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The Emotional Last Mile: A reflection on music and how it affects us. A program conceived by Benjamin Seror as an extension of his solo exhibition Fascination that ran at CRAC Alsace from November 2021 to February 2022.

Conversation with Joakim Bouaziz, musician. This conversation took place in March 2023.

Benjamin Seror: What's so moving about sound? You could ask this question about the sound of a violin, the perfect mastery of a concert pianist, or a few notes on a cello. But there's a paradox that I love about electronic music, in that it touches us so deeply even though it's supposed to be cold and mechanical. It has this gift of being able to stay with us until the end of the night. In particular, there's a song by Joakim that I always listen to when I'm scared of flying. There's a solo in the middle that starts on a long note, and I find that sound so moving. I like to focus on the different layers of synth, it helps me get through the turbulence, so I thought I'd ask Joakim about these questions, about how you build this feeling, every day in a studio with synthesizers and drum machines. And what's so paradoxical about musicians getting up on stage every night to provoke as many emotions as possible.

Hello Joakim.

Joakim: Hello Benjamin.

B.S: So, to begin: you wear a lot of hats—musician, producer, DJ, composer—so I wanted to ask you how you define your practice?

J.: Being a musician suits me very well, because that's how it all started. Though I've done a lot of things that are possible in the field of music, either by necessity or by opportunity. So, I've got a label, I produce other people, I make film scores sometimes, remixes, I tour as a DJ... But basically it's all music, that's what motivates me and that's what I can't live without.

B.S.: Okay, great. So, in this series of interviews, I'm particularly interested in the question of how we construct feeling, and what tools we have as artists, writers and researchers to try and understand how we can be more precise, or as precise as possible, with our feelings. And what's different about using these tools—which are emotions, to be specific—compared to other spaces such as social sciences, philosophy or sociology, where we use facts. What's so special about using feelings and emotions when making art and music, when you're an author? And in this story, there's something that particularly interests me, which is the recording studio, and I'd say even more specifically the place of electronic music, to know how, with synthesizers (because that's also what I practice) how, with these objects that have this reputation of being cold and complex, how do you produce feeling? So, to begin this interview, I'm going to ask you a simple question: how did you get into music? Did you learn when you were young? Is it something you developed later in life? Where does this musical life begin for you?

J.: It all started quite simply because my parents put me on the piano when I was six. I lived in the countryside near Paris, and at the age of six I started taking piano lessons with a local teacher, and then, well, I'm not going to go into all the details... But this first teacher kind of inoculated me with the music virus, because he was very enthusiastic and encouraged me a lot, and he made me think I was some kind of genius, which I wasn't. And so I had a lot of fun with music and I started to learn. Later on I had other teachers, more serious ones, including one who influenced me a lot called Abdel Rahman El Bacha, who is quite a famous concert performer, and who taught me piano from the age of twelve, I don't know, to eighteen or twenty. At the same time, I went to the conservatory. So I've always been a bit into music, even if my parents weren't musicians... they were music lovers, but they they didn't listen to music all the time, it was more on Sundays, classical music and things like that. So it was a bit by chance that I ended up doing music, because, for many reasons, I didn't project myself professionally into this education, this classical music training like conservatories, music theory. And then some day, I realized that you could actually make music on your own, whereas I previously had a more classical vision where you need musicians, you need to be a conductor, you need to be surrounded... how else would you record and all that? When I discovered that you could do everything yourself at home and become a little orchestra conductor, this megalomaniac project got me completely carried away and from there I started creating music by myself. With bits and pieces at the start, right up to the studio I have today.

B.S.: Have you kept any tools from all those years of learning? Do you still play classical piano? Are these things you still practice?

