

RONE

"Tohu Bohu"

infiné

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INTERVIEW: RONE

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French label InFiné, established by Agoria, shelters a lot of amazing talent that prefer not to conform themselves to hypes, bandwagons, or any boundaries that limit ones creativity. Over the past years, the label has spawned numerous sensational releases from the likes of Cubenx, Oxia, Apparat and Danton Eeprom to name just a few, making it one of the tastemaking labels for fans of both club-proof as intensely emotive music.

Among the labels most skilled producers is Rone, or Erwan Castex, whose music is best described as a breathtaking fusion of ambient, techno, and a subtle dash of progressive minimalism coated in storytelling compositions. The French producer first appeared on our radar in 2009, when he released his critically acclaimed debut album 'Spanish Breakfast'. An intelligent fusion of dreamy synthesizers, chugging beats and a warped sense of atmospherics, the album made Rone almost overnight one of France's most exciting producers. Last month saw the release of Rone's second album 'Tohu Bohu', on which the producer again treats us to his wonderfully melodic approach to soul-piercing electronics, yet in an even more developed and sophisticated way. Click [here](#) if you missed our review. More than enough reason for us to go and have a chat with the man behind the music...

Hey Erwan, thanks for taking the time to do this interview. How's life treating you lately?

I'm living a very exciting time! After a long stretch of sitting alone in the studio, releasing the album is a very intense moment. I feel like a bear coming out of hibernation. And I'm also playing my new tracks live, which is always magical, because they take on another dimension when played live. I can re-invent them endlessly.

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First off, congratulations on your new album 'Tohu Bohu', which has just been released on InFiné. It is often said that delivering a decent sophomore album can be very challenging, especially when your debut album has set high expectations. Can you relate to this? Did you feel any pressure while working on the album's content?

Yes, well, it wasn't so easy to do this album. The first album was really easy because I didn't realize I was making an album. I was just making music, without thinking and without any ambition. It was very spontaneous: all the tracks were there and InFiné told me: "that's a very good album you've got there, we'll release it!".

Things got more complicated for the second album: suddenly I had to work bearing in mind that people were expecting the result of my work. It unsettled me and I had to make an effort to revert to the frame of mind I was in when I started making music. It took me a while. Then I realized I had to try not to think about the others and what I am expected to do. If I start making music while asking myself what people might think of it, it doesn't work—a guaranteed deadlock. The paradox is that of course I make music in the hope of being loved, or at least to express something. But the more we hug ourselves tight, the more we risk meeting brotherly souls.

Can you tell us more about the production process? How did you experience writing the album tracks?

At 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.

I never have a track readymade in my mind. In a way it's more an instinctive process. I could search for a particular sound for ages, without finding it. It's a constant dialogue with the machines to find a satisfying compromise. I don't want to lock myself up in a genre either, but if people want to dance to "Tohu Bohu" and find it intelligent, I won't complain about it.



Production wise, did you use different techniques and methods as compared to working on your debut album 'Spanish Breakfast'?

On this album I used analog machines which I didn't have on the first album, and I feel my sound has gone denser, like it grew muscles, a bit like my music went from childhood to adolescence.

"Spanish Breakfast" was my "Bedroom" album, I did it on my own in my small flat in Paris with a computer, Ableton and two speakers, mostly during the night. For "Tohu Bohu", the situation was quite different. Straight after I moved to Berlin, I found a real studio. Every day I got up to go there and I also got to know some producers working in the neighbouring studio. One of them let me use his instruments for two months while he was away. Overnight, I had about ten keyboards handy (Korg MS20, Roland SH101, TB 303, Doepfer Dark Energy...). This just gave me a whole new approach to production.

We heard that the past three years have been an emotional rollercoaster to you in various ways. How has this been of influence on the new album, and your life in general?

I called this album Tohu Bohu ('Commotion' in french) because I have the feeling it's the result of a big chaos that's been tamed. A lot of ideas sprung up when I left Paris for Berlin, changing cities and life style must have triggered something very creative in me, which I had to deal with. I produced lots of tracks, good ones and less good ones, it went in all directions. The difficulty was to organize this little mess.

You just mentioned your relocation to Berlin. What has been the idea behind this move?

I mainly felt the need to leave Paris, to uproot myself. I could have gone anywhere else, but I chose Berlin because I love that city.

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 realized 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. One album, one country... Nice idea, isn't? ;)

Very! Now, your music is defined as being very emotive and coated in complex layers. Would you say your personal feelings impact your music when working in the studio?

Yes, I feel like a sponge; I absorb everything happening around me and then I and spit them back out again in my music...

The album has been released on InFine, with whom you have a longstanding relationship. Can you describe your partnership with the label?

Infiné is a label I love working with. It's a nice team, the people there have different yet complementary personalities. I feel totally free in my creative process, and at the same time I have the nice feeling of being surrounded, framed and supported by the label. They don't impose anything but suggest a lot... it's very precious.



You refrain from DJing, instead performing exclusively live. Why's that?

I have stopped DJing a few years ago. It does not mean I won't do it again in the future but when I am in the process of producing, which has been the case for the last three years, I really need to test my tracks with the audience. Even when they have been mastered and released, they get a second life and constantly evolve when they are played live.

Live shows allows me to re-invent my tracks on stage, to give them a second life, to take them further. Then, my music also gets to another level thanks to the energy of the audience. It's brilliant! I love it!

What are your plans now that the album is finished?

An international live tour! At the moment, we are working on a live set + video performance together with Studio Fünf (which produced the video of "So So So"). And then with Infiné we are working on releasing a series of remixes from the album. Musicians and producers will rework tracks in very different styles. They are all people I met through the past few years and whose work I admire, it's as simple as that. I'll also write the music to my friend Vladimir Mavounia-Kouka's next film, then there are many other beautiful projects I'm working on, but it's a bit early to talk about that. We'll get the chance to come back on those projects soon!

Please keep us in the loop! To conclude, any final words of wisdom to our readers? Anything goes!

Well... a huge 'thank you' to the readers of Beatsandbeyond for reading this interview to the end! I hope to be playing in a place near you and meet you very soon. See you!