

= Maxinquaye =

Maxinquaye is the debut album by English rapper and producer Tricky . After starting his music career in Bristol 's club scene , Tricky became a frequent collaborator with Massive Attack in the early 1990s . He rapped and wrote songs for the group while maturing as a lyricist ; his themes of sex and gang violence eventually evolved into more introspective , personal lyrics . He soon found his role with the group limiting and wanted to record an album with a female vocalist whose singing would offer his songwriting another dimension . Tricky discovered singer Martina Topley @-@ Bird , with whom he formed both a musical and romantic relationship , before signing a recording contract with 4th & B 'way Records in 1993 .

Assisted by co @-@ producer Mark Saunders , Tricky recorded Maxinquaye primarily at his home studio in London in 1994 with Topley @-@ Bird , who shared vocals on most of the tracks with him . He incorporated dub production techniques , heavily altered samples , and elements of hip hop , soul , rock , ambient techno , reggae , and experimental music into the record 's groove @-@ oriented and low @-@ tempo sound . The songs explore themes of dysfunctional sexual relationships , fear of intimacy , recreational drug use , and cultural decline , with lyrics inspired by Tricky 's experiences in the British drug culture . His songwriting style and use of female vocalists such as Topley @-@ Bird were influenced by his mother , Maxine Quaye , after whom the album was titled .

Released on 20 February 1995 by 4th & B 'way Records , Maxinquaye reached number three on the United Kingdom 's albums chart and sold over 100 @,@ 000 copies in its first few months of release . 4th & B 'way relied on independent record promoters and the British demographic of progressive , young music buyers rather than American markets for the record to perform well . A widespread critical success , Maxinquaye was cited by many journalists as the year 's best record and the key release of a musical style that was being dubbed trip hop at the time . Since then , it has been ranked frequently on all @-@ time lists of the greatest albums and has sold over 500 @,@ 000 copies worldwide .

= = Background = =

After a troubled upbringing in the Knowle West neighbourhood of Bristol , Tricky became involved with an eclectic collective of DJs and musicians known as The Wild Bunch during the late 1980s . As part of the collective , he helped arrange sound systems around Bristol 's club scene and penned raps under a stage name derived from " Tricky Kid " , the nickname given to him in a street gang as a youth . The Wild Bunch signed a record deal with 4th & B 'way Records and released two singles but their slow , experimental sound failed to make a commercial impact . The collective dissolved in 1989 , but would eventually lead to the formation of the group Massive Attack , with Tricky a frequent collaborator who rapped over their productions ; he later reworked material he had written for Massive Attack on Maxinquaye .

Tricky eventually grew frustrated with his role in Massive Attack , finding it limiting , and wanted to record an album with a female vocalist whose singing would offer another dimension to his lyrics and their meaning . In 1993 , he discovered Martina Topley @-@ Bird , then a teenager at Clifton College , when he saw her sitting against a wall near his house , singing to herself . " That 's really how it happened , " she recalled . " A few weeks later , I went around to his house with some friends . We 'd been drinking cider after our GCSEs . We were banging on his door , but he wasn 't in . Then Mark Stewart , who lived there , came up to us and said : ' Yeah , this is Tricky 's house , jump in through the window . ' " Tricky , whose lyrics had matured from simplistic raps about street violence and sex to more personal and introspective writing , said Topley @-@ Bird found his songs " quite depressing " , which he believed was because of her more privileged background : " It 's just reality . She 's been a student all her life , grew up in Somerset , and I don 't think she 's ever faced the real world . She finds it all a bit weird . But she 's my best mate . " They would form a musical and romantic partnership over subsequent years , and their first recording together , " Aftermath " , later appeared on Maxinquaye . After offering the song to Massive Attack , who were not interested in

including it on their 1991 album *Blue Lines*, Tricky released "Aftermath" independently to local record stores in September 1993 before he signed a record deal with 4th & B 'way.

