

## Album ASHTA – press kit

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*Two composers (Frédéric GERCHAMBEAU and Philippe WAUMAN aka ANANTAKARA) of electronic music with totally different styles and horizons wanted to create a common sound journey for the album ASHTA.*

*ASHTA means eight in Sanskrit. The sacred language of India. The album is composed of eight valleys to cross, associated with fine stones. Seven moments of a journey towards an eighth, the accomplishment, or enlightenment. It is the staggered progression found in all traditions that has been the common thread of this musical project.*

*We have asked a painter (Brigitte Schuermans) to accompany our creations with unpublished*

*digital paintings, the original videos of which can be found alongside each title in the digital edition.*

*ASHTA is first released digitally (<https://anantakara.bandcamp.com/album/ashta>) on 20/07/2021. And scheduled for a CD version in September 2021*

# Music

**Some questions to Frédéric GERCHAMBEAU [France]**



**Q1: It can be argued that you are experienced in co-writing albums. Collaborative creations must be enriching experiences. How would you characterise the one that was carried out with the ASHTA project]?**

FG: Is it possible to be really experienced in an exercise that consists of jumping into the water without a lifebelt with someone you discover little by little, slowly, over the course of days and pieces completed as a duo? It's always an adventure, a risk, an experience. In fact, the only thing I'm

really good at when it comes to duets is carefully applying a principle laid down by the leader of the famous German band KRAFTWERK. Indeed, RALF HÜTTER once said, "More than one musician, you need an organisation." This sentence sounds simplistic, but in fact it is not at all. And when you know KRAFTWERK, you can feel that they are experts in organisation, and that's why the band is still going strong, as strong as it was on the first day, despite the recent death of Florian Schneider. All this is to say that I pay a lot of attention to the form of duet that I propose to the other musicians, a formula that is now well established. And it's always this one: I create the sequences, give the duration of the tracks and the total length of the album, and the other musician has carte blanche for the rest, and in particular for the layers and melodies that he will put over my sequences. I always consider myself as the yin element of the duo, the musician in the background, leaving the other musician the role of yang, i.e. the one who will be highlighted. ASHTA has not deviated from these principles. I gave Philippe the form that the album was going to take, i.e. 7 tracks plus a longer 8th, then I sent him the 8 corresponding sequences. Then his immense talent did the rest

**Q2: You define your musical style as "minimalist BERLIN SCHOOL". How did you define it on the album?**

FG: When you don't do things the same way as others, the difficulty is always to give a name to what you do. So yes, I have named my musical style "Berlin School minimalist". But this term is easily explained. In fact, owning a big modular synth and being a fan, among other things, of KLAUS SCHULZE and TANGERINE DREAM, my style has a natural tendency to be close to what we call BERLIN SCHOOL, if we can give a precise definition to this term. But let's accept it as such, i.e. as a style mixing mainly sequences, strings and melodies. However, 1) when it comes to BERLIN SCHOOL, I've always tended to focus on the sequences, and 2) I'm also a fan of the compositions of STEVE REICH, TERRY RILEY and PHILIP GLASS, who are the three best-known representatives of the American Minimalism of the 70's, a style that gives pride of place to the sequences without them ever being overlaid with layers and melodies that would attenuate their expressivity and strength. It is therefore quite logical that my solo style consists of creating sequences and dressing them up only with echoes and transformed elements from these same sequences. On ASHTA, as I was in a duo, my sequences were only dressed with echoes. This was first of all to "leave some air" above my sequences, this space having to be filled by Philippe. But also because I consider, in the manner of Terry Riley, that the echo itself plays the role of a "ghost musician".

