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GIGI MASIN

“[My parents] simply didn’t understand why I’d love to study music. They believed to study music or becoming a musician or composer was a silly idea...I had to find my own way and it wasn’t so easy.”

The words of the Venetian composer, musician, producer, and polymath Gigi Masin ring true in the ears of those young and old, past, present and future, who want to be creative but feel restrained by family and society. Always an innovator, Gigi’s first experiments in the late 1970s were sound collages made while working for theatres in Venice, working with tape loops, field recordings, and turntablism. Experimenting with tape allowed him to discover a new language to express himself, more than in his original ambitions to be a guitarist and violinist, looked down upon by his parents. It was difficult to find a local audience for these works, culminating in the release of his debut album *Wind* in 1987. A nation and society at the forefront of so many strands of Western music and high culture, Italy was staid and traditional. Gigi believed there to be “a poor sense of culture and a sort of intellectual haughtiness in the Italian media about Italian musicians in general” – especially if they had anything to do with the avantgarde. The music on *Wind* is stripped back, bare, almost alien in their stillness, with the steady pulse of his beloved Korg Poly-800 echoing the lagoon waters around him.

Underappreciated on its release, *Wind* soon gained a cult following among late night radio listeners, hearing these gentle echoes of the Venetian landscape, reflecting a personal outlook on Venice from a native son; a rare artifact in a world where the platonic Venice can be heard and seen from artists the world over, but images and sounds of the actual Venice are harder to come by. Gigi is a rare exception. Released for free, Gigi never expected much to come of it. His 1989 joint album for Sub Rosa with This Heat’s Charles Hayward, *Les Nouvelles Musiques Du Chambre*, took on a life of its own when his track *Clouds* was sampled by Björk, To Rococo Rot, Nujabes, Black Eyed Peas, and Post Malone – but Gigi remained in obscurity. His output slowed from the early 90s as he raised a family and worked dutifully for *Il Posto*. Tragedy struck in 2007 when a flood destroyed the vast majority of his archives: instruments, tapes, records, and memorabilia. Salvaging what he could, he took to the computer for the first time, starting the next phase of innovating.

In 2014, Dutch label Music From Memory released *Talk To The Sea*, a retrospective of the past 30 years of Gigi’s output, favorites handpicked by label heads Jamie Tiller and Tako Reyenga. It marked the start of the wider recognition Gigi so richly deserved, receiving praise from media and figures like Devendra Banhart, who claimed to listen to the album daily, praising in an interview in *The Quietus* how his music “is representative of the entire spectrum of emotions, which is what I think I, as a fan of music, am often looking for”. Through the label, Gigi met British producer and Melody As Truth label head Jonny Nash and cult Dutch DJ and producer Marco Sterk (Young Marco), forming the trio *Gaussian Curve* and releasing their debut *Clouds* on the label in 2015. Gigi says it was “an instant friendship”, a dream collaboration where they only had to sit in a studio and “let the music fill the space”.

Back in Italy – where he remains, just outside Venice, having left his post office job to devote

himself to music full-time – he struck up a relationship with Luciano Ermondi and Paolo Mazzacani of Tempelhof after a show in Mantua; their two joint albums for Italian label Hell Yeah – Hoshi and Tsuki – came in bursts of inspiration, virtually but simply. Gigi also appeared on PAN as part of Lifted, a group spearheaded by Future Times founder Andrew Field-Pickering (Max D / Beautiful Swimmers), also featuring Matthew Papich (Co La), Jeremy Hyman (Avey Tare’s Slasher Flicks), Motion Graphix, Jordan Czamanski (Juju & Jordash), and Dawit Eklund (1432 R). A series of singles came on Throne of Blood, Dekmantel, and Light In The Attic, along with dates at festivals, galleries, and opening for Oneohtrix Point Never and Devendra Banhart.

In 2020, Gigi released Calypso The LP was inspired by the mythical Greek island of Ogygia and its alleged real-life counterpart Gavdos – also known unofficially as Calypso – a place of extreme beauty, which upon visiting, had a profound effect on the musician. The aqueous and sky-filled vistas of his native Venice were deeply intrinsic, but the best and simplest way to describe ‘Calypso’s sound might simply be Aegean, as every track takes you directly and vividly there – to timeless Greek beauty, glistening seas, picturesque landscapes and the sun’s bright, balmy heat. But, much more than just pleasant dapples of the twinkling of audio balm, ‘Calypso’ was the music of the gods, goddesses and heroes, subliminally capturing all the celestial beauty, awe, romance and adventure of an epic saga. On November 4h 2022, Gigi Masin returns with ‘Vahinè’ – a mini album of beautiful and distinct music that is unmistakably his, sounding better than ever. Masin always pours his heart into composing, but here it takes on a potent new level of heavy emotion – as it’s a tribute to his late wife, who sadly passed away last year. With more international tour dates, upcoming collaborations, and a continuous refusal to be pigeonholed as ambient, new age, Balearic, modern classical, or whatever you wish to call him, Gigi Masin continues to be one of the most quietly innovative and singular artists in the scene. Not wanting to rest on his laurels and remain tethered to past triumphs, he remains facing forward, doing things “in the same way I did in the past when “nobody cared”.