

## Interview with TNT Radio

"Mercury" is the new work of a unique band, PSYGNOSIS. Atmospheric and instrumental extreme metal with touches of electronic music, which leaves us with an interesting album influenced by sounds that take you on an intergalactic journey, through the solar system and alien worlds. A highly recommended album, the result of an evolution carved out through a series of albums released since the beginning of the band in 2009. Elise (guitar) and Raphaël (cello) answer the questions of our colleague Brujo, where we take a look for the career of PSYGNOSIS, and thus understand his career, and which we focus on in his new work "Mercury", published by the Season Of Mist label.

1. First, we will do a little review of the beginnings of the band, so that those who don't know you can get an idea of what PSYGNOSIS is. Can you tell us about the origins of PSYGNOSIS, its philosophy and how the project came about in 2009?

Initially, it was a solo project by Remi Vanhove, who wanted to explore a music that was both brutal and atmospheric. If you listen to the very first EP, you'll find the essence of what Psygnosis is all about, with its cinematic feel already supported mostly then by electronic parts and samples.

2. "Phrases" was Rémi Vanhove's first solo work, released in June 2009. How did it lay the foundation for the musical direction of PSYGNOSIS, mixing atmospheric extreme metal with electronic influences?

You've captured Remi's electronic influences very well! His favorite band is Autechre, one of the pioneers of IDM, along with Aphex Twin and Board of Canada. The first EP « Phrases » enabled him to mix and blend these electro influences with his love for extreme metal. He went on later to explore his taste for electro independently through Qima, one of his projects.

Even if Psygnosis now has a slightly different formula to what it did back then - because we're now an instrumental band - he already had a concrete idea of what where he wanted to go.

3. "Anti-Sublime" was released in January 2012, for this album musicians had already joined who gave PSYGNOSIS the band character. Did having other musicians help enrich the band's sound? What did they contribute and to what extent did it affect the sound of PSYGNOSIS?

On this album, Remi did indeed surround himself with musicians, but it didn't really change his way of composing. Remi has a very global vision when it comes to writing music, from guitars to drums, as well as with all the synthetics, ambiances and so on. When he sends out demos, they're already pretty finished songs. All that was left was for the singer, at the time, to create his vocals and lyrics.

4. Then came the EP "Sublimation" in 2013, and a year later the album "Human Be[ing]", with more worked and complex compositions. The evolution and maturity of PSYGNOSIS as a band was latent in this work. Could you go deeper into it?

It's obvious that Remi has evolved from one album to the next. The compositions are more mature, more structured. He's probably gained confidence in himself as a composer. The fact that we've had a change of singer also plays a part in this "maturity" aspect: Yohan went further in terms of melodies, lyrics and intention.

5. In 2015, PSYGNOSIS took the radical step of becoming an instrumental band when cellist, Raphaël Verguin, joined the band. What inspired this significant change and how did it affect the musical direction of the band?

As a matter of fact, Raphaël had already been with the band before: he'd been a guest on Sublimation and Human Being, so he'd been part of the Psygnosis universe almost from the beginning . When Yohan left the band, many singers were auditioned, but it didn't work out, so the decision to go with Raphaël was a natural one. It was a daring gamble at the time, but one that has paid off today I think!

6. With the new format came the Ep "Aaliens" (2015) and the album "Neptuno" (2017). How did the band's new instrumental approach affect PSYGNOSIS fans?

The change was very well received for the most part, although it surprised some people. I think a lot of people were sensitive to the fact that, thanks to the instrumental aspect, they could go further into the oneirism. Instrumental music makes it easier for someone to project themselves into the music, to make their own journey... I think that for Remi now, instrumental music is the most natural way of conveying his emotions. Raphaël and Remi's worlds complement each other perfectly, each enriching the other.

7. Now you return with a new and excellent album, "Mercury". How would you define it and what does it represent for PSYGNOSIS in your career?

Mercury is an important album for us, because it's the first that's no longer home-made, but backed by a label. It's a form of relief for us, because carrying a project represents a lot of energy and cost. It's also a form of recognition, from a label we really appreciate. It's also the first album on which there are real drums, which contributed enormously to the band's overall production and sound.

8. It's been 6 years since "Neptune". I suppose there must have been several factors for all this time... composition of "Mercury", Pandemic... right?

