

= Stereolab =

Stereolab are a music band formed in 1990 in London , England . The band originally comprised songwriting team Tim Gane (guitar / keyboards) and Lætitia Sadier (vocals / keyboards / guitar) , both of whom remained at the helm across many lineup changes . Other long @-@ time members include Mary Hansen (backing vocals / keyboards / guitar) , who played with the group from 1992 until her accidental death in 2002 , and Andy Ramsay (drums) , who joined in 1993 , and who is still in the official line @-@ up .

Called " one of the most fiercely independent and original groups of the Nineties , " Stereolab were one of the first bands to be termed " post @-@ rock " . Their primary musical influence was 1970s krautrock , which they combined with lounge , 1960s pop , and experimental pop music . They were noted for their heavy use of vintage electronic keyboards , and their sound often overlays a repetitive " motorik " beat with female vocals sung in English or French . Stereolab often incorporates socio @-@ political themes into their lyrics . Some critics say the group 's lyrics carry a strong Marxist message , and both Gane and Sadier admit to being influenced by the Surrealist and Situationist cultural and political movements . Gane is skeptical of labels such as " Marxist pop " , and defends the band against accusations of " sloganeering " .

Although many of the band 's albums have been underground hits , they never found larger commercial success . The band were released from their recording contract with Warner Bros. Records when Warner 's imprint Elektra Records folded . The release was reportedly due to poor record sales , and since then Stereolab 's self @-@ owned label , Duophonic Records , has signed a distribution deal with Too Pure . Duophonic holds the copyrights to the band 's recordings , and on this label the band has released many limited @-@ edition records . In 2009 , Stereolab announced via their website that they were going on indefinite hiatus .

= = History = =

= = = 1990 ? 1993 = = =

In 1985 , Tim Gane formed McCarthy , a band from Essex , England known for their left @-@ wing politics . Gane met the French @-@ born Lætitia Sadier at a McCarthy concert in Paris and the two quickly fell in love . The musically @-@ inclined Sadier was disillusioned with the rock scene in France and soon moved to London to be with Gane and pursue her career . In 1990 , after three albums , McCarthy broke up and Gane immediately formed Stereolab with Sadier (who had also contributed vocals to McCarthy 's final album) and ex @-@ Chills bassist Martin Kean . The group 's name was taken from a division of Vanguard Records demonstrating hi @-@ fi effects .

Gane and Sadier , along with future Stereolab manager Martin Pike , created a record label called Duophonic Super 45s which , along with later offshoot Duophonic Ultra High Frequency Disks , would become commonly known as " Duophonic " . The 10 inch vinyl EP Super 45 was the first release for both band and label , and was sold through mail order and the Rough Trade Shop in London . Super 45 's band @-@ designed album art and packaging was the first of many customized and limited @-@ edition Duophonic records . In a 1996 interview in The Wire Gane calls the " do @-@ it @-@ yourself " aesthetic behind Duophonic " empowering " , and says that by releasing one 's own music " you learn ; it creates more music , more ideas " . Other independent bands such as Tortoise , Broadcast , and Labradford would also release material on Duophonic .

Stereolab followed up with another EP , Super @-@ Electric , and a single , " Stunning Debut Album " (which was neither debut nor album) . The band 's early material was rock and guitar @-@ oriented ; of Super @-@ Electric , Jason Ankeny wrote in AllMusic that " Droning guitars , skeletal rhythms , and pop hooks ? not vintage synths and pointillist melodies ? were their calling cards ... " In 1992 , Stereolab 's first full @-@ length album , Peng ! , and first compilation , Switched On , were released on independent label Too Pure . Around this time , the lineup consisted of Gane and Sadier plus vocalist Mary Hansen , drummer Andy Ramsay , bassist Duncan Brown , keyboardist

Katharine Gifford , and guitarist Sean O 'Hagan of the 1980s famed Microdisney duo . Hansen , an Australian , had been in touch with Gane since his McCarthy days . After joining , she and Sadier developed a style of vocal counterpoint that distinguished Stereolab 's sound until Hansen 's death ten years later in 2002 . O 'Hagan would later leave to form The High Llamas , but would frequently return to contribute to Stereolab 's records .