J.: I think that knowing a bit of music theory and knowing how to make chords that are a bit more elaborate or out of the norm than _. Because in electronic music, the typical thing is to use only the black keys, because that's a pentatonic and it always sounds good, you can't make a mistake. So almost all the chords are based on this pentatonic. My training allows me to go a bit further than that sometimes. But I think above all, and this is something I learned a lot from El Bacha, it's how to conceive music as a kind of story or an image. Because, in fact, when I was performing pieces, when I was learning pieces with him and I had to perform them, before really getting into the practice, the technique, rehearsing the piece, making it my own, he would ask me to read the score as if it were a kind of scenario and to find the story I had to tell within it, to find the story myself, what am I going to tell? What does it tell? What do I understand? What can I say with it? I think that this cinematic idea of music is something I've kept inside me without realizing, and that's why the music I've created since then, electronically, has always had this idea of narrative, of a journey. My records have often been described as cinematic, though I didn't understand exactly why. But thinking about it now, that's probably where it comes from.

B.S.: That's great, I love the idea of a scenario. When I think about my music, I always try to think of this idea, that a piece should appear like a kind of adventure. It has to end somewhere very different from where it started. So I love this idea of a scenario, I think it's great advice. I'll think about that advice your piano teacher gave you.

J.: Yes, and I think it's also had a big influence on the way I DJ. Because there are DJs who manage to keep up one style of music for two hours, it's a kind of tunnel. I can't do that at all. I need to create a journey, a story, and take people from point A to point B, C, X, Y, Z. That's what interests me.

B.S.: Do you write a script before your DJ sets?

J.: No, when DJing, no. You can try to do it, but it would never work. There are so many parameters: the present, the moment, the place, the lights, the temperature, the intoxication levels, I don't know. There are many parameters, so it has to happen in the moment. But on the other hand, it's extremely powerful when you get there, at a given moment, things are going well and you realize that you've "caught" people and it's almost a kind of shamanism, and you manage to take them somewhere else, somewhere they hadn't planned to go. That's super powerful.

B.S.: Do you use sheet music in your work? Is it a tool you've continued to use after your years of classical training?

J.: Very little. Nowadays, with music creation tools, you rarely need to write a score, unless you need to share it with other people. So, no, I don't do that very much.

B.S.: And do you still play the piano? Do you have a regular piano practice?

J.: No, not enough. I think I'm kind of getting back to that. Well, first of all, from the age of twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, I stopped taking lessons and practicing the piano every day. So, I've lost a lot technically speaking, and in the studio, I mainly use what we call master keyboards or MIDI keyboards, which aren't keyboards with a heavy touch. I mean, they don't feel at all like a piano. It's a bit like playing with a toy. I don't really play the piano any more, you could say, it's quite rare. But, for the last few albums, or at least since I made this album in Venice, in Xavier Veilhan's installation during the Biennale, there were a lot of pianos, there were a lot of acoustic instruments, a harpsichord, an Ondes Martenot synthesizer, so I kind of rediscovered the pleasure of actually playing and performing. Because in fact, in music, with a master keyboard, there's no interpretation, there's very little nuance. There's speed and that's kind of it. And that made me want to go back to that, because it adds an extra layer to what you can express through music.

B.S.: Is this something we're likely to hear in future productions?

J.: Yes, that was already on that record... There's a record out now that's based on those recordings in Venice. And then in the records I've made since then, I don't know, there are a few piano passages, but that's it. I've been telling myself for almost two years now that I want to make a solo piano record, but I never find the time to do it. I've got a piano here that's completely out of tune and I didn't want to tune it on purpose, or to play it a bit out of tune for this project... I haven't found the time yet.

B.S.: In your formative years, do you remember a moment when you switched from this classical music space to electronic music? Was there a triggering moment, an experience, a concert? I also spoke to Deena Abdelwahed as part of these interviews, and she talks about a moment when she went to a club and suddenly the shock of hearing amplified music completely changed her relationship to music. She'd come from a vocal jazz background, and suddenly she's surrounded by amplified music, surrounded by music, which she remembers as a moment when everything turned upside down for her. Is there a moment like that, do you remember a turning point? Was there a moment when you said to yourself, I want to make this kind of music or work in this kind of space?