Neptune's release was exhausting in many ways. So naturally, we took time out to get together and experience other things. During this time, the line-up changed, and the composition was done step by step, without pressure. At the beginning of the pandemic, the album was almost entirely composed by Remi, which allowed Raphaël to add his cello serenely.

We took the time to produce and then to approach a label. Afterwards, it was a long process but it was necessary and worth it!

9. "Mercury" is your most ambitious album. It is full of very powerful metallic riffs, impressive atmospheric passages, all mixed with that dose of electronics that characterizes your sound. How has your sound evolved from Neptune to Mercury?

Mercury was both mixed and mastered by our drummer Thomas Cremier in his studio Soundblast. He knew how to find the right balance between all the facets of the music. He did a remarkable job, bringing out all the subtleties of the composition. We're very happy with it, and consider it our best album yet.

10. Your songs are complex, full of nuances and layers. How do you work when composing?

We have several goals and rules when we are composing a track. The first one is « we must not be boring ». If it is boring to us, it will be boring for anybody else. To avoid that, we have to build a good, logical but surprising structure as well as nuances. Without the soft parts, the heavy ones wouldn't be that strong, and the opposite works as well. We usually have one or several softer parts on the tracks, and it is part of what makes a Psygnosis track. For the track not to be boring for us, it must be fun to play, fun riffs, drum patterns, cello parts, whatever. We must be glad to play it, if we are bored about what we are playing, what is the point ? And then, the track has to feel « complete ». It doesn't necessarily mean that we have to put a lot of synths layers, or leads or whatever, but we don't have to feel that something is missing. And it is real in the very first composing process when Remi is alone building the base track. Nothing has to feel blank. We have to find a good balance between « not enough » and « too much ». And, of course, time is telling us if what we are doing is good. If we are bored of a track 6 months after we finished it, we failed. I think that's why we are really glad with Mercury, we had time to be sure that we were happy with the result.

11. I love songs like "Caloris Basin", with that emotional charge, that sadness and melancholy that it gives off, in contrast with those metallic sounds, which range from black to djent. The fundamental role that the cello plays in your sound becomes more palpable in songs like this. Tell me about it.

The cello's main challenge is not to appear as if it's sitting on top of Remi's music, but rather to be in symbiosis with it. In fact, the cello's place in the mix is not that of a voice. It's funny, because it was on Caloris Basin that Raphaël and Remi went back and forth on the composition the most, in order to build up the middle section, which is one of the most epic parts of the album.

12. "Eclipse" is another of the songs that I liked the most. I think it represents your sound very well. There is a little of each of the essences of PSYGNOSIS. I don't know if you agree.

We couldn't agree more: it's the track that best illustrates the variety of sounds and ambiances that Psygnosis has to offer. It's great to know that you really liked it!

13. We've talked about your music and influences, but another of your biggest influences is in space. The solar system, Aliens or intergalactic travel are your source of inspiration when composing. Could you tell us about the approach you apply to your sound under these influences, and what you try to convey to the listener?

Space travel, the universe and its infinity are the backdrop to our composition, visuals and choice of track names. But beyond that, as we said above, instrumental music allows us to travel and leaves the listener free to interpret. As space is a subject full of mystery, it evokes

feelings that are unique to each individual. We like to think that our music can accompany these interpretations or stories.

14. Over the years, PSYGNOSIS has evolved and matured in a very notable way. a good example is "Mercury". What do you think are the most significant milestones or moments in the band's musical journey?

It's not an easy question. Psygnosis has evolved over the years, according to the various encounters and human adventures of the group. There are plenty of memorable moments. Some hard, some great. Everything has contributed to what the band is today. Of course the switch to instrumental music obviously had a major musical impact, but so did the encounter between the four of us.

15. Already with the album on the street, with two singles that have performed very well. What feelings do you have with "Mercury"?

We're delighted with the first feedbacks we've had on these first two singles. We've put a lot of time and energy into this project, and the positive feedback has warmed our hearts!

16. What are the immediate plans for the future of PSYGNOSIS?

Ideally, we'd like to get back on stage. We really miss it. We're working on it, and hope to be able to defend Mercury as we should.

17. Anything you want to say to the people who are discovering you through this interview, and to your followers?

Thanks to all you who will give this album a chance. It was made with love and passion !

Thank you very much and congratulations on "Mercury"!!

Thank you so much for your support and positive feedbacks. It very important to us.