
Black Strobe are Arnaud Rebotini and Ivan Smagghe. Based in Paris, they like to make dark electronic music. But don't mistake Black Strobe for goth—they just think happiness can be overrated.

Written by Jane Esteron Photography by Lee Walker

BUY

So Arnaud, not sure if I personally would refer to Black Strobe as goth, but do you see how people would?

Yeah, I guess because we write music that isn't all positive, and we don't reference the joy of love and whatnot. But Johnny Cash wrote and sang dark songs, and no one called him goth. I have very little interest in happy themes and Ivan loves being in a state of sadness and pessimism. This disinterest in happiness taints the way we work.

So, if you were going to ask what music we hold as influences, I would say metal and rockabilly. Goth... not sure. I would even say there is a subtle hold from hip-hop and early house. I grew up with a lot of those records, so I guess it can't be helped.

Hip-hop? Really?

Yeah, I love it and know a lot about the genre. I can probably DJ an amazing hip-hop set. I, however, doubt anyone would want to see Black Strobe "do hip-hop." One day, though.

Speaking of DJing, you and Ivan have been doing it a lot, it seems. Do you enjoy it more than playing live?

We do DJ a lot, as Black Strobe and individually. It is fun making people dance to music we like. We travel and see new places—all in all, it is enjoyable. However, I think at this moment we are playing and recording more as a live band. I am finding that very satisfying.

You are about to release a new album. How is that going?

Well! We just chose the songs we like best. The tracks have been written for a while, so we've had time to think about it. Black Strobe is also releasing a remix album, which was a bit harder. We've gotten to remix some amazing tracks.

Yeah, it seems Black Strobe have done a fair amount of remixes.

Ha ha. Yeah it is fun to take a track we like and put a Black Strobe angle onto it. Sometimes it can take a few days, sometimes a week, but we always like the result to some level. Otherwise you would never hear it.

Ok, now I've heard all these things about music in Paris, in the sense that there seems to be a lot going on, but nothing at the same time. True?

It is easy to live in Paris—well, for me. I love it, as I grew up here and it is my home. However, I know what you are saying. Paris is behind in a lot of ways regarding music and club life. I don't really go out in Paris, so I guess the lack of scene does help us concentrate on our own projects. If I lived in Berlin, surrounded by hundreds of musicians, I am not sure it would be of any benefit to me. Paris, thankfully, isn't too far from anywhere in Europe. And Black Strobe, if anything, are French. +

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