J.: I've never thought about it in terms of topography like Deena, in terms of place. But on the other hand, I do think it plays an essential role in perception and what you can do. I think that the idea of pure sound as a medium, that the texture and sound beyond the note conveys something and can provoke emotions, has a lot to do with amplification. Because for most acoustic instruments, unless you're really close to one, there's a distance with the sound, like when you're in a concert hall, and it lacks the power to make you feel certain things that are only possible through sheer volume. So: amplification. Volume is another parameter of sound emotion, and there are bands who play on that alone, almost. Doom metal bands, for instance. In fact, in a club, it wouldn't work at all if you had low sound levels.

B.S.: Have you ever experienced a moment when, at a concert or in a club, you felt some kind of musical emotion that turned you inside out?

J.: For sure, the first time I went to a club. I don't think it's just the sound and amplification, it's also the fact that there are lots of people listening to the same thing all at once and who are completely connected by movement, connected to a sound. In fact, I think that human beings are constantly searching for moments of communion, and in today's context, where religions are of little importance for this, at least in Europe, it's one of the rare moments of communion that we can have, in the club. And for me, that's what my club experience was all about. And that means amplification, so that everyone can be completely enveloped in sound, bringing back the physicality of sound, and in this communion, trance, the physical element is extremely important.

B.S.: Is this physicality of sound important to you?

J.: Yeah, the physicality of sound. In fact, I find that music is too often intellectualized, or rather, listening to music is too intellectualized. We forget that, above all, it's waves that penetrate us and make us feel things. So, I'm very interested in the body's relationship with sound and music. That's why _.

B.S.: Intellectualized, what do you mean by that? Do you think we talk too much about music?

J.: When I say intellectualized, it's not necessarily something scholarly, but it's that our approach can be too cerebral, because we're so overstimulated by culture, by the biases of our musical education, that we forget to listen to music without preconceptions, in a completely naive and pure way, and that changes everything. I don't understand when people say to me "ah, but I hate this type of music", because to me, it's not that the person doesn't like this type of music, it's that they haven't taken the time to actually listen to it. I'm doing a bit of a caricature, but that's what I mean by intellectualizing music. It's not that contemporary music is very complicated, for example. Free jazz for instance, is seen as a kind of elitist music, it's supposed to be quite intellectual in a way. But for me, it's not intellectual at all, it's a wall of sound, it's really physical.

B.S.: What's a typical day's work like at Joakim's? Can you tell us about it? How do you work on a track? What happens in the morning when you arrive in the studio? Do you start with a cup of coffee? Do you take the time to listen to the stuff you recorded the day before? Or do you start a new track as soon as you arrive? What's a typical Joakim studio day like? If ever there was such a thing as a typical day.

J.: It varies a lot, because it depends on what I'm working on. It's like I put myself in different states of mind, or I wear a different costume—if I have to do a remix for example, it's not really "me", I feel. I like to put on a disguise and say to myself, I'm going to do a remix in such and such a way, with such and such ingredients, and so there's a kind of idea that precedes the making of the remix, and there's also the importance of the remix's functionality. If I'm working for myself, for an album, that can also vary, but in general, I take lots of notes, because I'm always coming up with ideas. I say to myself, "Oh, if I were to do a track at such and such a tempo and then there'd be this type of sound and then it would actually change and become like that" or sound treatments, if I were to put a reverb on backwards and then pass it through this. So I have lots of notes like that and when I'm working on my music I often start from these notes.

B.S.: Do you take these notes on your phone?

