

dirk Blanchart Biography (March 2019)



1981-1984 : LUNA TWIST

dirk Blanchart is first noticed in the early 80's, when -aged 21- he joins the band Once More, winner of the first edition of Humo's Rock Rally. They record one album, *Stress Conference* (EMI 1980) at London's Matrix Studios, with producer Jean-Marie Aerts.

1981: the band evolves into Luna Twist, once Belgium's most promising pop group with outstanding singles (*African time, Look out...*) and only one album, *A different smell from the same perfume*, loved by friend & enemy alike. 'Packed with clever popsongs, hypnotising rhythms and a for that time very innovative own production' (dixit press, rerelease 1998).

The band have an impressive live reputation and play some 300 gigs in less than 4 years, the most notorious being the opener for Roxy Music at Forest-National (B), with encores and an ecstatic press afterwards. The latter was highly unusual in those days when Belgian support acts were regarded as mere filler by international bands and local media, mostly inaudible and bereft of any stage lighting.

2012 : Luna Twist - Collected, or the complete remastered collection of their 16 recorded songs from the 80's plus 3 newly recorded bonus tracks, digital release only (SonoFab).

1984-1986 : dB SOLO in the U.K.

Early 1984, dB signs an artist deal with Statik Records (London, UK). Labelmates are a.o. Jeffrey Lee Pierce, The Sound and Men Without Hats. The singles *Fool yourself forever*, *Cockpit* en *I don't mind (if the Sputnik lands)* are hits in the Benelux and attract a lot of attention elsewhere. The video of *I don't mind (if the Sputnik lands)* was the first clip of a Belgian artist on MTV America, and the 12" version ends on both the American & Australian dance-charts. His first solo-album, *Europe Blue* (Statik 1985), is almost unanimously very well received.

The bankruptcy of Statik in early 1986 results in 2 years of forced solo inactivity, during which time he produces a.o. Belgian band Elisa Waut (the albums *Elisa Waut* and *Commedia*, with hits like *Growing pain*, *Four times more* and *Don't be mad, get even*).

2002 : '*Fool yourself forever*' (1985) is awarded a 42nd place by his fellow songwriters in Belgium's Radio 1 Top 100 of All Times (the only English song in this list by a Belgian writer apart from Mauro's '*Sad planet*' on 67).

1988- 1991 : FROM 'ABOUT THE RAIN' TO THE GROOVE QUARTET

Early 1988, dB is back on track with the single & 12" *Railway tracks*, released through BMG-Ariola. Later that year follows his second solo album *About the Rain*, a blues infected pop album with singles *The magical moon* en *Talkin' about the rain*.

In 1989 he forms a more permanent live band, The Groove Quartet, with a.o. singers Patrick Riguelle and Micheline Van Hautem. In the summer of 1990 they record as Dirk Blanchart & The Groove Quartet the much acclaimed album *Mama Luba*, with the hits *No regrets* and *Heart beats faster*.

This line-up tours intensively until the end of 1991.

1992-1996 : 'I'M ON A FAB LABEL NOW, FORTUNE IS BOUND...'

(from *Letter to Alex*, 1993)

In the autumn of 1991 dB signs with EMI Records Belgium, who subsequently release the albums *Blow* (1992), *The Best of Blanchart 1983-1993* (including bonus EP *Live at The Club*) and *Mindsurfin'* (1995).

In march 1993 he starts touring as a trio with Vincent Pierins (stand-up bass) and Piet Van den Heuvel (percussion, vocals). This formula proves to be very succesful and is described by dB as 'my most liberating & satisfying live experience so far'. They support Crowded House and Tim Finn, play the Cactus Festival (Bruges), various summer festivals etc...

The album *Mindsurfin'* (1995) is partially recorded in New York, with guest appearances from Chris Whitley, Sarah Bettens (*K's Choice*), the New York Preservation Gospel Choir and Chinese flute master Guo Yue.

The singles *L'amour ça va* and *Building an empire* (both from *Blow*) and *It's about time (that the future begins)* (from *Mindsurfin'*) attract massive airplay and are still played frequently on the Belgian radiostations.

