

RONE

"Tohu Bohu"

infiné

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INTERVIEW: RONE



Rone, otherwise known as Erwan Castex, is a remarkably eloquent person, which shouldn't really come as much of a surprise when his music is so emotive. His debut album *Spanish Breakfast*, first established the French producer as a burgeoning talent to look out for, with its powerful melodies earning the record a wealth of critical acclaim. Since then, he's released equally well-regarded EP, 'So So So', composed the score for a short film, moved to Berlin and now finished his second LP, *Tohu Bohu*. High are the expectations, then, for this latest offering, and they're not about to be disappointed. *Tohu Bohu* explores a range of sounds and genres, ranging from ambient and melodic techno, to hypnotic electronica and even hip-hop (the collaboration with High Priest, 'Let's Go', being one of the highlights of the album). While this could seem like a rather tall order for one record, the tracks together make a coherent whole. As with *Spanish Breakfast*, this is one of those rare records which is perfect for home listening with its epic musical journeys, whilst punctuating it throughout are a few key tracks which will undoubtedly be heard on many a good dance floor. Quite simply, this album is excellent! Ahead of the launch party for *Tohu Bohu* on Friday 16 November—a live show of musical and visual surprises—we interview the man himself to find out a little bit more about the record and the man behind the music.

For me the sound of your new album, Tohu Bohu, is markedly different from your previous album, Spanish Breakfast, and your last EP, So So So. How much of this change was a result of your move from Paris to Berlin?

I don't think I would have made the same record if I'd stayed in Paris. But surprisingly you can't really feel the influence of the German musical scene on my new record, even though I don't think I couldn't have done it anywhere else. Berlin influenced me in its own way, more by its rhythm and space than by its nightlife.

On that note, why did you choose to move to Berlin?

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'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. Perhaps Barcelona or London? ;)

You say that "Tohu Bohu" is a representation of my own chaos, which I have harnessed, worked my way through and committed to record. For me, this album feels anything but chaotic, rather a collection of masterfully composed tracks which together make a cohesive whole. Can you explain a little more what you mean by this?

One night, I was watching a documentary about Nietzsche and his theory of chaos. I just thought it fitted in some ways with my personal case. It's the reason why I called this album "Tohu Bohu". Tohu Bohu, in French, means disorder, noise, effervescence... I thought it was fitting to what I was experiencing in studio. After my first album, a lot of ideas came to me but I was not able to organize them. Tracks were piling up, ideas were flowing, it was a total mess: a chaos that needed to be tamed and put in shape to make a record.

I also liked this idea of "noise", this concrete intervention of auditory matter. But if you are able to listen to it now, that's because I succeeded in organising this psychological and physical chaos in me, and finished my record.

After having garnered a significant amount of critical acclaim from the release of Spanish Breakfast and subsequent releases, did you feel under pressure to produce something equally exemplary? Or better said, produce something as equally loved by the public?

Yes, the first album was really easy because I didn't realise I was making an album. I was just making music, without thinking and without 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 realised I have 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.

Tell us about the technical production of the record:

What instruments did you use in its composition? What's your studio set up?

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.

You worked in film before going full-time with music, right? Do you feel that this has affected your approach towards musical composition?

Yes, I think cinema has a big influence on the way I make music. While making "Tohu Bohu" I sometimes felt like I was writing the soundtrack to a film that doesn't exist.

For me, your music has something cinematic about it—the evocative and emotive scope of many of the tracks seem highly suitable for cinematic scoring. Have you composed for film?

Yes, I already did it for a short movie called "The Cord Woman", directed by Mavounia-Kouka, who's done the artwork for all my records and also directed the video for "Spanish Breakfast". I really enjoyed this experience! Musically it allows me to explore territories which I wouldn't have gone to alone... And I'm actually going to write the soundtrack for his second movie.

Many of your tracks have striking videos as visual accompaniment: Spanish Breakfast, So So So, and now Parade. What level of involvement do you have in the production of these videos?

All these videos were directed by friends. I've known Vladimir Mavounia Kouka (who directed "Spanish Breakfast") since I was 14. He was my next-door neighbour. Studio Fünf (who directed "So so so") is a bunch of really good friends and my neighbours in Berlin. Natalia, who plays in the "Parade" video is one of my best friends. In short it's a family business. I love all these people and I trust them totally, I don't feel I need to impose anything, I give them full carte blanche. I follow the evolution of the videos from afar, I make suggestions... but that's it. I spend so much time alone in the studio that I find it interesting to see them bring a bit of their world into mine. That's the interesting thing about these collaborations.

Do you intend for your audience to take the tracks and the videos as one creative production? Or are the videos intended more as complements to the musical productions?

I see this more as a visual interpretation of my music. But the one that a listener can picture in his or her head is also good. So yes, I see this more as an amusing way to bring a track elsewhere. I even sometimes feel it transforms the music a bit, because the images are not mine and they offer a point of view that I didn't specially have when producing the track. At the end of the day, it's the opposite to a sound track that adds sense to the images... in a way it's the image-track to the music ☺

You clearly have a strong interest in the visual arts, as exhibited by your video productions and collaborations with Vladimir Mavounia-Kouka and Studio Fünf. Can you envisage taking this interest and collaborative work even further? Perhaps with a project similar to Björk's Biophilia album-app?

Indeed, I find this turn interesting. We are already working on a sound/video show with Studio Fünf. I also have other projects with different artists, photographers, video directors and even painters.

You're renowned for exclusively playing live performances. Can you explain why it is you choose to do this?

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!

On Friday, you're launching Tohu Bohu in London in collaboration with Trax Magazine. What can we expect from this performance?

Yes! It's the very first time I play in London, so I'm really excited. Looking forward to be there! I will play my album in a very different way... And some new tracks too. I will try to surprise people and to surprise myself! ;)

Can we expect any more releases or collaborations over the coming months?

Yes... I am working on various projects: new tracks, film scores and collaborations. Max Cooper was recently in my studio in Berlin and we worked together on a track for example...

Catch Rone at Club Trax on Friday 16 November:

Club Trax
95 Kingsland High Street,
London E8 2PB
9pm – 4am