

Alice Gift

Roll Call

Alice Gift : vocals and guitar

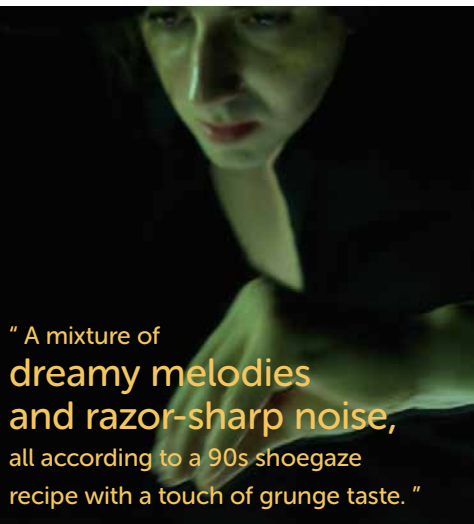
Djamila Paris : keyboard

When did the band get started and what was the original intention of the band?

AG : The idea of a solo project began to germinate when we split up with my previous band Liste Noire in 2018. The idea of stopping doing music was never an option for me, but I was also exhausted with being creative as part of a band, so I decided to move on with a project which I would be the only person in charge of. I then slowly started collecting all my song demos, as well as writing new compositions. The fact of composing on my own, without the need to compromise, was extremely refreshing and liberating.

Tell us more about your name: how does it communicate the sound or vibe of the band?

AG : There is a strong contrast in my sound. The dreamy and sensitive side of it which could be related to 'Alice' and on the other hand 'Gift' (which is used in German here and means 'Poison') reflects the more uncomfortable and dark feelings expressed by noisier and "untuned" sound elements. Alice Gift as well as the title of the album refer to the quote by the alchemist Paracelsus: "Alles ist Gift, und nichts ist Gift." ("All things are poison, and nothing is without poison; only the dose makes a thing not poison.")



" A mixture of dreamy melodies and razor-sharp noise, all according to a 90s shoegaze recipe with a touch of grunge taste. "

How would you describe your music to someone who has not yet checked you out?

AG : A mixture of dreamy melodies and razor-sharp noise, all according to a 90s shoegaze recipe with a touch of grunge taste. The androgyny from glam, the French-influenced chanson (accordion on the French-sung "Jeunesse Dorée"), the melancholy and coldness from cold wave. Dramatic and epic compositions topped by androgynous vocals.

What inspires you to create this style of music?

AG : Endless daydreaming. Anxiety. Philosophy. Idealism. Rage. Romance. Despair. Hope. Faith. Drama. Melancholy. Psychedelic music. Disharmony. Stories. Society. Politics. History. Europe. Alchemy. Underground. Art.

What influences in fashion, literature and culture impact your creativity?

AG : In terms of literature, I'm fond of Sybille Berg (German) and Michel Houellebecq (French), who are extremely talented at painting our times and our society. Recent theatre plays from the Gorki theatre in Berlin also had a big influence on my work. And of course, I love good storytelling which is essential in songwriting. Movies from Xavier Dolan, French nouvelle vague movies, dystopian series like *Black Mirror* or *Ad Vitam* had an impact on my creativity. Visually I'm influenced by Klimt, the German romantic, and German expressionists such as Otto Dix, Max Beckmann, as well as contemporary Italian painter Agostino Arrivabene. In fashion I love Alexander McQueen, Vivienne Westwood, Gaultier, and Yves Saint Laurent.

What other bands are inspiring you right now?

AG : Elliot Smith, Melody's Echo Chamber, Anne Pigalle, Can, M83, Mazzy Star, Smashing Pumpkins, The Horrors.

How would you describe the current alternative music scene where you live?

AG : Berlin is rather electronic territory, and the dark scene where I come from has very much evolved into dark techno, which is not so much different from old EBM in the 80s. There are not many interesting guitar bands left here, except "Underground Youth" and the kraut-oriented "Die Wilde Jagd" which is beautiful and trippy, perfect music for a long run. Most of the good bands had either split up or have moved from Berlin. Eventually it is more or less all about Big Beat oriented dance music nowadays which only works when it's played in a club.

What are your favorite tour or stage stories? Share 'em here.

AG : Unfortunately, I don't have that many tour stories to tell as we could not play many shows as Alice Gift yet. But I can tell you about my first live try out as a solo act. It was in 2019, and there was a tapas bar in my neighborhood doing live gigs. My artist friend Justin Lépany asked me to open for him. I was not ready at all yet, and I had just finished writing the songs for my album. I had no band, no clue how to play the songs live. Justin told me that the concept would be acoustic, but I had no acoustic guitar, so I played the show with an unplugged electric guitar which unfortunately was not covering the noise of the people talking in the bar. So, I had to strum my guitar so hard my fingers began to bleed, and I also had to scream the songs rather than singing in order to be audible. There was a group of customers in the corner who didn't give a shit about my show, so they decided to continue to talk like there was no show happening. I decided to get closer to their table and sang so loud while staring at them, so they eventually stopped talking. This was probably the hardest show I've done so far. It was first a fight against myself to overcome my stage fright, and then a fight for the attention of the guests. But I won.



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THIS PAGE
Upper, photo by Philipp Bogle. Lower, photo by Stéphane Hervé.
OPPOSITE PAGE
Photo by Jeremy Lynch.

Tell us about your latest release.

AG : It is the most personal piece I've ever done. It is 99% made by myself and I tried to be as intimate as I could. Most of my music and cultural and autobiographical references are in there, and some of the songs are the best I've written so far. It has been a pleasure and very adventurous to make. I had to learn by doing all along. I failed at a lot of things, but I succeeded in the end. It was a hell of a ride, but it became a beautiful piece in the end, and everything sounds right to me. I must confess that it is quite tough though to release a record during the pandemic. But a finished record has to come out, because that's what music is meant to do, to get out there and to move people, in any circumstances.

What's next for your band?

AG : To keep on going, whatever mother nature and politics are deciding. I'm already working on the second album, all the demos are done, we're almost ready for entering a recording studio again.

Where can people find out more about your band and any other projects members are involved in?

AG : On my Bandcamp you can listen to some of my previous projects: Velvet Condom, Liste Noire cymbeline records.bandcamp.com. By the way, Velvet Condom's first EP will be re-released on vinyl this year fleuret.bigcartel.com/product/velvet-condom-vc. And during the first lockdown last year I did this collective/quarantine song together with artists from all over cymbeline records.bandcamp.com/track/cadavre-exquis-a-collective-quarantine-made-song. I also have a more dark-wave side project that is releasing its first album within this year. There is no name and no link for the moment to communicate unfortunately. And my partner in crime Djamila Paris has a restaurant in Berlin which I recommend to visit when you're in town baretino.com.