Beginning with their 1993 EP Space Age Bachelor Pad Music , the band began to incorporate easy @-@ listening elements into their sound . This release raised Stereolab 's profile and landed them a major @-@ label American record deal with Elektra Records . Their next album , 1993 's Transient Random @-@ Noise Bursts with Announcements , was their first American release under Elektra , and became an underground hit in both the U.S. and the U.K. Mark Jenkins commented in The Washington Post that with this album , Stereolab " continues the glorious drones of [their] indie work , giving celestial sweep to [their] garage @-@ rock organ pumping and rhythm @-@ guitar strumming " . In the U.K. it was released on Duophonic Ultra High Frequency Disks , which is responsible for domestic releases of Stereolab 's major albums . The year would also see a collaboration with industrial stalwarts Nurse With Wound , in the form of the Crumb Duck EP .

= = = 1994 ? 2001 = = =

On 8 January 1994 , Stereolab achieved their first chart entry when 1993 EP Jenny Ondioline entered at number 75 on the UK Singles Chart . (Over the next three years , four more releases by the band would appear on this chart , ending with the EP Miss Modular in 1997 .) With their 1994 album , Mars Audiac Quintet , Stereolab focused more on pop and less on rock , resulting in what AllMusic described as " what may be the group 's most accessible , tightly @-@ written album " . Mars Audiac Quintet makes heavy use of vintage electronic instruments , and also contains the single " Ping Pong " , which gained press coverage for its allegedly explicitly Marxist lyrics . After releasing a 1995 collection of singles and B @-@ sides called Refried Ectoplasm : Switched On , Vol . 2 , Stereolab followed with an EP titled Music for the Amorphous Body Study Center . This EP was their musical contribution to an interactive art exhibit put on in collaboration with New York City artist Charles Long .

Stereolab 's 1996 album , Emperor Tomato Ketchup , was a critical success and was played heavily on college radio . A record that " captivated alternative rock " , it represented Stereolab 's " high @-@ water mark " according to music journalists Tom Moon and Joshua Klein , respectively . Krautrock techniques were still present , but the band stirred the pot with hip @-@ hop sounds and complex instrumental arrangements . Stephan Davet of French newspaper Le Monde claimed to see musical influences as diverse as The Velvet Underground , Burt Bacharach , and Françoise Hardy on the album . John McEntire of the band Tortoise assisted with production and played on Emperor Tomato Ketchup . Katharine Gifford was replaced by Morgane Lhote before recording , and bassist Duncan Brown by Richard Harrison after .

Also in 1996 , Stereolab collaborated with Herbie Mann on the song " One Note Samba / Surfboard " for the AIDS @-@ Benefit album Red Hot + Rio produced by the Red Hot Organization .

Dots and Loops was released in 1997 , and was Stereolab 's first album to enter the Billboard 200 charts , peaking at number 111 . Barney Hoskyns wrote in Rolling Stone that with it the group moved " ever further away from the one @-@ chord Velvets drone @-@ mesh of its early days " toward easy listening and Europop . A review in German newspaper Die Zeit echoed this observation , claiming that in Dots and Loops Stereolab transformed the harder Velvet Underground @-@ like riffs of previous releases into " softer sounds and noisy playfulness " . Contributors to the album once again included John McEntire , along with Sean O 'Hagan of The High Llamas and Jan St. Werner of German electropop duo Mouse on Mars . A second Nurse With Wound collaboration , Simple Headphone Mind , appeared in 1997 , and the third installment of the " Switched On " series , Aluminum Tunes , followed in 1998 . In 1998 , Stereolab collaborated with French avant @-@ garde singer and poet Brigitte Fontaine in single " Calimero " .

The band took a break from touring while Gane and Sadier had a child . In 1999 , Stereolab 's next album appeared , titled Cobra and Phases Group Play Voltage in the Milky Night . Co @-@

produced by McEntire and American producer Jim O'Rourke, the album earned mixed reviews for its lighter sound, and peaked at number 154 on the Billboard 200. An unsigned NME review said that "this record has far more in common with bad jazz and progressive rock than any experimental art-rock tradition." In a 1999 The Washington Post article, Mark Jenkins asked Gane about the album's apparent lack of guitars; Gane responded, "There's a lot less upfront, distorted guitar ... But it's still quite guitar-based music. Every single track has a guitar on it." Stereolab added a new bassist, Simon Johns, for the Cobra and Phases Group ... tour.

