

Les Marquises — A Night Full of Collapses (2017)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 28 August 2017 16:26 -

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A1 Vallées Closes 5:04 Cello – François Clos, Julien Nouveau Double Bass – Jeff Hallam
Drums, Percussion – Jonathan Grandcollot Guitar – Olivier Mellano Keyboards – Martin Duru
Marimba – Louis Montmasson Piano – Christian Quermalet Vocals, Keyboards, Guitar, Drum
Machine – Jean-Sébastien Nouveau

A2 Lament 2:56 Double
Bass – Jeff Hallam Drums, Percussion – Jonathan Grandcollot Guitar – Olivier Mellano
Keyboards – Martin Duru Vocals, Backing Vocals, Keyboards, Percussion, Drum Machine –
Jean-Sébastien Nouveau

A3 Feu Pâle 5:47

Double Bass – Jeff Hallam Drums, Percussion – Jonathan Grandcollot Guitar – Olivier
Mellano Keyboards, Guitar – Jean-Sébastien Nouveau, Martin Duru Piano – Christian
Quermalet Trumpet – Souleymane Felicioli Vocals – Matt Elliott

A4 The Beguiled 5:36

Backing Vocals, Vocals – Matt Elliott Backing Vocals, Vocals, Keyboards – Jean-Sébastien
Nouveau Double Bass – Jeff Hallam Drums, Percussion – Jonathan Grandcollot Guitar –
Olivier Mellano Keyboards, Backing Vocals – Martin Duru Marimba – Louis Montmasson
Piano – Christian Quermalet

B1 A Forest Of Line 9:11

Cello, Keyboards – François Clos Double Bass – Jeff Hallam Drums, Percussion – Jonathan
Grandcollot Guitar – Olivier Mellano Keyboards – Martin Duru Keyboards, Guitar –
Jean-Sébastien Nouveau Marimba – Louis Montmasson Piano – Christian Quermalet Violin –
Agathe Max

B2 Following Strangers 4:21

Backing Vocals, Keyboards, Guitar, Drum Machine – Jean-Sébastien Nouveau Double Bass –
Jeff Hallam Guitar – Olivier Mellano Keyboards, Guitar, Backing Vocals – Martin Duru
Marimba – Louis Montmasson Vocals, Backing Vocals – Matt Elliott

B3 Des Nuits 4:56

Backing Vocals, Vocals, Keyboards, Drum Machine – Jean-Sébastien Nouveau Double Bass –
Jeff Hallam Drums, Percussion – Jonathan Grandcollot Guitar – Olivier Mellano Keyboards –
Martin Duru Marimba – Louis Montmasson Piano – Christian Quermalet

B4 The Passing

Backing Vocals – Matt Elliott Double Bass – Jeff Hallam Drums, Percussion – Jonathan
Grandcollot Guitar – Olivier Mellano Keyboards – François Clos, Martin Duru Vocals,
Keyboards, Guitar – Jean-Sébastien Nouveau

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‘There can be no doubt with release of his third album, A Night Full Of Collapses, that Les Marquises is a remarkable project,’ proclaims the press release. Ordinarily it would be readily dismissible as hype, but a few tracks into A Night Full Of Collapses it becomes clear that this is not the case. Moreover, it’s a statement of fact.

I’m by no means the only critic to laud albums for their diversity and eclecticism, citing these qualities as evidence of artistic vision and capability. More often than not, this eclecticism manifests as an explosion of disparate sonic fragments, pulled together as if by some magnetic force, their relationships unknown and unknowable to the listener, with their only overt connection being the associative links forged in the mind of the creator. We applaud the creativity and the artist’s capacity to convey the electrical storm of the mind and something approximating the experience of life in the postmodern age in a single document. Sometimes, we may marvel at the artist’s ability to pull together such myriad sources and reference points while retaining some semblance of cohesion. Oftentimes, the likelihood is this praise will be sincere. It’s hard not to find some admiration and respect for an artist who can demonstrate a capacity for such mental and sonic gymnastics.

A Night Full Of Collapses is an album which is a rich tapestry of ideas. However, it isn’t an explosion of ideas: it’s something infinitely more subtle, more refined, more nuanced, more articulate. I’ve spent an entire week of evenings attempting to capture the album’s appeal and the experience of listening to it, but invariably find myself becoming distracted – not because the music fails to engage me, but because it sends me off on divergent psychological journeys, each track prompting a new trajectory for my introspective mental meanderings. I’m listening, but I’m not, because I’m being subliminally guided towards interior spaces, and A Night Full Of Collapses is the soundtrack to my fugue-like experience. I’m so reply immersed in the experience, I forget to type. Repeatedly. I resurface momentarily, and suddenly realise that once again, four or five songs have passed and I’ve not typed a word and can’t remember a thing. No, it not the Oranjeboom, Rioja, or Russian Standard which is responsible for my apparent amnesia.

Whatever this album seems to be at any given point, it is not. It begins as a work of haunting chamber music, in equal parts solemn and playful, as strings, picked and struck, form a regimented backdrop to the breathy, vocal utterances delivered with a Gallic *je ne sais quoi*... ‘Valées Closes’ possesses a quiet, restrained intensity, even when the drums rush in against a burst of expressive piano notes which cascade in an effusion of excitement.

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Jean-Sébastien Nouveau leads an extensive ensemble (which now includes Matt Elliott of The Third Eye Foundation and Agathe Max of Ofield and Farewell Poetry), through a carefully-orchestrated set of compositions. It's the hushed restrained approach to composition which renders A Night Full Of Collapses such a remarkable album. It encroaches into the mindspace by stealth. The dreamy, drifting 'Feu Pâle' is exemplary: a slow, hypnotic drifting tune, over which Nouveau croons a heavy-lidded, slow croon that's sort of soporific, sort of comforting but sort of uncanny.

'The Beguiled' is built around an insistent tom-led rolling rhythm and suspense-laden piano and builds an expansive tension which ultimately dissipates rather than climaxes. 'Following Strangers' is a woozy, soporific semi-ambient song, driven – no, not so much driven as pinned together – by a slow, echo-soaked, dub-inspired beat. The darkly brooding piano-led Des Nuits' is dark, uncomfortable, the low, creeping bass and piano providing a sparse sonic backdrop to Nouveau's queasy, semi-whispered vocals, a strathing whisper building unsettlingly beneath the surface.

Coming to, to discover 'The Passing' has almost passed, I wonder again where the time has gone where the album has gone, and how Les Marquises have achieved this sonic sleight of hand, this mystical folding of time and mind. After so many slips in time, so many strange moments of detachment accompanied by A Night Full Of Collapses, I have decided that I am happy for this question to remain unanswered in perpetuity. It's rare for an album to have such an inexplicable effect, and to attempt to unravel it would be to break the spell. ---Christopher Nosnibor, auralaggravation.com

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