1998 : dB IN DUTCH

Vrij Vertaald ('Freely Translated') is the name of the live program –commissioned by AB Brussels- with which dB is on the road in 1997-1998, as well solo or with a trio or a 10-piece band. It comprises Dutch versions of brandnew and old dB songs and some eclectic covers like Lou Reed's *How do you think it feels?*. Part of the material was adapted in Dutch by some famous Flemish (song)writers like Luc De Vos, Herman Brusselmans and Hugo Matthysen.

An album follows in the fall of 1998 : *Schietstoel* (Oorwoud), with the singles *Spoorwegbrug* (new Dutch version of his '88 single 'Railway tracks') and *Ik krijg je maar niet uit mijn hoofd* (an adaptation of ELO's *Can't get it out of my head*).

2001 – 2002 : MONObIRD / ICON-O-MIX

Early 2001 dB starts the project band MONObIRD.

Under the a.k.a. dA Reverend he forms a duo with Dr. Nebula (a.k.a. Vincent Pierins, who was part of his 1993 trio) to write, play and produce the album *Icon-o-Mix*. It's released in the Benelux on his own label SonoFab Recordings (as in Son oF a b.... or Fabulous Sono if you want).

The album is titled *Icon-o-Mix* because each song is in some way influenced by a famous icon of the 20th century. And has its very specific & known-all-over-the-planet name as a songtitle : *Pablo, Coco, Mahatma, Ayrton* etc... So yes, you could say it's a concept album, but one of a very different kind (forget that 70's connotation of 'concept' album....).

With guest vocalists D-Elle, Brite & Patrick Riguelle and Bert Joris on trumpet.

There's still a (Flash) website fully dedicated to this project: www.monobird.sonofab.com

2005: BEATS & BALLADS 1980 - 2005

In 2005, dB celebrates his first 25 years as a song'n'dance man and this goes not unnoticed.

The 2-cd compilation album *Beats & Ballads 1980-2005* (SonoFab - AMC, april 2005) is very well received by the national press. The festival gigs in the summer of 2005, with an extended line-up, show a resolutely rocking and very intense Blanchart.

2006: PRETTY DARK ALBUM

His 9th solo album (release October 2006) gets the slightly tongue-in-cheek title *Pretty Dark Album* (SonoFab Recordings). The singles *Girl from outer space* and *Pre-millennium friend* do very well on the national radio.

dB tours until the end of 2007 with a remarkable minimal line-up (plus Wouter Berlaen on bass and Leen De Haes on backing vocals) which underlines the pure quality and strenght of his songs.

2008-2010: LUNA TWIST PART 2

In the summer of 2008, Luna Twist reforms. After an interruption of 25 years, the 3 surviving original band members dirk Blanchart, Alain Tant and Filip Moortgat (plus Senne Guns on keyboards and Laurens Billiet on drums) again feel the desire to confront a live audience as Luna Twist. Timeless versions of their greatest hits - *African time*, *Look out*, *Decent life...-*, some 'forgotten' tracks from their 80's period (*Backbeat*), a couple of exquisite covers plus exiting new material arouse feverish reactions from the public at various venues and festivals in Belgium (Grensrock Menen, Genk on Stage, Gentse Feesten St-Jacobs, Maanrock Mechelen, Ieperse Dinsdagen, Handelsbeurs Gent, Vooruit Gent etc).

April 2010: 'Madame Soleil' is their first new single after almost 27 years. Recorded 'as live as it gets' to capture as much as possible the energy and drive that the song has on stage.

2009 - 2012: KRAAKPAND

From February 2009 to February 2012, dB hosts 18 Kraakpand shows at Handelsbeurs (Gent, B). Kraakpand is an eclectic live music show (think of BBC's 'Live with Jools'), featuring 5 - mostly young- artists or bands who alternately play each 4 to 5 songs. dB presents the show & interviews the guests & plays along himself.

2014: NEW SINGLE & SOLO GIGS

In Jan 2014, dB releases *Greenback Dollar*, a cover of an early 60's classic and his first solo single in almost 6 years. He also starts performing solo for the first time in his career. This proves to be a very liberating experience whereby the pure essence of his songwriting & singing & guitar playing skills take central stage.

2017: STRIPPED - LIVE SOLO RECORDINGS VOL. 1

What does an artist do who maintained a low profile for a while? He usually returns among the people with a compilation album under his belt, containing the original studio versions of his best and best known songs.

