

THE REMYN_4

LIMA / TOKYO / LIMA 20-A テルミン4

LINER NOTES

THE CITY IS NO LONGER A DARK VAULT

To go back twenty years in the discography of a musician is, undoubtedly, a reason to celebrate. And it is so -among a dozen reasons- because it is about a musician who is still alive and restless; not an inactive one, whose career has become a rumor. Thus, the reissue of *Lima/Tokyo/Lima* is the commemoration of a life project such as *Theremyn_4* is for José Gallo, its factotum and numen. It is also the opportunity to re-expose the public to an album that represents a sort of missing link to understand the irregular and atomized production of Lima's electronic music (more than Peruvian) at the beginning of this century.

The 15,600 kilometers that separate Lima from Tokyo mean nothing thanks to the hyperconnectivity and digital proximity that governs our daily lives. But in the incipient Internet of 2004 -the era of the reign of blogs, of the brand new webcams in chat rooms, of Messenger “nudges”-, the Japanese capital was an illusion. Not to mention Gallo's teenage years in the eighties. So, how and why is it that this city is the birthplace of his third album? Because if we look back, Japanese pop-culture has always been present in our environment: all the programming on TV Peru (the Peruvian state channel, channel 7) in the eighties and nineties - its golden age - was Japanese content; Godzilla in black and white was repeated *ad infinitum* on various open signal channels; while in the heyday of cable television, channels like Locomotion introduced us to contemporary classics like Evangelion or Cowboy bebop, making anime a religion that to this day manifests itself in cosplayers and passionate readers of those foundational manga.

Gallo's unconscious drank from all that, detonating in this album what can be read as a circular odyssey, a journey whose curious protagonist unveils Tokyo represented from the archetype built from the immense popular imagery already mentioned; an auditory journey that lands us in a futuristic metropolis, because in Gallo's Tokyo (a city that, curiously until now, he does not know), science fiction is presented as the traditional: There do not inhabit ordinary citizens, who exercise domestic and parsimonious work. No. They inhabit

beings that on the one hand are closer to the formidable and vigilant robots described by *Capitan Memo*; and on the other, to those dark and eccentric -as well as nobodies- that populate his abject nights.

Between both worlds, the protagonist walks -and walks us-. We assume from the outset that his *leitmotiv* lies in escaping the chaos of Lima, of its hyper-reality. The name of the opening song, “El Efecto Mariposa” (The Butterfly Effect), induces us in this theory, in the need for a physical as well as metaphorical journey. These first few tracks graph that take-off, the expectation for the arrival to this “other world”. But what Gallo does as the album progresses, is to annul all distances, converging the influence of both urban cultures, establishing deep cultural connections.

As his alter ego marvels at what he discovers along the way, one of the album's great strengths is its ingenious ability to leverage its unique soundscape into filmic images. *Lima/Tokyo/Lima* is anything but still. It's not an album that you just listen to, you see it. There are dazzling, but also frenetic moments, as in “Deconstructing Tokyo”, “Supertrain '74” or “Panasonic Jazz Suite”. Here the pentagram is visual, its primordial molecule is composed of sound-image-future. It is a diatribe against monotony. It is a struggle between the mundane, the hedonistic and the sensual, and existential rapture; a struggle against all that materiality that the protagonist leaves behind in his hometown.

In spite of all this, there is nothing left but to return with what he has learned. “Noir” refers to a walk on foot, back in the early morning, while the streets light up with the first light of day, waking up from that atmosphere of nocturnality that accompanies the entire album. Finally, “Lucidez” sounds like a minimalist composition of loops and synths that makes us wonder if the trip wasn't just an illusion, if the protagonist is really waking up from a dream.

ALTERING THE MICROCOSM

As the tremendous drummer he is (let's not forget that five years before forging *Theremyn_4* he was part of the alternative and hard rock band, *Huelga de Hambre*, as well as Miki González's band), it is the pulsating rhythm what sustains the proposal of each song, allowing him to manipulate the electronic textures in a very particular way. There is a reason why, whenever he can, *Theremyn_4*'s concerts are performed with live drums. And believe me, it's

worth the effort of setting up the band on stage, because the thrill of feeling the drums and cymbals bursting through the speakers is unmatched when it's time to do it with recorded sequences.

Lima/Tokyo/Lima is also the first production in which Gallo breaks his individuality and adds some colleagues, such as the late guitarist Chisco Ramos, with whom he played for the first time in 2001, when he needed more hands to be able to start performing with the project live. "The cool thing about Chisco was his groove and his ability to adapt to any vibe, he did very good backing vocals, he was super musical and sensitive", Gallo recalls with no small amount of nostalgia. Perhaps this addition made it possible to achieve the continuous exchange of styles that characterizes the album.

At the time -2004- some critics said that this was Theremyn_4's best work. Fortunately, time does not stand still and today, twenty years later, the album is a valuable enclave to understand his growing musical progression.

Gallo knew how to combine his most obvious references (from Kraftwerk to Chemical Brothers, Unkle or Orbital), without crossing the border of noise or sound experimentation (as did projects like Jardín or Evamuss, with whom he shared the stage), nor falling into the easy "USB electronica", those bland tunes that made millionaires of some gringo DJs, but of which nobody remembers anymore. He, on the contrary, risked the construction of conceptual albums close to the listener. The complexities outlined in his music excite the connoisseur (because he recognizes in him a disciplined student), as well as the amateur listener (who appreciates the honesty without pretension). Even so, his music is intimate, introspective and danceable at the same time (because, after all, that's what we all expect from electronic music, right?).

To have for the first time on double vinyl *Lima/Tokyo/Lima* is the vindication of the work of a completely independent musician (Gallo is in charge of the entire production process of the album, even creating his own label, Hypersfera) and, I insist, current. Theremyn_4 is not a mythical band. It is a living, nervous organism, with the potential to resonate with global audiences, especially if we remember that the album was officially launched in Paris in February 2004 (it was completed in late 2003). But it is also a reminder of how urgent and necessary it is to leave this city from time to time. *Lima/Tokyo/Lima* is the exit from the tunnel, from the dark and grayish vault, to desire.

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—La Shaparrita—
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