= = Music and themes = =

Tricky asked Mark Saunders to co-produce *Maxinquaye* after being impressed by his previous work with English rock band The Cure on their albums *Mixed Up* (1990) and *Wish* (1992). They recorded *Maxinquaye* in the first half of 1994 at Tricky's home studio in Kilburn; further recording later took place at the Loveshack and Eastcote studios in Notting Hill. Island Records, 4th & B 'Way's parent label, set up equipment in the home studio at Tricky's request, including an Akai S1000 sampler, an Atari 1040 computer with Logic software, an Alesis ADAT recorder, an AKG C3000 microphone, a Behringer Composer compressor, and a Mackie 1604 mixing desk. The recording sessions were somewhat chaotic, and Saunders, who had the impression he would only perform engineering duties, often found himself serving as a DJ and programmer. Tricky instructed him on what to sample, regardless of different tempos and pitches, and asked him to piece the results together, something Saunders achieved by pitch-shifting the respective samples until the combination sounded satisfactory. The samples they experimented with were taken from the many vinyl records that Saunders recalled were "littered" all over Tricky's floor. Influenced by dub music's production techniques, Tricky exhaustively altered borrowed sounds on his sampler, mixed tracks as they were being recorded live in the studio, and preserved sounds that otherwise would have been unwanted in the final mix, including glitches and crackles.

According to American critic Robert Christgau, *Maxinquaye*'s groove is oriented and low-tempo music drew not only on dub but also on lo-fi, ambient techno, and hip hop, while James Hunter from *Rolling Stone* said Tricky subsumed American hip hop, soul, reggae, and 1980s English rock sounds into "a mercurial style of dance music". *Entertainment Weekly* critic David Browne classified the music as an intellectual form of R & B. In Tricky's own words, he composed his songs based on a particular sound he liked rather than having a definite song structure in mind: "I couldn't write you a blues track or a hip hop track if you asked. I just make what I hear and then me and Martina sing all the words on paper, putting the emphasis on the things that perhaps shouldn't be sung." Tricky had no concept of pitch, regard for notational conventions and time signatures, or previous experience with sampling, but his approach for *Maxinquaye* challenged Saunders to rethink his ideas about music production and experiment in ways he had never tried before. Saunders recalled being asked to combine samples of two songs that were 30 beats per minute apart and composed in entirely different keys: "[Tricky] thought differently to anybody I've ever known ... It didn't occur to me that by de-tuning one to slow it down, both might then gel musically at that point. I always think of it like going into a scrapyard and building a car out of all the bits you can find. You could probably build a car that would work, and although it might be the ugliest you've ever seen, it would have loads of character."

Almost all of Topley Bird's vocals on *Maxinquaye* were recorded in a single take, a process she later said was "totally instinctive. There was no time to drum up an alter ego." Topley Bird, a soft-spoken singer, found herself backed on most tracks by Tricky's rapped vocals. According to British music journalist Sean O'Hagan, she sang with a "broken voice" that acted as "the perfect foil to Tricky's whispered and drawled raps". The liner notes credited Tricky and Topley Bird for vocals on all songs except "Pumpkin" and "You Don't", which Tricky performed with vocalists Alison Goldfrapp and Ragga, respectively. A printing error mistakenly credited the then-unknown Topley Bird as "Martine" on the record. Other musicians were recruited to play instruments for some tracks, including guitarist James Stevenson and bassist Pete Briquette. The band FTV performed on "Black Steel", which was a rock version of Public Enemy's "Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos" (1988) and one of two remakes on *Maxinquaye*; Tricky also remade one of his contributions for Massive Attack, "Karmacoma" (1994), retitling it as "Overcome". Saunders contributed guitar himself, with the resulting improvisations treated as samples.

Tricky explained *Maxinquaye*'s title in an interview with Simon Reynolds: "Quaye, that's this race

of people in Africa , and ' Maxin , ' that 's my mum 's name , Maxine , and I 've just taken the E off " ; Reynolds interpreted this as a " place name " similar to the Rastafarian idea of Zion . In another source , Tricky was reported as saying Quaye had also been his mother 's surname . According to Greg Kot , his mother 's name provided the album its title while her suicide , along with his father abandoning him and Tricky 's lack of moral sense as a youth , helped inform his " unsentimental grasp on reality " , which was reflected in Maxinquaye 's " collision of beauty and violence " . In the opinion of Stylus Magazine 's Kenan Hebert , who called it " a document of obsession , mistrust , misconduct , solipsism , and sociopathy " , the songs dealing with dysfunctional sexual relationships and fear of intimacy were given a Freudian angle by his mother 's influence on the album , including Tricky 's reference to her on " Aftermath " . In an interview for The Wire , Tricky explained his mother 's influence and his use of female vocalists like Topley @-@ Bird : " My first lyric ever on a song was ' your eyes resemble mine , you 'll see as no others can ' . I didn 't have any kids then ... so what am I talking about ? Who am I talking about ? My mother ... used to write poetry but in her time she couldn 't have done anything with that , there wasn 't any opportunity . It 's almost like she killed herself to give me the opportunity , my lyrics . I can never understand why I write as a female , I think I 've got my mum 's talent , I 'm her vehicle . So I need a woman to sing that . "