The album Sound @-@ Dust followed in 2001, and rose to number 178 on the Billboard 200. Again featuring producers McEntire and O'Rourke, it was more warmly received than Cobra and Phases Group Critic Joshua Klein said that "the emphasis this time sounds less on unfocused experimentation and more on melody ... a breezy and welcome return to form for the British band." Klein also commented that "never has it been harder to discern just what [Sadier] is singing, but rarely has her gibberish sounded so pleasant."

== 2002 ? 2008 ==

In 2002, as they were planning their next album, the band started building a studio north of Bordeaux, France. October saw the release of ABC Music: The Radio 1 Sessions; a compilation of BBC Radio 1 sessions. That year also marked an end to Gane and Sadier's romantic relationship. As the year was coming to a close, tragedy struck.

On 9 December, longstanding band member Mary Hansen was killed when hit by a truck while riding her bicycle. Born in Maryborough, Queensland, Australia, Hansen earned the most attention for her vocal work with Stereolab, although she also played the guitar and keyboards. The music journalist Pierre Perrone said that Hansen's "playful nature and mischievous sense of humour came through in the way she approached the backing vocals she contributed to Stereolab and the distinctive harmonies she created with Sadier." For the next few months, Stereolab lay dormant as the members grieved. They eventually decided to continue; as Sadier explained in a 2004 interview: "Losing Mary is still incredibly painful ... But it's also an opportunity to transform and move on. It's a new version. We've always had new versions, people coming in and out. That's life." (Future album and concert reviews would mention the effects of Hansen's absence.) In a 2004 interview, Sadier said that "Our dedication to her on the album [2004's Margerine Eclipse] says, 'We will love you till the end', meaning of our lives. I'm not religious, but I feel Mary's energy is still around somewhere. It didn't just disappear."

The 2003 EP Instant 0 in the Universe was recorded in France, and was Stereolab's first release following Hansen's death. According to music journalist Jim DeRogatis, the EP marked a return to their earlier, harder sound? "free from the pseudo @-@ funk moves and avant @-@ garde tinkering that had been inspired by Chicago producer Jim O'Rourke". That year, Sadier's side @-@ project, Monade, released its debut album Socialisme Ou Barbarie: The Bedroom Recordings. Both the name of the group and the title of the album are references to the work of Greek @-@ French intellectual Cornelius Castoriadis.

The album Margerine Eclipse followed in 2004 with generally positive reviews, and peaked at number 174 on the US Billboard 200. The track "Feel and Triple" was written in tribute to Hansen; according to Sadier "I was reflecting on my years with her ... reflecting on how we sometimes found it hard to express the love we had for one another." The Observer's Molloy Woodcraft awarded the album four out of five stars, and described Sadier's vocal performance as "life- and love @-@ affirming", and the record as a whole as "Complex and catchy, bold and beatific." Kelefa Sanneh argued in Rolling Stone that Margerine Eclipse was "full of familiar noises and aimless melodies". Margerine Eclipse was Stereolab's last record to be released on American label Elektra Records, which shut down that same year. Future material would be released on Too Pure, the same label which had released some of the band's earliest material.

Margerine Eclipse was followed by Oscillons from the Anti @-@ Sun; a 2005 three @-@ CD and one @-@ DVD retrospective of the group's rarer material. Monade's second album, A Few Steps More, also appeared that year. In 2005 and 2006, Stereolab released six limited @-@ edition

singles which were later released as a collection in *Fab Four Suture* , and contained material which Mark Jenkins thought continued the brisker sound of the band 's post *Mark Hansen* work . *Serene Velocity* , a " best of " compilation focusing on the band 's *Elektra* years , was released in late 2006 . By June 2007 , *Stereolab* 's lineup comprised Tim Gane , Lætitia Sadier , Andy Ramsay , Simon Johns , Dominic Jeffrey , Joseph Watson , and Joseph Walters . The band had finished the production of their next album , entitled *Chemical Chords* , which was released in August 2008 on the 4AD label . The release of the album was followed by an autumn tour of Europe and the United States .