J.: Yes, yes. But most of the time the idea doesn't work out, or it comes out transformed. It becomes something else, and it's very rare that it's as good once produced as it was written down. There's also the fact that, when I'm working on my music, I like to have a bit of a framework for each album. To start with, I have an old-fashioned approach: I make albums, which is becoming less and less common. For example, in the last record, *Second nature*, I had been reading books—Descola and Latour—about the relationship between humans and nature, and so I drew conceptually on these ideas to create the record. The one for *Samouraï* was Mishima, so that allowed me to frame the record conceptually. But after that, when it comes to actually starting the composition, it's very variable. I like to start with rhythm, because I'm obsessed with rhythm. I try to program rhythms, or I record myself playing percussion. Sometimes it might be that I know I'm going to try to make a specific sound with a synth and that's going to be the first step, or I have an idea for a chord. It's never the same process. There are records, for example, to come back to the one in Venice, where I actually had a process in place because I didn't want to get lost in the studio. Because it was a studio installation where musicians were invited to play and record whatever they wanted. There were a lot of instruments and I only had three days. And I said to myself, I'm not going to know what to do when I get there, so I set up a process where I asked people to help me determine the basis for each piece. They'd give me a word and then I'd transcribe it into a chord, then I'd ask for a letter to get the scale and I'd give them little papers, they'd choose little papers with all the instruments on them and that would give me three basic instruments. So I knew I had to start in C minor, with such and such a chord and such and such an instrument, and so I started from that. Anyway, you have to find tricks to get started, because that's always the most complicated thing. Well, not quite, maybe it's hardest to finish, or it's in between, it's the middle... But I like the idea of creating little tricks like that, which also introduces an element of chance. The rest is very instinctive. I work a lot with improvisation and I don't like reworking takes. I like the idea of mistakes. I like to keep things as they are even if they're not perfect, and that's also why I continue to work analogically. Now, that may be a bit technical, but that's how I mix tracks, because nowadays, people only work on the computer, when you're mixing for example, you work on the computer and you can go back to a mix ad infinitum because everything is always saved in the computer. Personally, I work with an old analog console, so there are no pre-set recordings, and once I've made my mix I can't go back to it because I don't write down the settings, I don't have a backup.

B.S.: So you do everything from a mixing desk?

J.: Yes, from the console.

B.S.: And do you record on tape?

J.: No, it depends. On my own albums, I do it on tape because I have more time and I'm a perfectionist. It doesn't make much difference; what counts is that there's a recorder behind the console that records what comes out of the console. But I like the idea that things are fixed in time. And that this track was mixed in such and such a way at such and such a time, and maybe there are flaws, but it represents a moment that happened.

B.S.: It may be a technical detail for our listeners, but when we record with this method, we record live, all the synths play their scores live and we only do one take during which we record everything. Then afterwards, we reset all the table settings to zero. Then we're ready to record a new track.

J.: Exactly. That's it. It's a configuration, an ephemeral type of configuration.

B.S.: Can you tell us how long this whole process takes? Do you work for a long time? Does it take weeks and weeks, or is it quick for you to make a piece?

J.: It's also very variable, because I'm a bit hyperactive and I do a lot of other things. If that's all I'm doing, it can go pretty fast. And then, in general, when it goes fast, it's a good sign. It's when it starts to drag that it means there's a problem with what I'm doing. I generally work relatively quickly and I don't like to leave things unfinished, so I finish everything. Which is quite rare in the music world.

B.S.: Wow. You manage to finish everything? So, everything's published?

J.: Almost everything, yeah. And it's not that I finish everything, it goes beyond that, everything actually gets released. Almost everything.

B.S.: You don't think we'll find any hidden monsters?

J.: There will be very few forgotten tapes. Oh, just a few.

B.S.: And what happens when it doesn't work out? Do you give up? Do you quickly move on to something else? How do you know if the piece isn't going anywhere?