While songs such as " Overcome " and " Suffocated Love " dealt with themes of " sexual paranoia and male dread of intimacy " , the rest of Maxinquaye explored the psychological tolls of the British recreational drug culture , which Reynolds said served as a " temporary utopia " for a generation of users who otherwise lacked a " constructive outlet for its idealism " . He felt the album 's cover art , featuring rusting metal surfaces , represented the cultural decline explored in the music 's themes . Tricky drew on Rastafarian ideas about end time for the record , although unlike adherents to that movement he did not disassociate himself from " Babylon " , or the degenerate qualities of Western society , writing lyrics such as " my brain thinks bomb @-@ like / beware of our appetite " on " Hell Is Round the Corner " . He later told Reynolds , " I 'm part of this fuckin ' psychic pollution ... It 's like , I can be as greedy as you . The conditioned part of me says ' yeah , I 'm gonna go out and make money , I 'm going to rule my own little kingdom . ' " Christgau deemed the album 's songs " audioramas of someone who 's signed on to work for the wages of sin and lived to cash the check " , while O 'Hagan said Tricky 's " impressionistic prose poems " were written from the deviant perspective of the urban hedonist : " Maxinquaye is the sound of blunted Britain , paranoid and obsessive ... This was the inner @-@ city blues , Bristol style " .

The songs " Ponderosa " , " Strugglin ' " , and " Hell Is Round the Corner " were inspired by Tricky 's experiences with marijuana , alcohol , cocaine , and ecstasy , particularly a two @-@ year binge and consequent state of despondency while on Massive Attack 's payroll after the completion of Blue Lines . His stream @-@ of @-@ consciousness lyrics on Maxinquaye explore the delirious , despondent , and emotionally unstable state associated with drug use while offering a pessimistic view of the drug culture , as Tricky viewed the high of cocaine undeserved and the depth of thought achieved through ecstasy unsubstantial . In Reynolds ' opinion , Tricky 's experiences with drug @-@ induced paranoia , anxiety , and visions of specters and demons were represented in the production of songs such as " Aftermath " and " Hell Is Round the Corner " . For the latter track , he altered and slowed down a vocal sample to give it a wounded basso profundo sound , while channelling it through a loop of an orchestral Isaac Hayes recording titled " Ike 's Rap II " . On " Strugglin ' " , which sampled sounds of a creaking door and the click of a gun being loaded , Tricky 's lyrics made explicit reference to his visions of " mystical shadows , fraught with no meaning " .

= = Release and reception = =

After Tricky signed to 4th & B 'way , the label reissued " Aftermath " in January 1994 and released " Ponderosa " in April to promote Maxinquaye . The following year , three more singles were released ? " Overcome " in January , " Black Steel " in March , and " Pumpkin " in November . The label also released a four @-@ track EP entitled The Hell E.P. in July , which was a collaboration with American rap group Gravediggaz and featured " Hell Is Round the Corner " ; the song reached number 12 on the UK Singles Chart . Although hip hop records in the United Kingdom had received

exposure through dance music dealers and press , 4th & B 'way relied on independent record promoters and Tricky 's cover story in NME to promote the album . According to 4th & B 'way director Julian Palmer , the UK 's demographic of young music buyers such as students was more progressive than in the United States , where he said the record would have to be marketed differently because of his race . He believed that much like Portishead , a contemporary Bristol act , Tricky would have received airplay in the US on alternative or college rock radio if the label focused their efforts to promote him there : " Some people I 've met were confused because he 's black , and it 's not easy to break through those barriers there . "

Maxinquaye was released on 20 February 1995 and sold over 100 @, @ 000 copies in its first few months of release in the UK , despite no significant radio airplay . The record charted for 35 weeks on the British albums chart , peaking at number three . After it was released in the US on April 18 , Tricky toured the country as a supporting act for fellow English recording artist PJ Harvey . According to Nielsen SoundScan , the album had sold 222 @, @ 000 copies in the US by 2003 . By 2012 , it had sold over 500 @, @ 000 copies worldwide . That same year , Tricky performed the entire album with Topley @-@ Bird on April 27 at the Sundance London festival , which was their first onstage appearance together in 15 years .

