

Alain Bashung
Bleu Pétrole
Release: March 25th

Six years ago, with *L'Imprudence*, Alain Bashung seemed to be done with pop music. His vision of music had evolved toward multi-movement constructions and 4D-harmonic architectures, with songs structured more like acoustic conversations. The *La Tournée des Grands Espaces* tour and live album made him change his mind. After over 100 concerts (not to mention numerous participations in various fellow-artists' recordings), Bashung has regained his taste for singing and found his way back to the sheer organic pleasure of pure unadulterated performing. « *I've made my peace with pop-music and I've felt the urge for melodic, simple songs again. I left aside any idea I had of writing a sequel to L'Imprudence and projected myself into a very straightforward album, somewhere between country, pop and folk music.* » The bottom line: a performer's album, pure ecstatic joy, along the lines of *Osez Joséphine*. A meeting point. An album to relate to immediately, anywhere, everywhere. One of these obvious facts of life. With songs written especially for him, for his kind of bluesy singing...*Bleu pétrole*, of course.

The rest is nothing short of a miracle - or magic. Or instinct. With Gaëtan Roussel's first three music/lyrics projects, last summer Bashung found his Eldorado. These aren't mere songs - Louise Attaque's frontman has set up a regular Westward-bound music convoy, full of guitars and minstrel melodies, co-driven by New-York sound alchemist Mark Plati (who has worked with the likes of David Bowie and produced Louise Attaque's latest opus *À plus tard crocodile*). Moving along with these two guides, Bashung dreamed up an urban, pointillist country picture, with hints of Bonnie Prince Billy's Appalachian roots, Kris Kristoferson's prairie sound, Dylan's unique lair and Johnny Cash's paradise.

Bashung's crazy futurist folk caravan, fueled by basic sounds, crosses the West with the old partners: Simon Edwards, Martyn Barker (the rhythm section he's been working with ever since *Fantaisie militaire*) and guitar-guru Marc Ribot, a permanent fixture on the plucked instrument front... Never before in Bashung's music was the guitar so omnipresent in all kinds of variations, arpeggios, colours: bluesy electric, crystal-clear folk acoustic, Dobro, Leslie, banjo, pedal-steel, they all go through the hands of virtuoso sound magicians: Roussel, Plati and Ribot at the forefront but also enjoy the charm of M. Ward, the acrobatics of Arman Méliès, and Gerry Leonard, Marc Muller...

Bashung seems so happy to be here. A rare feat. In fact, one must go back a good ten years to find such a feeling of fulfillment in his voice and melodic lines. « *For a long time, my lyrics focused closely on intimate subjects, on feelings, on one's relation to oneself. This time, I wanted to open up onto the world, look into the here and now, give my sentiment on our present times.* » Borrowing Gaëtan Roussel's words (« *Résidents de la République* », « *Hier à Sousse* », « *Je t'ai manqué* », « *Le secret des Banquises* » and « *Sur un trapèze* » : five pop-folk gems worthy of the greatest time-honored standards), or Joseph d'Anvers (« *Tant de nuits* »), like so many sunny streaks in his voice, Bashung also opens a new window onto his

personal vocabulary and explores new prosodic ways. A performer's challenge. He 's much closer to Elvis or Johnny Cash than ever before, whether he sings about melancholy, doubts or states of grace, does a cover of Graeme Allwright's version of Leonard Cohen's « *Suzanne* » or unfolds Gérard Manset's disappointed verses in a fabulous encounter between the two most fascinating worlds of today's French song scene. (« *Comme un lego* », « *Venus* »).

With *Bleu pétrole*, Bashung is reborn to the light of pop and reconciled with the outer world. A double landmark in his creative output.