J.: When things get stuck, it's usually because there's something not quite right at the base, or because I'm trying to assemble elements that don't work together, especially because after a while you intellectualize the process too much and forget about the emotion, and often you have to go back and say, okay, what do I want to say here? What do I want to express? What do I want to feel with this piece? And that's something you forget very easily, especially when you've been making music for a long time, there's the technical side, it becomes a bit technical and you have habits and you sometimes forget why you're doing this. When things get stuck, you have to ask yourself those questions.

B.S.: It's funny that you talk about improvisation and doing things quickly. I'm quite surprised, because in my experience as a listener, what I like in your tracks is the layers of instruments. I'm a pretty geeky listener: I try to understand how the tracks are made and I always find that they're super complex, so it's hard to imagine that it could be done quickly, in an improvised manner. Maybe this stems from my own technical limitations, I can't imagine anyone being so comfortable with instruments.

J.: Yes, I do go pretty fast, especially in the initial phase when we're composing and piling up tracks and coming up with ideas. Ah, I'm going to add this, I'm going to do that. That part goes pretty quickly. What takes time is listening to the thing a hundred and fifty thousand times and understanding whether you like it or not. And if you don't like it, why not? That can take time. But yes, I guess I work pretty fast. I like that you mention complexity... I don't think I'm trying to make complex music, but I do like the idea that you don't understand exactly what you're listening to. That there are layers, and in fact it's all up to me, i.e., I get bored pretty quickly, so I try to create a complexity to the point that I'll hear something new in the piece every time. Or at least, that's what I want the listener to hear, on many different levels. I want the listener to be able to listen to the same piece over and over again without ever really making it out fully. That's the goal at least, but I'm not saying I achieve it.

B.S.: Well it works on me. I keep listening to the tracks over and over to try and understand how they're done, to try and understand each layer, the percussion, the bass.

J.: Ah, but that's something we all have with _. Me too, there are lots of people, I don't know how they do it.

B.S.: Do you spend time just looking for sounds? Are there any sounds that obsess you, that you try to find or reconstruct?

J.: Yes, I'm completely obsessed with sound, with the quality of sound. That's also why I work with a mixing console, with a lot of analog synths, because it's this type of sound that _, there's a richness and a mystery to it. You never have 100% control over an analog synth, and that's what interests me. It's this part of life in the instrument, which is also the case with acoustic instruments, but I don't know why I was saying that now...

B.S.: I've been asking myself this question. For instance I know there's a sound from a particular Daft Punk song that I'm always looking for, and that's often how I start my tracks. Is there a sound that you're looking for, that you're obsessed with and can't find?

J.: No. I'm never completely satisfied with my sound. At any rate, it's a kind of never-ending quest. But I wouldn't say there's one sound I'm particularly obsessed with. I mean, there are sounds that appeal to me more and that I use a lot, like the sound of bells, of metal, of, well, anything resonant like that. Because I really like the hypnotic qualities of music, and I find these instruments very hypnotic.

B.S.: I'm very interested to know why we take music everywhere with us. What's the use of always, or at least often, having music with us? Sometimes it's for emotional support in difficult times.

J.: On a plane...

B.S.: Yes, I told you about that. There's this song, one of your songs, *Bring your love*, that I always listen to when there's turbulence on a plane. It's full of details and I listen to it over and over again, concentrating on each part. What do you imagine people take home from your music? When they've spent an evening listening to you, coming out of a concert or a party where you've DJed? What do people take home with them after an evening like that?