== 2009 ? present ==

They toured Australia in February 2009 as part of the *St Jerome 's Laneway Festival* . In April the same year , manager Martin Pike announced a pause in the band 's career together for the time being . After 19 years , he said that they felt it was time to take a rest and move on to new projects .

In November 2010 , the band released *Not Music* , a collection of unreleased material recorded at the same time as *Chemical Chords* .

At a performance on 21 June 2013 at the *All Tomorrow 's Parties* festival held at *Pontins* in *Camber Sands* , *Cavern Of Anti Matter* (a trio featuring former *Stereolab* members Tim Gane and Joe Dilworth) were joined onstage by Lætitia Sadier for a performance of " *Blue Milk* " (from *Cobra and Phases Group Play Voltage in the Milky Night*) , thus effecting a partial *Stereolab* reunion . The song is mentioned repeatedly in the festival programme as being highly influential on the work of festival curators *Deerhunter* , and band member Bradford Cox also joined the group onstage for this performance .

== Musical style ==

Stereolab 's music combines a droning rock sound with lounge instrumentals , overlaid with sing along song female vocals and pop melodies . Their records are heavily influenced by the " motorik " technique of 1970s krautrock groups such as *Neu !* and *Faust* . Tim Gane has supported the comparison : " *Neu !* did minimalism and drones , but in a very pop way . " *Stereolab* 's style also incorporates easy listening music of the 1950s and ' 60s . Said Joshua Klein in *The Washington Post* , " Years before everyone else caught on , *Stereolab* was referencing the 1970s German bands *Can* and *Neu !* , the Mexican lounge music master *Esquivel* and the decidedly unhip *Burt Bacharach* . " The band 's music is also associated with genres such as art pop , indie pop , indie rock , post rock and experimental rock .

The band make use of vintage analog electronic instruments such as the *Farfisa* and *Vox* organs , and the *Moog* synthesizer , which was featured prominently on 1994 's *Mars Audiac Quintet* . Gane has praised these older instruments for their superior controllability : " We use the older effects because they 're more direct , more extreme , and they 're more like plasticine : you can shape them into loads of things . " Funk , jazz , and Brazilian music were inspirations , and the sounds of minimalist composers Philip Glass and Steve Reich can be found on 1999 's *Cobra and Phases Group* Several critics have commented that the band 's later work , like *Instant 0 in the Universe* (2003) and *Margarine Eclipse* (2004) , sound similar to their guitar driven earlier style .

Lætitia Sadier 's French and English vocals have been a part of *Stereolab* 's sound since the beginning . She writes the group 's lyrics , which tend to lean towards Marxist social commentary rather than " affairs of the heart " (in the opinion of music journalist Simon Reynolds) . In reference to Sadier 's laid back delivery , Peter Shapiro wrote facetiously in *The Wire* that she " display [ed] all the emotional histrionics of Nico " . Sometimes Sadier will just sing wordlessly along with the music . Before *Mary Hansen* 's death in 2002 , she and Sadier would often trade vocals back and forth in a singsong manner that has been described as " eerie " and " hypnotic " . Critic Jim Harrington commented that *Hansen* 's absence is noticeable on live performances of *Stereolab* 's older tracks , and that their newer songs could have benefited from her backing vocals .

In interviews , Gane and Sadier have discussed their musical philosophy . According to Gane " to

be unique was more important than to be good . " On the subject of being too obscure , he said in a 1996 interview that " maybe the area where we 're on dodgy ground , is this idea that you need great knowledge [of] esoteric music to understand what we 're doing . " Sadier responded to Gane , saying that she " think [s] we have achieved a music that will make sense to a lot of people whether they know about Steve Reich or not . " The duo were up @-@ front about their desire to grow the group 's sound : for Gane , " otherwise it just sounds like what other people are doing , " and for Sadier , " you trust that there is more and that it can be done more interesting . "

