

## Orchestre Tout Puissant Marcel Duchamp - *Ventre Unique*

The brainchild of Geneva-based Vincent Bertholet, founded in 2006, Orchestre Tout Puissant Marcel Duchamp is a perpetually evolving 'orchestra', loosely modelled on the great 20<sup>th</sup>-century African groups like Tout Puissant Orchestre Poly-Rythmo de Cotonou and tipping its hat to revolutionary French artist Marcel Duchamp.

New album *Ventre Unique* - their sixth, and the successor to 2021's acclaimed *We're Ok But We're Lost Anyway* - is as exuberant as it is emotionally fraught with a dream amalgam of folk, krautrock, post-punk and African rhythms that feels both uncluttered and beautifully organic. The album will be released on Bongo Joe Records (Vincent Bertholet co-founded the label with Cyril Yeterian), with band and label both sharing a collective vision that was forged from Geneva's punk history and squat scene.

It finds them once again exploring contemporary anxieties and setting them to music that balances fat, loping grooves - built around simple loops written by Bertholet - sparkling marimba, strident horns and strings with dissonance and angular guitar riffs. The beautiful sleeve art comes courtesy of French painter Dove Perspicacius.

The recording of *Ventre Unique* took place over ten days in a studio near Paris, Studio Midilive in Villetaneuse, and was overseen by Johannes Buff who mixed *We're Ok But We're Lost Anyway*. The orchestra was comprised of an international cast of 12 musicians including many OTPMD regulars: Frenchman Gilles Poizat on bugle, lead vocalist Liz Moscarola, two marimba players (Aïda Diop and Elena Beder), two drummers (Gabriel Valtchev and Guillaume Lantonnet), guitarists (Romane Millet and Titi), a trombonist (Gif), a viola-player (Thomas Malnati-Levier), a cellist (Naomi Mabanda) and Bertholet on double bass. Every one of the musicians is a singer too, contributing to the glorious mass of vocals that gives OTPMD songs their emotional resonance and ritualistic power. They also worked with new vocalists: Mara Krastina (who will be more involved with the group in future) from Swiss band Massicot on *Smiling Like A Flower* and François Marry from French group François and the Atlas Mountains - you can hear the latter's distinctively lilting tone on *Tout Haut*.

Following the release of *We're Ok But We're Lost Anyway* also on Swiss label Bongo Joe, the group - a travelling party of 14 people, including two sound engineers - crossed numerous borders themselves, playing around 150 shows and touring in territories they'd never visited before: Canada, USA, the Balkans, Greece. Whereas *We're Ok But We're Lost Anyway's* vision was of a world falling apart (it was written during the Covid pandemic), *Ventre Unique's* seems to be one of people

working out what they have in common. *Coagule* opens with the line "C'est assez inédit comme forme de tristesse/l'extinction de l'espèce" ("It's a rather novel form of sadness/the extinction of the species".) Miraculously, the group are able to tackle themes like these in a spirit of generosity, inspiring people to come together and dance - not to forget their troubles, but to forge a new commonality.

As Bertholet says of the album's title, "It comes from a sentence I sing in 'Coagule'. Pour le moment, on coagule en un ventre unique, on s'agglomère autour d'un rêve commun" (which translates as "for the moment, we're coagulating into a single womb, coalescing around a common dream."). The idea is that we're all the same, with all our differences. "We're one, coming from Pachamama, also known as Mother Earth. Saying that, I feel it's a bit cheesy, but it's an important idea."

The group's political outlook and vision of radical collectivity was forged in Geneva's punk past and its squat scene, the spirit of which lives on in the Les Disques de Bongo Joe label and record shop. Bertholet - who is also a member of of minimal trance-pop duo Hyperculte - helped set up Bongo Joe along with Cyril Cyril's Cyril Yeterian, yet is no longer involved, day to day, with the label.

One of the triumphs of OTPMD is their longevity and the manner in which the group's sound and spirit is maintained, regardless of personnel. "This idea of changing line-ups is very important in the process of writing the music" according to Bertholet. "I always try to propose very simple ideas, which don't require too much rehearsal to be played. The music must be simple so that whoever the musician is, it doesn't change the sound of the band. It's one of the key ideas behind the band and the compositions. We're a collective force and individuals are not important."

31.10 - La Chaux-de-Fonds - Temple Allemand, CH

01.11 - Tour Vagabonde, Fribourg, CH

07.11 - L'Usine, Genève, CH

08.11 - La Grenze, Strasbourg FR

09.11 - Rotonde, Brussels, BE

10.11 - Jazz Cafe, London, UK

13.11 - La Marbreire, Montreuil, FR

14.11 - La Soufflerie, Rezé FR

15.11 - Antipode, Rennes, FR

16.11 - La Grange à Musique, Creil, FR

23.11 Jack Jack, Bron, FR