When Maxinquaye was first released , it received widespread acclaim from critics . In a review for Mojo , Jon Savage called it a very ambitious and musically audacious work that brilliantly explored the disparities in Britain 's social structure , with Topley @-@ Bird as the " dominant voice " articulating Tricky 's vision of uncertainty in an ever @-@ changing world . Dele Fadele from NME said the record was unprecedented , spellbinding , and revealed something new with every listen . He found Tricky 's production innovative and his fusion of various sounds so seamless , " you can 't label the results under any existing genre " . David Bennun of Melody Maker called the record " all but perfect " and noted that " Tricky 's music is so gripping , original , sublime , his lyrics so abstruse and woven into the sound , that they become inseparable " . In Q magazine Tom Doyle praised Topley @-@ Bird 's vocals for making Maxinquaye " a highly inventive and intoxicating collection " and stated that " with this debut , Tricky proves himself to be more challenging and eclectic than his peers " .

Along with Blue Lines , Maxinquaye was hailed by journalists as the pivotal release in what they were calling " trip hop " music ; Jon Pareles , the chief critic at The New York Times , called it the genre 's " first album @-@ length masterpiece " . Tricky disliked the term , saying " I was supposed to have invented trip hop , and I will fucking deny having anything to do with it " . In a retrospective review for Stylus Magazine , Hebert argued that " there 's too much here to be sequestered to any genre , let alone that one ... Calling Tricky ' trip @-@ hop ' is a bit like calling Prince ' pop ' . It 's partially accurate , but the music is so much better than that . " Jason Draper from Record Collector dubbed it " the British postmodern album of the 90s " , and AllMusic senior editor Stephen Thomas Erlewine said it remained " a bracing sonic adventure that gains richness and resonance with each listen " because of the songs ' imaginative structures and exceptional use of " noise and experimental music " . In The Village Voice , Christgau believed its significance lied in an aesthetic of cool derived from the blues and African @-@ American culture , which valued a self @-@ possessed resolve in the face of oppression :

" What stands out isn 't the dolor pop generalists noticed at the time , but the listenability that induced them to bother : Martina 's pervasive lyricism , beats that are buoyant at any speed , a profusion of sweet @-@ tempered [keyboard] effects that signify melody , harmony , strings . It 's still pretty morose , sure . But nothing in its bitter passivity and contained rage comes off as a defeat or a sham ... Maxinquaye had that kind of cool . With blues replications per se having worn out their formal gris @-@ gris , it voiced and embraced a grim new resignation about freedom , power , race , and human connection in the postwelfare state ? and simultaneously counteracted it . "

Reviews of the 2009 deluxe edition continued to praise the album and highlight its originality . Rupert Howe of Q magazine awarded it five stars out of five and called it " an album of contradictions " , saying that at the time it " sounded as alien to hip hop as it did to Britpop " and concluding , " Maxinquaye proved impossible to live up to ... while subsequent Tricky albums tested both musical boundaries and patience , his experiments here still glow with mystery and magic " . In

another five @-@ star review in Mojo , Victoria Segal said , " Maxinquaye still sounds like it came from space rather than Bristol , an exotic , erotic alien that nobody (not least its creator) has managed to clone " .

Maxinquaye was named 1995 's best record in year @-@ end polls by numerous English publications , including NME and Melody Maker , and finished second in the voting for the Pazz & Jop , an annual poll of American critics . The record also received a nomination for the 1995 Mercury Prize , an annual music award given to the best album from the UK and Ireland , losing out to Portishead 's 1994 debut Dummy . It was later ranked high in Q magazine 's poll determining the 100 greatest British albums , Mojo 's " 100 Modern Classics " , and Rolling Stone 's " Essential Recordings of the 90s " , among other lists . Since then , Maxinquaye has frequently appeared on authoritative lists of the greatest records ever , including NME 's 2013 list of the 500 greatest albums , which ranked it 202nd best . Slant Magazine named it the 21st greatest electronic album of the 20th century and wrote that along with Blue Lines and Dummy , it was also " one of the most influential trip @-@ hop albums of the ' 90s " . According to Acclaimed Music , Maxinquaye is the 170th most ranked record on critics ' all @-@ time lists . It was also included in the music reference book 1001 Albums You Must Hear Before You Die ; according to contributing writer Alex Rayner , the " Innovative , thought provoking , and intricately arranged " album played a significant role in popularizing British hip hop and spoken word music in the UK .

= = Track listing = =

Notes

All songs were written and composed by Tricky , except " Ponderosa " (Tricky and Howie B) and " Black Steel " (Carlton Ridenhour , Eric Sadler , Hank Shocklee) .

All vocals were performed by Tricky and Martina Topley @-@ Bird , except on " Pumpkin " (Tricky and Alison Goldfrapp) and " You Don 't " (Tricky and Ragga) .

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = Charts = =