= = = On stage = = =

Stereolab toured regularly to support their album releases . In a 1996 The Washington Post gig review , Mark Jenkins wrote that Stereolab started out favoring an " easy @-@ listening syncopation " , but eventually reverted to a " messier , more urgent sound " characteristic of their earlier performances . In another review Jenkins said that the band 's live songs " frequently veer [ed] into more cacophonous , guitar @-@ dominated territory " , in contrast to lighter albums like Cobra and Phases Group In the Minneapolis Star Tribune Jon Bream compared the band 's live sound to feedback @-@ driven rock bands like The Velvet Underground , Sonic Youth and My Bloody Valentine . Several critics have said that Stereolab lacked stage presence , arguing that Sadier 's vocal delivery was too subdued and that the band tended to play instead of perform its music . Regarding being onstage , Gane has said that " I don 't like to be the center of attention ... I just get into the music and am not really aware of the people there . That 's my way of getting through it . "

= = Lyrics and titles = =

Stereolab 's music is politically and philosophically charged . Lætitia Sadier , who writes the group 's lyrics , has reportedly been inspired by her anger at the Iraq War . The Surrealist and Situationist cultural and political movements were also influences , as noted by Sadier and Gane in a 1999 Salon.com interview . Stewart Mason commented in an AllMusic review that the lyrics from the 1997 song " Miss Modular " " sound influenced by the Situationist theory of the ' spectacle ' . " When asked to explain her intentions in a 1991 Melody Maker interview , Sadier responded that " Basically I want to change the world . I want to make people think about how they live every day , shake them a bit . "

Critics have seen Marxist allusions in the band 's lyrics , and several have gone so far as to call the band members themselves Marxist . " Ping Pong " , a single included on Mars Audiac Quintet (1994) , has been put forward as evidence . In the song , Sadier sings " about capitalism 's cruel cycles of slump and recovery " with lyrics that constitute " a plainspoken explanation of one of the central tenets of Marxian economic analysis " (said critics Simon Reynolds and Stewart Mason , respectively) . The song opens with the lines :

It 's alright ' cause the historical pattern has shown ,
How the economical cycle tends to revolve ,
In a round of decades three stages stand out in a loop ,
A slump and war then peel back to square one and back for more .

Band members have resisted attempts to link the group and its music to Marxism . In a 1999 interview , Gane stated that " none of us are Marxists ... I 've never even read Marx . " Although Gane admitted that his partner 's lyrics touch on political topics , he argued that they do not cross the line into " sloganeering " . Sadier herself has mentioned that she has read very little Marx . In contrast , Cornelius Castoriadis , a radical political philosopher but strong critic of Marxism , has been mentioned as a marking influence in her thinking . Her side project 's name (Monade) and its first album 's title (Socialisme ou Barbarie) are also references to the work of Castoriadis .

Stereolab 's album and song titles occasionally reference avant @-@ garde political groups and artists . Gane said that the title of their 1999 album Cobra and Phases Group Play Voltage in the Milky Night contains the names of two Surrealist organizations , " CoBrA " and " Phases Group " . The title of the first song on Dots and Loops , " Brakhage " , is a nod to experimental filmmaker Stan

Brakhage . Other examples are the 1992 compilation Switched On , named after a 1969 Wendy Carlos album , and the 1992 single " John Cage Bubblegum " , named after experimental composer John Cage .

= = Legacy = =

Stereolab have been called " one of the most influential alternative bands of the ' 90s " , and one of " the decade 's most innovative British bands . " Simon Reynolds commented in Rolling Stone that the group 's earlier records form " an endlessly seductive body of work that sounds always the same , always different . " In The Wire , Peter Shapiro compared the band favorably to Britpop bands Oasis and Blur , and defended their music against the charge that it is " nothing but the sum total of its arcane reference points . " Stereolab were one of the first groups to be called post @-@ rock ? in a 1996 article , journalist Angela Lewis applied the " new term " to Stereolab and three other bands who have connections to the group . The band 's 1996 album Emperor Tomato Ketchup , their " high @-@ water mark " according to critic Joshua Klein , was a critical success and underground hit . Stereolab have also received negative press . Barney Hoskyns questioned the longevity of their music in a 1996 Mojo review , saying that their records " sound more like arid experiments than music born of emotional need . " In The Guardian , Dave Simpson stated : " With their borrowings from early , obscure Kraftwerk and hip obtuse sources , [Stereolab] sound like a band of rock critics rather than musicians . " Lætitia Sadier 's vocals were cited by author Stuart Shea as often being " indecipherable . "

