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Yesterday's Mañana: the brilliant "Interruptions"

 [August 24, 2015](#)  [Valerie Polichar](#)

In 2007, the Basel, Switzerland-based band **Mañana** was poised on the edge of stardom. They'd toured Europe on the strength of their 2005 EP, *Fast Days*. Their single "Miss Evening" had received worldwide exposure when it was featured on the FIFA 2005 soundtrack. EP. A German record company had offered them a lucrative album contract, and they were invited to London to play for other record companies. In autumn of 2007, **Mañana** began recording their first (and last) full-length album; it was released in the summer of 2008 to wide acclaim. The world was at their feet. Everything seemed theirs for the asking. And then —

Then they disappeared.

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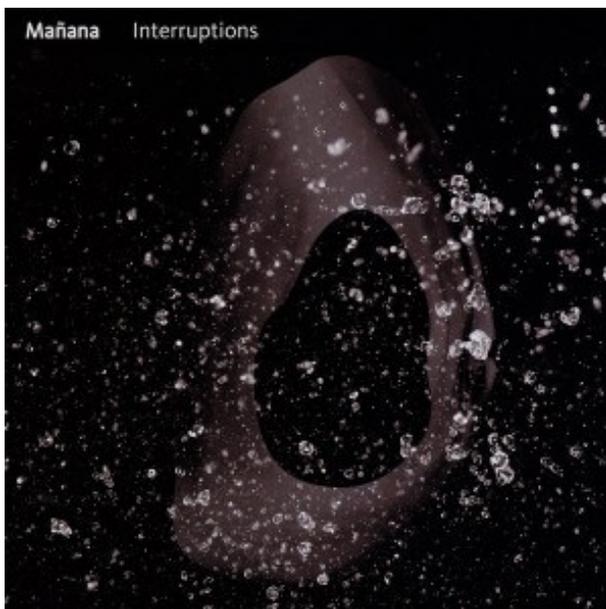
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We'll get to that. But the album, first and foremost: *Interruptions* is a gem, composed with what was, by all accounts, excruciating attention to detail. "We were really working hard to find a certain sound, to have a kind of musical handwriting," says Manuel Bürkli, **Mañana's** lead singer/songwriter. *Interruptions'* dreamy pop gleams with starlit guitar, carefully interwoven keyboard sounds, and Bürkli's extraordinary vocals. Soaring on the high notes, his tenor has all the clarity of a-ha's Morten Harket; in his lower range, a judiciously applied dose of rougher timbre supplies an emotional tug. His voice pairs beautifully with the backup vocals of keyboard player Jennifer Jans. Krattiger's guitar is a voice of its own, sometimes providing a lead melody and other times a sonic backdrop. "I'm really inspired by sounds and creating spaces," he notes, "so the effects board I use is really important for what I do."

Even the construction of the album is masterful. In songwriting, a suspended chord is usually used towards the end of a musical phrase, to create the sense of something unfinished, something that needs resolution either at the end of that phrase or with the next. **Mañana** puts it at the beginning of a song. And the curious impact of this is to make each track appear to continue the musical sentence of the song before, linking several songs into a seamless whole.

It's not that the songs sound the same; rather, they merge



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and move into each other in a sleek, logical fashion, creating a larger symphony where each story flows into the next. Krattiger remembers this as “something we tried to achieve when in the studio recording... we tried to create some sort of journey for the listener.” Bürkli’s recollection is that “it was only the intro that we tried that on. Maybe it depends how you see it. I think the rest was just selection, and cutting the seconds between the songs – not so much when we were composing the tracks.” He laughs. “So now you can choose one [interpretation].” Regardless of intention, the effect is to make the album more than the sum of its considerable parts.