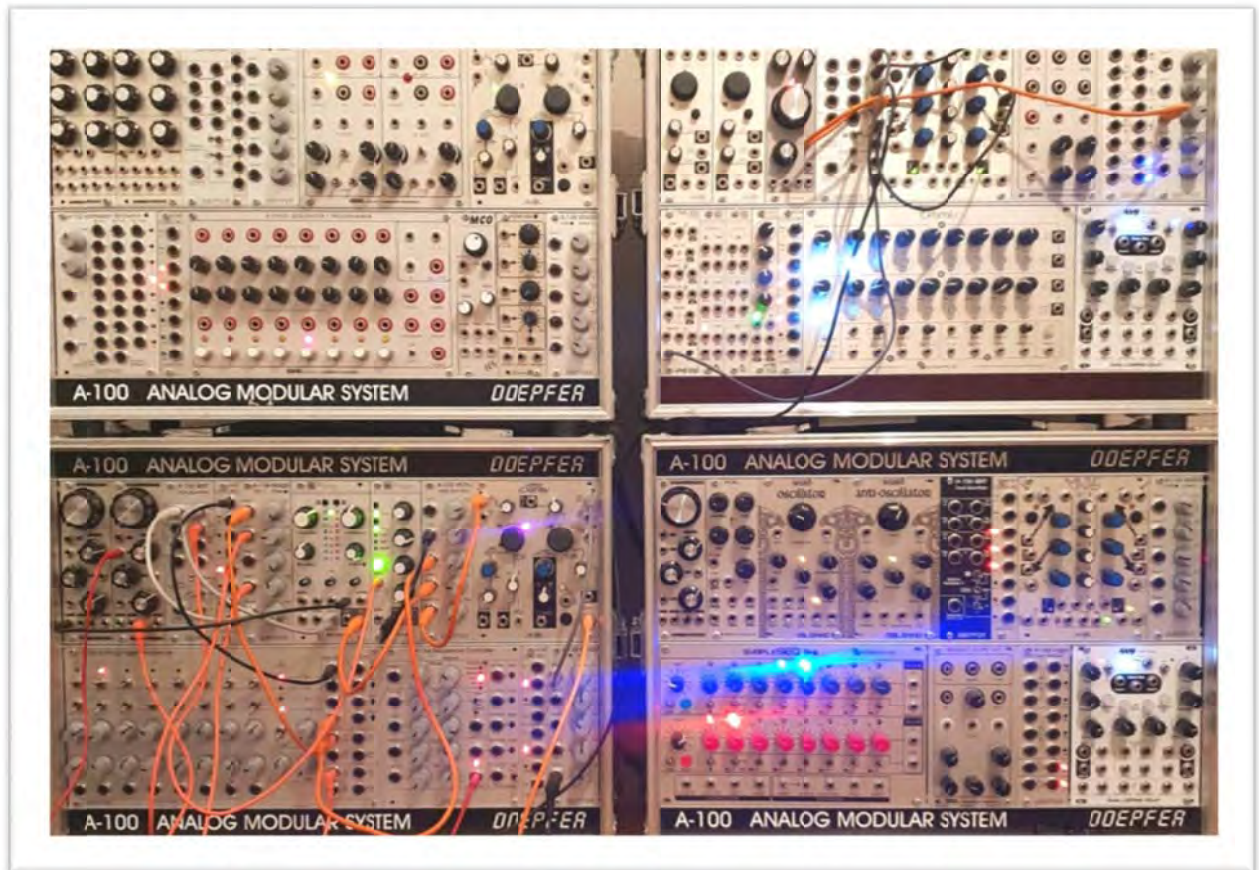
**Q3: The theme of the album is a progression towards enlightenment. Did you try to illustrate the process? Or is it just a pretext for creation?**

FG: One must know how to remain humble and modest when dealing with subjects such as enlightenment. First of all, because enlightenment is in principle a mystery, and secondly, because we are not in the mind and experience of those who seek to approach this mystery. So yes, the theme of ASHTA is based on an ancient Iranian mystical poem. But all that can be said of it, from the outside, is that mysticism is about seeking direct union of the soul with God. It is, therefore, a determined will, a passionate quest, and a path whose only possible end will be this much-desired union with God. The experience of the mystics always describes this path as one of stages, visions, and above all 'journeys'. Since these "journeys" are in essence interior and beyond any possible narration by human language, it would be futile to try to describe them. Unless, of course, one speaks the "Language of Birds", that is to say the language of angels, which is by definition supra-



human and consequently perfectly impenetrable to us mere humans. So what is left for the musicians? Well, a lot of things. God, in the form of a 'fabulous bird', is perched on the summit of an 'immense mountain', which is only accessible to the other 'birds' through seven 'valleys', which must be flown over in order to reach this 'immense mountain' and finally God Himself. All this is obviously pictorial, coded, because it is beyond human comprehension, but nevertheless clear enough to inspire musicians. And this is, yes, humbly, what was the pretext and the theme of ASHTA.

