



## **SANTA CRUZ / *Now&Here***

We left the elegant French band three years ago with their album "MicrOrgan". A hinge record which provided an acoustic re-reading of the Santa Cruz repertoire, which in many respects referred to the stylish and soulful American bands like Lambchop, Sparklehorse, Wilco or even the great Neil Young. That was in 2014. 1095 days later, the time of the reunion with the now quintet of Rennes is symbolized by a perfect alignment of the stars around a sixth studio album entitled "Now & Here".

Now & Here, not later and elsewhere. Here and now. "Now&Here". An album title that does not come out of the blue. Because the world has changed in the past three years. Because Santa Cruz has necessarily changed too. Vassilli Caillosse (guitars), Thomas Schaettel (piano,

keyboards), Jacques Auvergne (bass) and Alex Tual (drums) have never been so sharp. "It's our best album, the one we're most proud of," Pierre-Vital Gerard confessed, without blushing.

Santa Cruz knows how to pick its cast. "Now & Here" was recorded and mixed by Ian Caple (Tricky, Tindersticks, and so many others). Joseph Racaille (Alain Bashung, Miossec, Thomas Fersen...) wrote the string arrangements and signed a new dazzling collaboration with Santa Cruz on 5 songs. They hired the English string quartet that usually plays for The Tindersticks or Divine Comedy. And in the guest section, we also find Mirabelle Gillis, and her stunning and enchanting violin. No less!

"Now & Here" is an organic, warm, round, soft and enveloping disc. Gorged with sweaty soul and devilish pop. The lush strings accentuate the depth of the landscapes sculpted by the five musicians and bring you back to the Motown or Beatles era. But make no mistake, Santa Cruz is a today's band. From here and now. Santa Cruz does not play the nostalgia card. The one of melancholy and spleen, certainly, but it is in the DNA of the group.

Santa Cruz has a hell of a rhythm section (James Chance's), a pianist who loves New Orleans dear to Allen Toussaint, a fine and elegant multi-tasking guitarist and a frontman who has never sung so well in his own soft manner. As a result, "Now & Here" comes with an unfettered insolence, from the dry and swaying "What's happening here" to the volcanic "Andromeda" as the eleventh and final piece.

Let's quote, at random, "High heels on ice", an Eels' distant cousin and a perfect single. "Favorite Jesus", and his jingle jangle guitars exhuming The Byrds ghost. And as for the twins songs "Heavy dancer" / "Nancy and Lee", it is a nice tribute paid to Lee Hazelwood and his muse Nancy Sinatra that tells a bittersweet scene from their two points of view.

One would almost forget the relevant and oblique lyrics of Pierre-Vital Gerard, tinged with a discreet irony and a subtle humor. A woody poetry more open than in the past. Or less introspective. Lyrics that start from a personal feeling to achieve a universal reading ("The pilot is me", "Uneasy money"). But above all, Santa Cruz is made of flesh, blood, and raw emotion. Shimmering melodies that unfold through listening. All this to say that Santa Cruz is not far from being the best kept secret of the hexagon. Till today. Because it is happening here and now. "Now&Here".

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