Mañana promo photo, ca 2008

On an album with no weak tracks, it’s hard to pick favorites. Even the lyrics are striking and notable. “Monster” starts with a slam: “You look at me / With eyes that see a monster,” and ends with the exquisite: “I draw deep breath under the sea / Blow some air into your bubble.” “Elephant,” exploring emotional disorder and a relationship’s stumbling with kicky drums and gauzy harmonies, doesn’t shy from distinct lines: “I need to be your boy / Your face with all its scars...” Bürkli chooses simple words that illuminate lasting ache: “In heavy boots / All on your own // I don’t want to be / Forever alone.”

“Little Lights” was influenced by a book Bürkli was reading at the time, *Kleine Lichter* (“*Little Lights*”) by Roger Willemsen, but the emergent story isn’t identical to that of the novel. “[There’s] a lot of stream of consciousness when I write. Some of that I leave as it is, because it just feels

good. That's also the thing that makes [the lyrics] a bit less narrative."

In "Roadside Museum," against a lovely, echoic piano background that slowly builds to the full ensemble, sparse lyrics create a mental movie. "I will name your daughter Luisa / For one night with such big ideals," Bürkli sings. Asked to illuminate the song, he laughs, a little embarrassment audible in his voice. "It's very cryptic. — You know, I think even when I talk I'm a bit cryptic sometimes." The song, he finally concedes, "is about being an artist, but it's from various perspective — [e.g.] artists being inspired by other artists; or an artist who is struggling, not knowing that his contribution, his art is also providing input for someone else."

Mixing by Ken Thomas highlights the cymbals in Lorenz Hunziker's percussion like fireworks, and allows the guitar, keyboards and vocals to intertwine to the point where it can be hard to detect where one leaves off and the next picks up. Samuel Burri's resonant bass, lifted on tracks such as "Little Lights," becomes both motion and rails for the album's train of sound.

So with such success, what happened? In the end, *Mañana's* dissolution is an old story: after the immense effort of making an astounding album, business and contract problems left the members with a sour taste in their mouths. Pain and disappointment began to replace the initial good feelings of creating the album even before the album's release. Hunziker left to join a girlfriend in Berlin; Burri was devastated by the loss of a brother; the remaining members gathered in the studio and found themselves stuck. After some struggles, the band finally broke up, but the agony of this decision clearly left its mark. "There we were: we had just recorded, in my eyes, a good album," Bürkli mourns, "we had opened some doors, but we couldn't take the steps from there to pull it together."

So where are they now? Fortunately, still friends, and mostly still making music,

though not together. Krattiger is playing guitar with singer/songwriter Lena Fennell, who has just released a new EP (recorded with producer Jolyon Thomas, who also worked on *Interruptions*).



Jan Krattiger



Wellis Mac (Manuel Bürkli)

Bürkli is in the final stages of creating a crowdfunded album under the name Wellis Mac. He's living in Berlin, enjoying the creativity the city inspires. "[Berlin] helped me to work more freely, to give myself more leeway. To be away from home and to be surrounded by so many artists who are liberated, whose creative works are so free — it inspires me to be more courageous."

Jenny Jans' solo artistry can be heard on her new project, Bleu Roi.

Bürkli adds a postscript: "I'm still very happy with the album when I listen to it, because it was — the whole process was really painful to make it, and [there were] a lot of struggles, but when I listen back to it, I can still stand behind every decision. It's not that I say I think the album is great compared to other albums, but it's just — I'm really happy that we kept working on it and finished it."



Bleu Roi, project of Jennifer Jans

And so — very much so — are we.

Unappreciated Scholars Review Grade: A+

Interruptions is available on [iTunes](#). Lena Fennell's EP *Seeker*, featuring Jan Krattiger's distinctive guitar, can be streamed on [her website](#) or on [Bandcamp](#). Bleu Roi can be heard on [Soundcloud](#); visit the official website at <http://www.bleuroimusic.com/>. Some Wellis Mac demos can be heard on Bürkli's [YouTube channel](#) and [Soundcloud](#) site. Follow Jan Krattiger on Twitter at https://twitter.com/jan_krattiger and Jenny Jans at <https://twitter.com/bleuroimusic>.

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