



YANN TIERSEN KERBER BIO

"I think there is a similarity between the infinite big and the infinite smallness of everything," says Yann Tiersen. "It's the same experiment looking through a microscope as it is a telescope."

This exploration of the micro and the macro has permeated through much of Tiersen's career, as an artist capable of vast expansiveness as often as he is intricate detail. This multifaceted approach can be heard in the stirring piano minimalism of 2016's *EUSA*, to the full band intensity of albums such as *Infinity* and *Skyline* - not to mention earlier albums such as *Le Phare*, filled with idiosyncratic compositions and a variety of textures.

However, Tiersen is not one to stick to a formula. For him, context is everything and the context keeps changing. When he revisited his own back catalogue on 2019's *Portrait*, this was not an exercise in nostalgia, rehashing past glories or an attempt to repeat previous ways of working. It was about re-contextualising his own work. *"The purpose of revisiting and playing live some of my previous stuff was to gather a snapshot of what I've done and then move to something else and start again,"* he says. *"It's good to have an endpoint and a sense of reconciliation. The goal was to put everything back in context."*

With that chapter now behind him, ***Kerber*** is very much a new one in Tiersen's career. One that begins with his most overtly electronic material to date. However, true to Tiersen's nuanced and subtle approach, this isn't a U-turn-like thumping piece of dance music but instead a beautifully textured, highly immersive and thoughtfully constructed electronic world to step inside of. It is both an evolution of what has come before, as well as a new space to explore. On the new album, the piano is the source, but electronics are the environment that they exist within. Tiersen explains, *"You may get this intuitive thinking of, 'oh it's piano stuff', but actually it's not. I worked on piano tracks to begin with but that's not the core of it, they are not important. The context is the most important thing - the piano was a precursor to create something for the electronics to work around."*

Working in The Eskal, the studio he built on Ushant (the island where he lives, located 30 kilometres off the West coast of Brittany in the Celtic Sea), Tiersen's process for the album's recording was particularly involved. After spending the spring writing the piano parts, he went on to spend that summer meticulously creating a sample bank for the Elektron Octatrack using these parts as inspiration, following the chord progressions, playing them on instruments such as the Ondes Martenot, mellotron and harpsichord. These were then subsequently transformed, reshaped and processed. What then followed, with producer Gareth Jones (Depeche Mode, Einstürzende Neubauten), was three weeks of working with electronics, sampling, re-sampling and processing sounds to create an engulfing soundscape where the tender tones of piano keys merge with gently pulsing electronics and an intense ambient milieu. *"You get the acoustics of the studio in there as well,"* he says. *"So it's good that you have this mixture that comes from having electronic stuff in a big space."*

The opening 'Kerlann' is a masterclass in subtlety and restraint, as piercing piano keys merge with swirling soundscapes, whereas songs such as 'Ker al Loch', with added Roland CR-78 drum machine, build up from gently played piano keys to a full on sensory



assault as pulsating and gargling electronics cloak the song. There is a clear tonal coherence to the album but also one that remains impossible to predict where it may go next. Tiersen took a lot from the creative process. *"I had a really amazing time messing around with my modular system, getting really technical"* he says, *"That was more of an inspiration than anything else. It was sort of a meditation diving into all the geeky technical stuff."*

A sense of place has often been a central theme in Tiersen's work and here that is no different. *EUSA* is the Breton name for Ushant and this album is also connected to the place Tiersen calls home. *Kerber* is named after a chapel in a small village on the island and being further influenced by the close geographical area around him, each track is tied to a place mapping out the immediate landscape that surrounds Tiersen's home. Which links back to Tiersen's comments about the possibilities of the infinite smallness. *"I've become more and more obsessed with location,"* he says.

It might be easy to picture Tiersen on a small island during a pandemic and imagine this as an exploration of isolation but this is much more an expression of being conscious of your own direct environment and your place within it - a sonic encapsulation of the hyper-local. For Tiersen this approach extracts the same degree of profundity as spending the evening studying the stars - which he himself does. *"You can look at things that are thousands of light years away and relate your own existence to this really cosmic element,"* he says. *"But you get that same feeling with the things all around you."*

However, whereas Tiersen has previously used field recordings to cement the sense of place and location as a theme in his work, this time he wanted the music to have its own symbiotic relationship with itself. *"With field recordings you use them to build a relationship with the tracks to create something new,"* he says. *"But on this album the idea is just to do that with electronics - to build everything around that and to create a sense of interaction. For it to be its own ecosystem."*

Kerber Tracklisting

Kerlann
Ar Maner Kozh
Kerdrall
Ker Yegu
Ker al Loch
Kerber
Poull Bojer

Kerber is released on 27 August 2021 on Mute: <https://mute.ffm.to/kerber>

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