

Allez Allez

By Nicolas Fransolet as told to Maisonneuve staff.



I've always done two things: photography and music.

I was better at photography than music, but the punk movement in '77 gave me and other people the opportunity to play music quite easily. The main thing was not to study music, but just to play it loud. That was okay for me, because I'm not a really good guitar player. That was the perfect movement for me in my adolescence.

At the same time, I was taking classes in photography. I won something like twenty-five thousand Belgian francs in a photographic contest called Brussels Is Love. Don't ask me why, that was the time. With this money, I bought a guitar and an amp. I began to listen to Pink Floyd and tried to mimic David Gilmour. I also did band photography. My friends and all the gigs were in Brussels. I started the band with my best friends. There was a really big music scene in Brussels, because it's so close to London, you just have to cross the channel. The band, Allez Allez, was six people. Sarah was the lead singer. She was English and really iconic, a bit like Marilyn Monroe.

I had an exam and, because I was touring all the time, I decided to combine it all in a testimony of the behind-the-scenes life. Of course, I was on stage, so it was quite impossible for me to do the pictures. But I realized it could be interesting to see the tour life, the relationship between all of us; we were something like eight to ten people. We were really close, literally, because there was just one van with all the guitars and the drums. That led to the intimacy of the photography, the intensity behind-the-scene. It was cheap to tour, so we could sleep with two people in a room, a really big luxury. It was a long time ago, and there was a lot of alcohol and drugs. The man in the bathtub is called Marka, and he's still doing music and touring in Belgium. He was the bassist, and I shared a room with him because he wasn't smoking. Today, his two children are really well-known singers—his daughter is Belgian pop star Angèle.

We had the opportunity to do a lot of gigs. The band was quite successful in Belgium, Holland and a little bit in the UK. We had double golden records in '82. We did something like two to three concerts every week, all over Belgium and Holland. We also played in London. That was all really exciting. In the early eighties, it was quite easy to open for popular bands, because people like the concert manager didn't really care. We had the opportunity to share the stage with Talking Heads, U2, Steve Miller Band amongst others. It was really the time where everything was open.

Nicolas Fransolet is still a photographer and fortunately no longer a guitarist.