A variety of artists , musical and otherwise , have collaborated with Stereolab . In 1995 the group teamed up with sculptor Charles Long for an interactive art show in New York City , for which Long provided the exhibits and Stereolab the music . They have released tracks by and toured with post @-@ rock band Tortoise , while John McEntire of Tortoise has in turn worked on several Stereolab albums . In the 1990s Stereolab and veteran industrial band Nurse With Wound released two limited @-@ edition records together ; both contained Nurse With Wound remixes of original tracks provided by Stereolab .

Stylistically , music journalist J. D. Considine credits the band for anticipating and driving the late 1990s revival of vintage analog instruments among indie rock bands . Indie rock band Pavement (who also toured with Stereolab) acknowledged the group 's sound on their song " Half A Canyon . " Stereolab alumni have also founded bands of their own . Guitarist Sean O 'Hagan went on to form The High Llamas , while keyboardist Katharine Gifford created Snowpony with a former member of My Bloody Valentine . Sadier herself has released three albums with her four @-@ piece side @-@ project Monade , whose sound Mark Jenkins called a " little more Parisian " than Stereolab 's . Australian band Turnstyle sampled " OLV 26 " from Emperor Tomato Ketchup on their debut album and going as far as using Andy Ramsay to mix and master their reunion album " Time equals Function " .

Despite earning critical acclaim and a sizable fanbase , commercial success eluded the group . Early in their career , their 1993 EP Jenny Ondioline entered the UK Singles Chart , but financial issues prevented the band from printing enough records to satisfy demand . When Elektra Records was closed down by Warner Bros. Records in 2004 , Stereolab was dropped along with many other artists , reportedly because of poor sales . Since then , Stereolab 's self @-@ owned label Duophonic has inked a worldwide distribution deal with independent label Too Pure . Through Duophonic the band both licenses their music and releases it directly (depending on geographic market) . According to Tim Gane , " ... we license our recordings and just give them to people , then we don 't have to ask for permission if we want to use it . We just want to be in control of our own music . "

Members of US band ! ! ! have formed Stereolad , their tribute to the group . Stereolad are supporting ! ! ! on their current European tour (February 2016) .

Artists covering Stereolab 's songs have included Iron & Wine (" Peng ! 33 ") , Editors (" French Disko ") , The Raveonettes (" French Disko ") , and The Flowers of Hell (" Super @-@ Electric ")

= = Selected discography = =

Stereolab released dozens of studio albums , EPs , and singles over the years . They made it a practice to make almost all of their more obscure material widely available through compilations .

= = = Studio albums = = =

Peng ! (1992) , Too Pure / American
Transient Random @-@ Noise Bursts with Announcements (1993) , Duophonic / Elektra
Mars Audiac Quintet (1994) , Duophonic / Elektra
Emperor Tomato Ketchup (1996) , Duophonic / Elektra
Dots and Loops (1997) , Duophonic / Elektra
Cobra and Phases Group Play Voltage in the Milky Night (1999) , Duophonic / Elektra
Sound @-@ Dust (2001) , Duophonic / Elektra
Margerine Eclipse (2004) , Duophonic / Elektra
Chemical Chords (2008) , Duophonic / 4AD
Not Music (2010) , Duophonic / Drag City

= = = Compilations = = =

Switched On (1992) , Too Pure / Slumberland
Refried Ectoplasm : Switched On , Vol . 2 (1995) , Duophonic / Drag City
Aluminum Tunes : Switched On , Vol . 3 (1998) , Duophonic / Drag City
ABC Music : The Radio 1 Sessions (2002) , Strange Fruit / Koch
Oscillons from the Anti @-@ Sun (2005) , Duophonic / Too Pure
Fab Four Suture (2006) , Duophonic / Too Pure
Serene Velocity : A Stereolab Anthology (2006) , Duophonic / Elektra / Rhino