J.: It's quite different, I think. The two things are quite different for me. To start with the concert, because, again, it's a moment and a place that's delimited with a set group of people. For me, this experience of music is very different from walking around in the subway and listening with headphones on. On top of that, there's the difference between a concert and a DJ-set, which are completely different in terms of what you're trying to convey or what happens with the audience. But what I really like is the idea of people leaving the concert and still being moved by what they've experienced. And I was telling you about an interesting anecdote on this subject, it was a concert by La Monte Young, an American minimalist composer in New York. It was a piece with four cellos, so it's very, very, very static pieces where almost nothing happens, it's long notes that overlap and rub against each other. It's pure contemplation. And there was a little leaflet, and at the end of the leaflet, it said: do not applaud at the end of the concert. I didn't immediately understand why, but I did when I left the concert. It was so as not to break the continuum of time between the moment of the concert and afterwards, and the exit. And in fact, I was with a friend, we went out but it's like we were still in the concert. It was as if the concert went on inside us for hours afterwards, and we were still in it. I thought that was a really beautiful idea. And then, to talk more about people who would listen to my music anywhere, what interests me, or what I find fascinating, is precisely the extent to which each person will draw a different emotion from it and appropriate the music for different reasons. Sometimes people will say to me, "Oh, that helped me, that song got me through a difficult break-up". Or once, there was this guy from the Philippines and he was a teenager and he was a bit lonely and he listened to my music on his way to school and I thought that was incredible. Because between the intention I can put into it and eventually what I want to convey through the tracks and what people actually do with them, I think that's where the magic lies. It's as if _, there's a kind of incomprehension, you could say, but that's the beauty of it all, it's the translation.

B.S.: Do people ever approach you and tell you their stories?

J.: It happens quite often, actually. Or sometimes the piece comes from an encounter I had. It's something that often sticks with me afterwards, the encounter pieces.

B.S.: Yes, that happened to me. I once ran into Peter Hook at the airport in Athens and I was very moved, it took me a long time to _, it took me a long time to dare speak to him, to tell him that I'd met my wife on *The Perfect Kiss* and that he'd played a very important role in our lives.

J.: Yes, it's the idea that what you create doesn't actually belong to you, quite simply. That's it, really.

B.S.: Do you listen to a lot of music?

J.: I listen to it all the time. But on the other hand, sadly enough I think I've almost forgotten how to listen to music just for pleasure.

B.S.: Have your ears become too professional?

J.: No, I think it comes a lot from DJing and record collecting, and doing radio shows. It's because I'm constantly looking for new music that I can use for this or that. Or because I'm very, very curious about what's out there. I'm really interested in what's new. People say, "Oh, have you listened to this?" I'll listen to anything. But that's a bit of a problem.

B.S.: Especially since you told us you were a bit hyperactive. I imagine you don't spend much time at home doing nothing.

J.: It does happen to me, yes. But I should probably change certain practices. It happens to me when I'm at home and I've got nothing to do and I'll put on a record I just like. But that's very rare. I'm a bit of a maniac when it comes to classifying and organizing my music library, which is now all on my computer. So, for example, when I'm out on the town, I listen to music all the time and it's all in my phone. But my phone is full of playlists of tracks I've recently received, or bought, or downloaded, which I check to see if I'll keep or not. So it's work.

B.S.: Are there any particular things you listen to over and over again? Are there particular sounds that you keep coming back to?

J.: I have my own classics. I mean, things that are really, really strong for me. Not necessarily specific songs, *State Trooper* by Bruce Springsteen for example, Scott Walker records, things like that, or the Frank Sinatra and Jobim album, or some electronic music stuff, also classical music. Those are the things I really listen to religiously.

B.S.: In preparing this interview, we discussed one of the questions that interests me most, and that's how music touches us and what affects us directly when we listen to it. There's something I find particularly interesting about electronic music, and that's the paradox between something that's very manufactured, very mechanical, and at the same time very moving. And I had in mind the example of Dalida, which takes us a little further afield. You can watch dozens of videos of her singing

Je suis malade, but at the end she always does the same stabbing motion. She stabs herself and then it goes up like that. She always does the same gesture, and when she's in public, you can watch the song over and over again, and she always does the same gestures, as if the gestures were part of the score of the song, as if they were written in the score of the song. And it's always very moving... But at the same time, it's a trick she uses to manage to be on stage and give the best of herself, and to be able to move people without it being the ultimate performance for her every time. I wonder, then, how you build up these forms of sincerity. Is it constructed? Can it be a construction? Is it possible to manufacture this sincerity? Do you have any tricks or ways of performing or playing or insisting on emotions?

