

FALLS - Eryck Abecassis and Lars Åkerlund

Eryck Abecassis and Lars Åkerlund started their Falls project to investigate the possibilities of achieving instability with synthesizers and electronic instruments. With only one dramatic change in their strategy: they employed both the same branded instruments to do that and it worked.

Eryck Abecassis is a French musician who has been working in diverse areas of music production: producing his own albums and works for chamber orchestras, theaters, installations and cinema. He got commissions from such institutions like INA-GRM, Radio France and Institut Français and played at many festivals like Amplitude, Presences, IRCAM. Now he mostly works with modular synthesizer and computer.

Lars Åkerlund is a sound artist and composer and performer of electronic as well as electroacoustic music hailing from Sweden. With a classical training, he also works in the music underground scene. He founded bands such as P.I.T.T. (among others, with Zbigniew Karkowski) and the Lucky People Center and recently the LLLSD (Lab for Life-Long Sound Dysfunctions) which toured in South East Asia, China and Japan during 2018 and 2019.

He performs solo and in collaboration with other artists, film makers and choreographers. Åkerlund lives in Stockholm working in the studio with computers, controllers and live electronic equipment such as an amplified monochord.

In eight tracks of “Falls” they drive you to the state of ecstasy. Working with a minimal and an accurate attention for the structures, they gain such a level when they lose control of their two Doepfer Dark Energies that it starts hypnotizing the brains. Subliminal thoughts, experiences and sonic hallucinations may suddenly erupt to the surface. Take care when using these powerful and uncompromising musical dream machine which will disorientate you in its subversive sonic masses and spectrum.

Lars Åkerlund & Eryck Abecassis > dark energy i, dark energy ii,
midi-controllers, modular synthesizers, ableton live

Executive producers: Kurt Liedwart and Sergey Kolosov

Design: Kurt Liedwart

Photography: Sergey Kolosov / kolosov.photo

Credits to: VICC (Visby International Centre for Composers), EMS (Electronic Music Studio, Stockholm)

Reviews

Falls

Mikroton does their releases in a whole bunch, so some for this week and a big one for next week, or maybe the one after. We start with the work between Lars Åkerlund and Eryck Abecassis. From both of these gentlemen, I reviewed a bunch of solo works before but also works in collaboration with others. Most notable is that both have worked with Kasper T. Toeplitz. Lars Åkerlund in a duo called Inert/e and Abecassis is part of the group Kernel, performing works by Toeplitz. I believe the latter is a bass player and the first a composer of electronic music. The credits on this release read as 'MIDI controllers, modular synthesizer and Ableton Live', to be used by the two of them. There are seven pieces here, divided over sixty-two minutes. The shortest being three minutes and the longest is thirty minutes. Although it is not mentioned, I can imagine they went into a studio together, going through the material in a rather improvised way, but only as a starting point to generate sound material. Once there is a whole stack of that, the work that we call composing starts. It is hard to say to what extent they edit their material, and also how much of this contains bits and pieces from various sessions. Maybe it is all-straightforward, and each mixed piece is a session by itself, and in the mix, there is the composition, the dialogue, if you will, between the sounds. Just as well, I can imagine they move their bits all around and look for the perfect dialogue within everything that they recorded. I am sure this is just I trying to imagine working processes between Åkerlund and Abecassis and probably not a major interest to anyone. The outcome is what counts here and being somewhat familiar with their previous work, I am not surprised that this is some heavy type of electronic music. Noise, however, is not the preferred genre here, as they know how to be quiet, as the proof in 'Aruk'. That's the longest piece here and it moves from inaudible to loud and from drones to cracks and back again. This is something to play with considerable volume so that the quiet parts get the attention they deserve and the loud section form this pleasantly oppressive wall of sound, ripping your speakers gentle apart (almost). This is an excellent and one that should not only appeal to modular aficionados.

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Freedom Falls

Superb record of contemporary synthesiser music and noise is *Falls* ([MIKROTON CD 87](#)), produced by the team of **Lars Åkerlund** and **Eryck Abecassis**. On it, they're attempting something rather edgy and potentially dangerous to do with "instability", and aim to induce hypnotic trance states, about which more shortly. Swede genius Åkerlund came our way not long ago on the [superb split LP](#) released on Fylkingen as FYLP 1037 with Zbigniew Karkowski, a release which prompted me to look into that partnership's history a little bit (which goes back to the late 1980s when they made a record for Radium 226.05). I enjoyed that "jet-black dark droner", and even if Lars's side sagged a bit, he more than compensates for it today. As for Eryck Abecassis, he is a French composer with a background in theatre, cinema and audio installations, and his career path has moved from working with the orchestra to plugging jacks into the sockets of his modular synths.

For instance, he used the Chrysalide to remix Kazuya Ishigami's *Cancellor X* album, which [we noted in 2018](#).

