

CEPHEIDE

Paris-based atmospheric black metal band Cepheide may not be very well known to many of you, although they deserve a lot more attention based on their latest output “*Saudade*”. Instead of reading further, I suggest the legions of true Satanic black metal warriors to clean up their spikes and bullet belts because the four piece does not connect with this vision and philosophy. I talked with front man/guitarist Gaetan (G), bass player Hugo (H) and guitarist François. (JOKKE)



Hi guys! Cepheide is a relatively new band. How did it all started out?

G: Cepheide started in 2013, I just moved to Paris and was looking forward to start a band that would be a continuation of my solo project, but by adding a human part that a solo project can't offer. Even though the line-up changed often from “*De silence et de suie*” to “*Saudade*”, the project keeps a musical coherence, and was enriched by the people who participated in the project.

A Cepheid is a type of star that pulsates radially, varying in both diameter and temperature and producing changes in brightness with a well-defined stable period and amplitude. I think it's a very suiting band name for the style of music you play. Are you heavily inspired by the universe and its mysteries?

G: A Cepheid is also like a guiding star, just like the north star for instance. I found this parallel interesting, between the name of these stars, and what music can be in our daily lives, but also in the necessity of building ourselves based on landmarks we all have. I'm not particularly keen on astronomy or on the universe mysteries, but it's rather the immensity of it, compared to how little we are that fascinates me.

You combine the rawness of black metal with the beauty and melancholy of shoegaze and post-rock, so if one needs to label your style it would be some kind of atmospheric post-black metal. For some people though, black metal must be related to satanic themes and imagery. Do you consider Cepheide black metal yourselves?

G: There is no connection with the satanic ideology, be it on a visual or intellectual side, because we don't relate to it. Our music solely helps us in transcribing daily emotions, positives or negatives. As you noted, there are very raw/brutal moments, some melancholic, or some very luminous along the tracks.

H: I really don't think we care about the black metal themes nor imagery, but more about its musical codes. I enjoy the modern evolutions of black metal, it's rawness or violence to an extent, and I'm happy I can do that in Cepheide, but I have no interest for the imagery of it.

F: I don't care about labeling. We create music we love to share with people, that's the only thing that matters. Even if we can't deny the fact that our music is influenced by bands we use to listen and like, we must see beyond labels and metal categories and focus only on what we create, regardless of the type of music.

I was really impressed by the “*Respire*” EP that came out two years ago on which you made a big step forwards compared to the demo. With your new album “*Saudade*”, you again perfected your sound. The biggest difference seems to be the length of the songs. They are (a little bit) shorter and more to the point although there is still off course enough space for tension building, dynamics and atmospheric parts. Was this something that came naturally or was there a bigger plan behind the song writing process of your debut?

G: “*Respire*” is a concept album that was thought through before it was written, so that the two tracks would be interdependent. For “*Saudade*” we wanted to come back to a rawer phase we had with “*De silence et de suite*”. This makes tracks shorter and faster in their setup, but doesn't mean they have to lose their atmospheric touch. We also care about our sound identity, so we worked a lot to improve on that part.

What do you think is the biggest difference between the EP and the album?

G: There are 2 major differences. The objectives and conditions weren't the same. As mentioned above, “*Respire*” was a concept album we wrote as 2 people, solely in a studio. Our objective was to create 2 long interdependent tracks, more difficult of access due to their length. “*Saudade*” was created in a more spontaneous way because the line-up allowed it, and we didn't constrained ourselves at all during the writing. Everybody's influence allowed to create a whole which might be richer musically.

H: It's hard for me to say since I've only joined after *Respire* was out, but it feels like this is more a group effort than it used to be.

F: Agreed with Hugo.

“*Saudade*” is a deep emotional state of nostalgic or profound melancholic longing for an absent something or someone that one loves. What are some things you are feeling melancholic or nostalgic about?

G: One of the recurring theme is the connection to time. For instance in Madone: “*Les madones et les marbres s'émiettent!*” (“Madones and marble crumble”) symbolizes the decay of bodies. The observation that, through time, life takes its toll on bodies, and its strength vanishes away. It's an important theme, but that doesn't make us pessimists, it's just a realization.

F: Music is fueled by life itself, with all the emotions it brings with it. Nostalgia or melancholy are only two of the many aspects that she has, but it seems that we are more inclined to use it because they bring with it the strange beauty, anger and reverie that we hope is felt in our music.

“Saudade” can also mean “the love that remains after someone is gone”. Did you already have to cope with death in your close family and friends and how do you deal with the feelings of loss?

G: “Saudade” might have many translations, and that's also why we chose it. For instance, it's a title from a Cesaria Evora song that my mom used to often listen at home, and that in some ways symbolizes the nostalgia of past events. It also comes from the trips I did to Portugal with my girlfriend, who's from Portuguese origins. I think everybody can reflect on the word because it is very broad and strong.

