

RIOPY

THRIVE



Photo credit: Pierre-Emmanuel Rastoin, 2023

What is the meaning of “THRIVE” to you?

THRIVE embodies this force that pushes us forward, an inner force more intense than anything else, a force of evolution, of survival, of surpassing everything. *THRIVE* also marks an awareness, which translates into action by development and awakening in power.

Did this notion of fulfillment guide you in composing the music of this album, or did it arise during the creative process and inspire the title of the project?

More than fulfillment, it's a need – a need to change for the better. *THRIVE* implies a form of power, of strength that allows you to evolve and grow. It's something deep, almost violent, a primal need for survival – as if fleeing a natural disaster like a hurricane, calling upon this energy to escape and survive. It's a feeling I've had anchored inside me since my early years. The will has evolved over the years, and today it helps me find the perfect healing frequencies of my music. It's something magical that doesn't follow any earthly logic, something that seems unreal but that keeps me going. So I've always lived with this need, this desire, but it wasn't actually the original intention of this album. What oriented the project in this direction were the first three tracks that I composed (“Costa da Caparica”, “Nocturne”, and “Thrive”).

What is the concept of this album?

THRIVE is a new chapter after the previous trilogy closed with [extended] *BLISS*. This current period and world in which we live incite us to fight for our values and seek out positive change, a new form of society or personal fulfillment. We don't have to wipe the slate clean to evolve, and that's what I wanted to show. Starting from notes or themes of classical pieces, I composed new pieces. Then I imagined string arrangements to illustrate that everything can evolve. A familiar melody rearranged and reinterpreted inevitably arouses new emotions in us. This experience also offered me great freedom in my composition and direction.

You're self-taught and had very little musical education in your youth; what was the inspiration behind these classical pieces?

I don't listen to a lot of music; I'm often satisfied with whatever music is played around me. These great masterpieces touched me, of course, and each time I heard their melodies, I imagined something else, something more. One day, I was playing one of Erik Satie's *Gymnopédies* and a little seed grew; *THRIVE* was born.

You borrowed some themes and transformed them into your own unique solo-piano style, which your listeners know well, but for some you brought in strings; why?

The idea was to show that the same piece can have several facets and arouse different emotions depending on the arrangement. Sometimes an arrangement with strings was necessary, but other times I also kept the solo-piano version because the two versions take us in different directions, both just as interesting to me. I've always worked with strings and love acoustic instruments. Music is a living thing. It's all very organic: a human being produces a sound by touching or breathing into an instrument; I never tire of this magic. To combine the sounds of bass and violins with my piano brought me immense joy.

How did you compose the parts for strings: at the piano, or directly in the score?

I compose everything at the piano or in my head, then go to my studio and enter everything into software, using all the sounds available around me, commonly called "samples". Once I've created the sound universe I had imagined, I send the files to my team who

to play too many notes. Creating music can sometimes be like a puzzle, a labyrinth, a mathematical problem, an enigma to solve.

How do you find the same sounds with strings as with the 88 notes of a piano?

We can't have the same sounds, because we're adding others. The notes of my piano are enriched by new tones and frequencies. It's a bit like a fruit salad (local and without pesticides, of course): each ingredient must bring a particular flavor that blends harmoniously into the overall composition.

Has this experience opened you up to new perspectives?

Artistically, I've always followed my intuition. I've always been independent, in the sense that I don't let myself be influenced by trends. This is my philosophy in life: to free myself from any form of dependence, to resist the temptation to participate in projects simply because

they reflect the *zeitgeist*. I don't know if this has opened me up to new perspectives, but I'm very proud of and happy with the final result. It represented a new challenge for me. We had a technical ambition that required perfect osmosis between the whole team and the strings, which meant a lot of preparation. But believe me, when everything falls into place, it's magical! Moments like these are why you live for your music – and the music gives back to you. For me, this is the meaning of *THRIVE*.



album artwork

writes the score for the instruments. From there, we can go into the studio and start recording. I love it; it's full of life.

We've already seen classical themes adapted in pop music, yet yours seems much more complex; why is that?

I don't know why it seems complex, but that's not my intention: I simply translate and execute what I have in my head. One of my professors at Oxford University once told me that I tend

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