On *Falls*, we have one long 30-min track and a number of shorter ones, all generated using modern workstation tools such as Ableton, various modular synths, and midi-controllers...plus a brand of synth called (wait for it...) *Dark Energy*, a model produced by Doepfer in Germany. This monophonic beast, and its successor *Dark Energy II*, is an old-school pulse-generating machine with waveform switches and knobs a-plenty for twitchy fingers to manipulate. At least one review characterises this squat brute as producing an “edgy” and “wild” sound, qualities which I guess Lars Åkerlund and Eryck Abecassis were in pursuit of with this release. They explicitly want to reproduce the effect of a “dream machine”, and welcome the possibility of inducing hallucinations and altered states with these hypnotic chattering sounds; part of the strategy involves a certain loss of control on their part, and there are several moments on the record where the machines do indeed appear to be taking over the situation, asserting their own mechanical brain-waves over those of their masters. Me, I like the bad-tempered atmosphere of the whole thing, and the rough, abrasive textures; near-unpleasant abstract barks that spit, sizzle, and rub up against you like an unwelcome wild animal visitor (e.g. cobra snake, feral cougar, grizzly bear). Some of the tracks exhibit very extreme dynamics, high and low ranges, shocking shifts and leaps up and down the scale, working to a system that only our two creators understand.

All of this points to a fairly uninhibited mindset at play for the preparation and performance of these works, a near-joyous spirit of exploration which goes hand-in-glove with the “uncontrolled” part of the equation. Once they signed up to the dictum of the unstable platform and the rocky ride through analogue Hell, our two plucky explorers did not renege on the deal, and stand by their decision to follow it through to the end. My personal preference is for the shorter, shocking bursts of crazed and illogical energy bursts, such as ‘Ruak’, ‘Aurk’ and ‘Kaur’ (yes, many of the tracks are anagrams of each other), although we must single out the long track ‘Aruk’ which outpaces its brothers at a lengthy 30:32. This one bucks the trend for startling effects, and instead produces a single-minded helicopter whirligig attack (or perhaps an insane motorboat with kniving blades) which grows in volume and intensity as it proceeds, generating much alarm and consternation in listener's mind. It may even out to a steady drone, but it's by no means a soothing one; the sense of disaster is never very far away.

Sergey Kolosov's cover photo, perhaps treated to emphasise the harsh white light of the railway station, is a most apt visual analogue for these sinister pulsations and vibrations. A generally intense listen for the most part, and only the relatively sedate ‘Ukra’ offers any respite from these stern, relentless, aural lacerations. Released in October 2019.

(www.thesoundprojector.com)

La collaboration de Lars Akerlund et Eryck Abecassis laisse également présager, *a priori*, une longue maturation de pensée, même si leur duo est plus récent : ils n'en sont qu'à leur premier enregistrement, bien qu'ils jouent ensemble depuis quelques années déjà – à la louche, je dirais deux ou trois ans, mais c'est évidemment plus puisque j'ai souvenir de les avoir entendus jouer dans une cave parisienne en 2016 déjà, un concert riche de sons et de textures, pour moi un des plus notables de cette année-là. Les deux musiciens avaient en commun chacun un petit synthétiseur Doepfer, au joli nom de Dark Energy. Les mêmes Dark Energy (avec la précision supplémentaire qu'ils ne sont pas du même millésime puisqu'il y a le modèle I et le II ; je ne sais qui joue duquel) sont présents sur leur disque Falls (édité là encore par le label Mikroton, décidément le label à suivre !). Et c'est curieux, je m'attendais à ce que les deux musiciens – forts d'une part d'une déjà

longue présence dans la musique, mais surtout tous deux ayant un passé, un vécu, dans d'autres musiques, puisque si Akerlund a collaboré avec des musiciens tels que Zbigniew Karkowski ou Dror Feiler (avec lequel il continue de travailler), il est au départ guitariste classique, et travaille depuis longtemps avec l'EMS, le centre de création musicale de Stockholm, où il s'occupe entre autres de la formation au logiciel d'enregistrement et mixage Pro Tools ; tandis qu'Abecassis a derrière lui, ou en parallèle, une carrière de compositeur de musique contemporaine (je me souviens d'un concert de quatuor à cordes de sa plume, LA formation classique par excellence !) – je m'attendais donc à ce que ces parcours laissent une trace sensible sur la musique, alors que le duo a visiblement préféré une autre déclinaison du classicisme : celui d'une certaine *noise*, ou une attention portée au son, une certaine gestion du plutôt de la musique électronique expérimentale. Et là, le terme d'expérimental est pleinement justifié par le minimalisme sonore mis en œuvre, comme si le but était de voir (entendre « ce que ça fait ») : si je parlais de *noise* (non, ce n'est pas un disque de *noise music*), c'est par la conduite singulière des compositions (huit au total, ce qui conforte cette idée d'expériences, et non de « composition », avec ce que cette dernière porte d'image de grande forme, de construction). En fait, ce disque *Falls* est, à l'image de pas mal de musiques *noise* ou *laptop* de la première génération (années 80, par là), très monophonique : une voix (électronique) à la fois, et s'il y en a une autre, elle est le perturbateur de la première. Une sorte d'ascèse sonore...

KTT (Revue&Corrigée)