness that is reflected in *Nord Noir's* coarse grooves. A time and a space that is universally concrete, fathomable, but distant. A world imbued with a latent, unsaid violence.

While techno music appears as the perfect canvas to transcribe the constellation of mechanical, industrial ambiances that lend themselves to the topic at hand, Toh Imago – as he is wont to do – finds a kind of malicious solace in deconstruction. "*Décadence Cadence*"'s obsessive cadence invokes the ghosts of the arduous rhythms that the miners had to uphold, only to deviously slow down along the way, while "*Sainte Barbe*" has a footing in acid techno and a hand in electronica, all while indulging in the debauchery of psychedelia – like a religious incantation to the patron saint of miners. '*Galerie Boisée*' concludes the album with a sometimes soothing, sometimes tense visit of the subterranean universe, echoing the lament of the wooden beams that supported the mines, providing protection for the workers.

Through the last of album's ten tracks, paced as they are with interludes and sequenced like a documentary novel, the listener is left with the sense of having taken in a complete *oeuvre*, rather the sum of parts that classically constitutes the definition of an album.

The ruminating darkness of the north's tumultuous history remains subdued and appeased, as though chronicled by a placid historian. *Nord Noir* is somber at heart but is made lighter by another event in the young producer's life: the welcoming of a child, an opening to a new vitality that begins a new chapter in the slow build of a still-nascent career. This newfound maturity is proof that once in a while, a debut can also emerge as a fully-formed masterpiece.

DIGITAL

1_Final Silence

03:26 - FR T09 19 000 80

2_Nord Noir

04:39 - FR T09 19 000 81

3_La Napoule

05:38 - FR T09 19 000 82

4_Décadente Cadence

04:40 - FR T09 19 000 83

5_Schiste Pyramide

04:38 - FR T09 19 000 84

6_Extraction 2

02:01 - FR T09 19 000 85

VINYL

A SIDE

A1_Final Silence 3:25

A2_Nord Noir 4:38

A3_La Napoule 5:42

A4_Décadente Cadence 4:38

B SIDE

B1_Schiste Pyramide 4:41

B2 - Sainte Barbe 5:18

B3 - Vertical Cheval 4:34

B4 - Galerie Boisée 6:09