## Frédéric's short bio



Being born in 1960, it is thus in the 70's that I stored in me all the flavours and musical madness of this blessed time. This means that I have in my memory the prog rock of PINK FLOYD, Genesis, YES, and EMERSON, LAKE & PALMER, as well as the neo-folk of MALICORNE, the jazz-rock of WEATHER REPORT, the minimalism of STEVE REICH, the rough blues of the WHO or LED ZEPPELIN, or the hard rock of DEEP PURPLE or BLUE ÖYSTER CULT. And I'll go on and on, there are too many to mention, PETER GABRIEL, MIKE OLDFIELD, BRIAN ENO, DEVO, ROXY MUSIC, TALKING HEADS, or even ROBERT FRIPP, I'll stop here. Inside me, musically, I am all that, and much more. As far as electronic music is concerned, it all started for me in 1974 with the release of KRAFTWERK's album AUTOBAHN. I was already a fan of TANGERINE DREAM and therefore of Berlin School. But this was like a revelation. And so it was thanks to or because of KRAFTWERK that I bought my first synth, a Kawai 100-F.

It was on October 15, 1977 at 2pm, a memory that will remain forever engraved in me. After that, I followed the usual and normal path of any self-respecting synth lover: one synth, then two, then three, and a bank account that empties itself with each release of a new beautiful synth. Of course, at the same time, I got to know electronic music in all its aspects and all its great names, from WALTER/WENDY CARLOS to KLAUS SCHULZE, from KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN to MICHAEL STEARNS, and from PIERRE HENRY to MICHAEL MCNABB. In 2010 I started to get seriously interested in modular synths, and in particular the EURORACK format.

But one does not launch into this kind of adventure without having matured one's project, not to mention the financial investment that it supposes and for which one must be prepared. So it was at the beginning of 2013 that I got my first complete modular system. It was like a second revelation, and the EURORACK format became my total and definitive passion in terms of synths. Everything is possible in terms of architecture or philosophy of sound synthesis, East Coast in the Moog style, West Coast in the Buchla style, and many other hybrid, different, or even downright weird styles. It's a whole universe! But my own thing, my great passion, is sequencers. I own a dozen of them, and that's without forgetting the combinations of modules that allow me to build pseudo-sequencers that work almost as well as the real ones. I love sequences and sequencers. Like those, of course, of TANGERINE DREAM in Ricochet or those of KLAUS SCHULZE in Mirage.

Ah, those big Moog modulars that send you to the stars on flying carpets of electronic arpeggios. But I love just as much the perfectly orchestral sequences of STEVE REICH, TERRY RILEY or PHILIP GLASS. For me, the sequence, in its circular harmony, in its seamless rhythm, is a symbol of perfection. This perfection plus a little echo has become my own style, my second nature in electronic music. The sequences, without layers around them, without melodies on top, may seem dry at first. But if you get used to this simplicity, the sequences become very effective and often very gentle tools for reveries and meditations. Over time, the sequences I create with my modular system have also become the basis for many duo albums, which have also been the occasion for many encounters and exchanges with warm and fascinating musicians.

## Discography :

url : <https://asso-pwm.fr/artistes/frederic-gerchambeau>

youtube : <https://www.youtube.com/user/GruithuisenCityMan>



## **Questions to Philippe WAUMAN aka Anantakara [Belgium]**

**Q1: You are a philosopher and a musician. Which philosopher are you? Which musician are you? And how does the fact that you are both in the same mind translate in your way of philosophizing and in your music ?**

PW: Philosophy, which is my basic training, I have always considered it as an access to the formulation of concepts, ideas and intellectual articulations that allow us to understand the foundations of the horizon of the world that characterises a culture, what is at the basis of its epistemé, or how it takes knowledge of the world and justifies its validity to itself and to others. What is its founding vision, so to speak. It is a view that is a construction, a vision of the world that will generate paradigms. And it shapes many things.

The world is made up of various views, all of which have borders. I try to make different views meet to find the blind spot of each one and perhaps make something unheard of happen. This is where music comes in. If philosophy is cartography, music is the space of the journey. Philosophy is like a language, the practice of art gives me access to what this language can only point to. Where "logos", the discursive, explanatory and linear reason is in apnea, music takes over; it is of the order of

"mythos", that is to say of the creative imagination in the visionary (and not phantasmatic) sense of the term.