Similarly dB, except that he re-recorded them live and solo in 2016. In one passionate take -voice, guitars and footstomp- during a performance in the studio for a select audience. 14 songs, from classics like *Fool Yourself Forever* and *Building an Empire* via Luna Twist's *Oh Oh Oh* from 1981 to a never previously recorded electrifying cover version of Depeche Mode's *Personal Jesus*.

Stripped - Live Solo Recordings Vol. 1 (SonoFab SR2017001 Recordings) is released end of January, 2017 and is the precursor of a new studio album, his first since *Pretty Dark Album* (2007).

2019: A BOY NAMED dIRK

In March 2019 dB's 11th soloalbum, *A Boy Named dIRK* (Sonofab) is released. dB himself once described his eclectic musical style as **rocknrollbluesoulfunkfolkreggaejazz**. There's still no better word to summarize this inspired collection of new songs.

From Elvis mourning his twin brother who died at birth (*Jesse Garon Was Buried in a Shoebox*) to the adaptation Duke Pearson's classic 'Idle Moments' that he wrote lyrics to and converted into 3' of jazzpop (*Too Much of Everything*). From an emotional tribute to Bowie's immense artistic legacy (*How Do We Feel?*) to sharp sensory observations from the trenches in Ypres, 1917 (*In Between Battles*). From a very personal State of the Union (*Now Is The Time*) to a nighttime appeal to Mrs. Muse (*Hail Mary of the Songs*)... and then some. With his acclaimed version of Jules De Corte's *Ik Zou Wel Eens Willen Weten* (in Dutch) as a bonus track (previously released as a single, Jan 2018).

dB PRODUCER

Apart from producing all of his own 11 albums & numerous singles and Luna Twist, he is also in charge as producer/arranger for many other artists & bands. To name a few:

- * Elisa Waut (albums *Elisa Waut* and *Commedia*, 6 singles, 1985-1988)
- * Richenel (12" & single *L'esclave endormi*, 1985)
- * Micheline Van Hautem (album *Choco* 2008 + live album 2009)
- * Lenny & De Wespen (winner *Nekka* wedstrijd, debut album 2006)
- * Art Meets Management (music project for CEO's, at AB Brussel, 2001),
- * Kiss of Life (debut album 2007)
- * The Snowwhites (debut EP 2010, featuring Bert Van Renne, finalist *The Voice van Vlaanderen* 2013)
- * Man Huys (debut EP, release 2014)
- * etc....

dB VARIOUS

dB-songs are recorded or covered by a.o. Clouseau (*Waterdrager*, cd Oker, 1994), Riguelle & Hautekiet (*Cockpit*, cd Red Harmony, 2000), Red Harmony (*Everything that matters* and *I do fine*, cd Dielectric Union, 2003), Micheline Van Hautem (cd Chocolat, 2008) e.o.

He translates 3 of Leonard Cohen's songs in Dutch for the succesfull Cohen-project by Belgian singer Yasmine, *Vandaag (het morgen van gisteren)* (2005).

As a producer-songwriter-coach, he works for numerous organisations : coach & jury member Nekka Wedstrijd (last 6 editions), songwriting Muzikantendag (AB Brussel 2002), De Kleine Avonden (2004 to 2008), jury member Just the Two of Us (VTM, 2006), songwriting Studio Herman Teirlinck (2004), workshops 'Visit the Demo Doctor' CC Strombeek (2002), Centrum voor Amateurkunsten (songwriting, 1994), Rockschoon Antwerpen (1997), Koning Boudewijnstichting (live project Artiboko, March-Dec 1990) etc...

In 2002-2003, he tours and records with De Flandriens. dirk Blanchart and Wigbert Van Lierde are the musical directors of *De Belgische Popklassieker* : 40 years of Belgian pophits, from The Pebbles to Plastic Bertrand to Technotronic, all translated in Dutch and re-arranged musically. A live album *De Popklassieker* (Virgin 2003) is recorded at AB Brussels in dec 2002.

Since 2011 he's also a docent Songwriting, Production Analysis and Combo at School of Arts - KASK – Conservatory, part of Hogeschool Gent (B).