J.: I need to think if I have any techniques, because it's a really important question, and one that came up a lot for me on the last record I made during the lockdown. The fact of doing it while on lockdown, there was this idea that there's more at stake, that there's more, well, ... There's more need for music. There's no more touring, there's nothing. And so it completely lightened my load, and freed me from all those thoughts about what I should do, how I'm going to get it out there, what's my audience? All sorts of questions. And so, all of a sudden, I found myself making music the way I was really doing it in the first place, when I wasn't asking myself any questions, and I didn't even know why I was doing it exactly, but there was this form of absolute sincerity of just, I'm doing it for me actually. And I think that takes work. It's not something that just comes to you. You have to have a kind of discipline, sincerity or to remind yourself regularly, to say to yourself ok why am I doing this? Because the more experience you have, the more professional you become, the more you do things based on professional habits. And that allowed me to wipe the slate clean and to tell myself that, in the end, I'm doing this just for me. That was extremely liberating and I think it inspired me a lot. I had a lot of fun working too. And it goes back to that Dalida thing, there's that rehearsal, there's that work, in fact. Because rehearsal is work. So it's also through this work that she's able to convey her feeling to the full every time. Maybe if she did it and didn't care, or said "I'm going to go on stage and do my thing", maybe it would be a lot less powerful.

B.S.: Is it by going back to being a bit of an amateur or forgetting the professional side of things that you manage to be more precise?

J.: Yes, well, that's another thing. It's not exactly the same thing. But anyway, there's this idea that you have to sort of work at remembering why you do things. And really go back to the sources of inspiration and artistic expression.

B.S.: So is the next Joakim record going to be something with more and more instruments, or just a couple of them, something very minimal?

J.: Yes, yes, I'm extremely fascinated by things that are very simple and very raw. But in fact, it's a mistake to think that because it's simple and raw it's not precise. In fact, it's like a haiku: there's a brushstroke, or a phrase, but the sincerity, the intention is laser-focused. That fascinates me.

B.S.: So there's something that interests you about these very minimal forms, whereas your music is always very composed, with many distinct layers.

J.: Yes, there's a lot more. For instance, I'm talking about the brushstroke of Japanese calligraphy, and it's all there. I'm not good at this. But that's what fascinates me. The other day I mentioned that I love listening to things like Eliane Radigue, things that are really, really, really minimal. And that fascinates me because it's the opposite of my natural way of doing things, but that's where I'd like to go. That's also why I'm fascinated by the idea of a *song* in the really pop sense of the word, which has a kind of universal perfection. Because a good song is something that you can't take anything away from, you can't add anything, the form is really completely perfect and completely universal as it is. For me, there's this sort of common ground between a really good Beatles song and Eliane Radigue. While I have a tendency to add things, to tinker with things to make them fit. But I fantasize about this type of pure intention.

B.S.: Do you work on these very minimal gestures? Do you try to make things that come close to Eliane Radigue?

J.: A little, but not enough. I mean it's also about getting into condition. Because with the Venice record, there was very little time and I set a framework for myself, so I really went that direction of just keeping the gesture and not trying to add to it. That was the principle. It was about just taking what I've recorded and then not adding arrangements, not adding sounds. And I really enjoyed working like that. In fact it's all about setting constraints.

B.S.: We've come to the end of this interview. I hope that in years to come we'll be hearing some very fine minimal pieces by Joakim.

J.: I hope so.

B.S.: Thank you very much for this interview.

J.: With pleasure.

B.S.: See you soon, thank you.

J.: Thank you, goodbye.

—Interview with Joakim Bouaziz, recorded in March 2023.

The Emotional Last Mile was mixed by Victor Donati (R22), transcribed by Héloïse Prax and translated by Thomas Patier.