Q2: You have a strong taste for traditional Africa, the ancient East, modern Western electronic music, collaborations and solo work. How does all this balance out in you?

PW: Let's just say that I feel carried along by a creative breath that expresses itself through intensities that find support in a vast spectrum of resonances. Collaborations are opportunities to reveal unknown intensities, and solo work is the manifestation of intensities that run through me outside of the above-mentioned contexts. I am a speck of madness in love with a speck of beauty. In search of that unexpected point that regenerates and fulfills.

Q3: In the end, and taking into account the previous elements, how did you approach the ASHTA album in its philosophical or even spiritual context, in its musical concept and in its duet style where you were nevertheless totally free in your instrumental expression?

PW: First of all, there was the intuition that a duo with Frédéric would be a particularly enriching artistic adventure in terms of creative potential. Even though we play electronic music, our instrumental modalities are very different. Through him, I had the sensation of dialoguing with a whole side of electronic culture of which he is an astonishing and very beautiful flowering. We agreed on a theme. The path of transformation towards the realisation of the Spirit, or the Self, whatever the term used. I wanted to avoid the music becoming a narrative illustration of an inherently inexpressible subject. And it did so naturally. The roaming from valley to valley suggests that there is gradation, or graduation. These are markers laid down by the mystics as pedagogical and metaphorical.

Philosophically: in order to access the Open, the very thing that conceals itself by showing itself (we do not see the light that allows us to see), we must free ourselves from the metaphysical duality of the sensible and intelligible worlds. The non-manifest is not "better" than the manifest. There is no longer a hierarchy (bottom-up). They coexist simultaneously in a Present to which our presence can coincide at any moment.

Spiritually: realising the silence from which the journey, the story of a quest is irrelevant, for the effort, however great, to realise the unspeakable is not a mechanic which ipso facto will produce the desired result. The journey is the destination, it leads nowhere. Except to let oneself be surprised by the knowledge that everything is already there, that permanent impermanence does not await us at the top of anything. The path opens up when we stop wanting to walk and let ourselves be walked. In short, it's about being available, without expectations.

This process also applies to any act of creation. Any quest for inspiration and the state of grace that allows its reception.

I totally appreciated the total freedom Frédéric gave me and his insistence that the creative process be joyful. He would send me his sequences as I went along, after I had completed my part. It was impossible to have a prior idea of the whole. I let myself be impregnated by his sequences, his cycles and what resonated in me with his proposals.





### **Philippe's short biography**

Here are the musical shocks that marked and formed me, in an approximate chronological order: Bulgarian voices, PINK FLOYD, HENDRIX at Woodstock, RIBEIRO and ALPES, ANGELIQUE IONATOS, LIGETI, POPOL VUH, TANGERINE DREAM, VANGELIS, MAGMA, MONTEVERDI, DIBANGO, SATIE, ENO/HASSELL , SHANKAR (the violinist), Gérard MANSET, GRATEFUL DEATH, STRAVINSKI, MOZART, the ECM label, RILEY, FRIPP/ SUMMER ,trio SHAKTI, BOULEZ, Michael VETTER, Sheila SHANDRA, David SYLVIAN, DEAD CAN DANCE, Avro PART, Steve ROACH, Nik BÄRTSCH RONIN, Eric TRUFFAZ

15 albums to date. Guitarist and flutist. My entry into music as a composer and recording musician dates back to 2005. In 2008 I joined an experimental transdisciplinary performance collective in which I created the music for more than 30 performances, sound effects for exhibitions and music for choreographies. This is the experimental side of my creation. At the same time, since 2010, I have been developing a more meditative, ambient and contemplative side with albums and numerous concerts. In 2015 I joined an African music group as a guitarist. In 2019, I founded a duo with a Burkinabe singer, the style that emerges is tradi-modern, electro-ambient and African vocals/instruments. A bit in the line of the late Jon Hassell's Fourth World.

Official website : <https://www.anantakara.com/>

Youtube channel : <https://www.youtube.com/Anantakaramusic>



# Digital painting

**Brigitte Schuermans [Belgium]:** [www.brigitte-schuermans.be](http://www.brigitte-schuermans.be)