F: “Saudade” is a complex word indeed, a powerful one which contain various meanings like the one you described. Loss is inseparable from love, and whenever we lose someone or something, it leaves deep imprints on us. Music is very personal for the one who creates it and for the listener, so when we composed “*Saudade*” we put in our heart and a bit of ourselves.



Gaetan': Your depressed like vocal parts rather seem another instrumental layer instead of really wanting to tell something. To be honest, it doesn't seem like you're really singing lyrics.

G: The vocals being drowned in the mix is something that we want, because it creates an homogenous block, in which all single elements are equal. There are lyrics that suit the songs, but by tackling singing very spontaneously, it's not always present in the same way. From that perspective, it is true that it might not be easy to get your bearings as a listener, but its spontaneity is important to me, so that I can apprehend tracks in the more instinctive way possible.

F: You're absolutely right. The vocals are very particular and mixed with all the instruments to create an ethereal layer. This is the way we like it to sound in the band and it's an important part of our atmosphere and soundscape

The vinyl version of “*Respire*” was released on the mighty Fallen Empire Records, whereas Monotonestudiorecords was in charge for the cassette release and Ogmios Underground Records did the digi-pack. For “*Saudade*” you work with Malleus records regarding the cassette version. Will there also be a CD and vinyl and who will release it?

G: For timing reasons, the digipack was self-produced. When it comes to vinyl, there is a release planned, but we'd rather wait until everything is settled before announcing it. In any case, we will release a vinyl version of “*Saudade*”.

Do you prefer to work with different smaller underground labels instead of one label that takes part of all physical releases?

G: It depends on the case, but indeed, for now we'd rather work with small labels we know. For instance, I've been in contact with Mike from Fallen Empire for many years, and if our calendars get along, we work together, but that needs to be discussed with every release. For the CDs, it's the same with Ogmios Records, we are still in contact, we respect his work, and we might work together again for the next release, even though we went with auto-production this time. There's nothing set in stone in advance, we adapt based on the calendars of everyone involved.

I came in contact with metal music at a very young age thanks to my older neighbors. I first was into death metal but when I heard Cradle Of Filth’s “*Malice through the looking glass*” at the national radio station I was blown away about black metal’s atmosphere and mysterious image. I started digging deeper via Dimmu Borgir’s “*Enthroned*” and “*Emperor’s Anthems to the welkin at dusk*” and afterwards left most of the bigger bands behind me to focus more on real underground bands. You guys are still quite young and grew up in the internet age where the new Satyricon album is almost as easy to access as for example a demo of a Romanian underground black metal band. What are the black metal bands you first came in contact with and made you feel attracted to the genre?

G: Being a drummer originally, I first got into metal through bands like Sepultura or Soulfly, because I found their drum plans to be interesting. While looking into starting a band in Strasbourg, I was contacted to start an atmospheric black metal band, which was a genre I didn't know about, and it was the biggest slap of my life. The project lasted for a year, during which I could enjoy the acute musical knowledge of the other members. The first band I got to listen were Altar Of Plagues, Ash Borer, Krallice, The Arrival Of Satan...

F: The first contact with black metal was both copy of “*Puritanical euphoric misanthropia*” by Dimmu Borgir and “*At the heart of winter*” by Immortal that one of my friend gave me when I was near 15 years old. At this age, the sound and the violence of the music completely blew my mind. During years, like many of us, my tastes change and I became more interested in different or more underground bands from many music styles.

H: I was more into progressive metal originally, then a close friend of mine pushed me toward post-rock, and from then, I started focusing more on the emotions provided by the music rather than the technicity of it. My focus wasn't much on black metal then, but it came as I started playing with Gaetan in a post-metal band, and discovered his other projects: Cepheide and Rance. That is probably what threw me into the black metal genre, but I'm still heavily influenced by post-rock.

Are there any underground French metal bands you can recommend?

F: Check out the last releases of Celeste and Blut Aus Nord

H: It's hard to choose a few bands in particular, but it seems Glaciation might release something soon, which I'm definitely looking forward to.

In France there is the satanic and orthodox scene with bands like Antaeus, Asooth, Temple Of Baal and Merrimack amongst others. You on the other hand, seem to have more connection with bands like Time Lurker or Paramnesia. Are you part of any scene or just operating on yourself?

G: Even though we don't belong to a specific scene, I have a lot of reluctance about the satanic/religious side of things, or even a certain ideology associated to that kind of music. For instance, we would never take place in a show that would involve bands with a questionable political ideology.

It pleases me that you mention Time Lurker or Paramnesia because those are people I know personally from the time I lived in Strasbourg, and whose work I respect a lot. I don't know if we belong to the same scene, but I can relate to their music.

I don't think you play that much shows, correct? Are there any plans for touring to promote the new album?

G: Until today, the line-up changed a lot, so we haven't had much time to focus on that, even though it is something we appreciate. There is nothing planned yet for this release.

What are the goals you would like to achieve with Cepheide?

H: I don't think we have specific goals, we just want to do something we enjoy!