



***IN CONVERSATION WITH CHERIF HASHIZUME // PROFOUND SOUND 2020***

Olivia: Can you tell me a little more about what you're doing in Profound Sound this year?

Cherif: So this year I'm really excited! I'm performing with my new band Hrí́m, which consists of Anil Sebastian my main collaborator. We performed last year, we did a collaborative set. As well as with this amazing Icelandic folk singer Ösp Eldjárn.

O: What does Hrí́m mean?

C: Hrí́m means Rime, it also has the same sound in Hindi Hreem meaning the sound vibration of the cosmic heart. Ösp's name means popular tree & Ösp's brothers name is Orn which means eagle- it's so cool! Ösp really is a phenomenal Icelandic folk singer, her first solo album was nominated for the folk music award. They're genuinely two of the best people in the world to be working with.

O: And also close friends to you too?

C: Yeah super close, we've been working together for 5 years. The album that got nominated for the folk award music award, I recorded as well as co-produced it too. Hrí́m is just one of the outcomes of the collab between the three of us, so we kinda work independently, collaboratively as well as semi-collaboratively- it depends what comes up and what we want to do, it just happened to be that in Hrí́m- there's such a special chemistry between the 3 of us. It just feels stronger than anything else we've done so far so we decided to really put our foot down and really focus on developing this, and hopefully through next year too.

O: You seem really happy about it?

C: I am really happy about it! When you finish something and you listen back to something and you're like ah yeah we've made something special here. Obviously having that feeling confirmed by actually releasing it too- we're really chuffed that we've got every single release featured on the Spotify playlist new music Iceland.

O: Didn't you tour there too?

C: Yeah we went to Iceland Airwaves. The festival have this app and it tells you which artist is playing where and when, and if you sign up to it, you can look at who's turning up to each venue on each show, and when we checked our stuff it said 400 people signed up, and it was a 400 capacity venue... we said 'oh it's online, if we get 40 people we'll be happy', then we turned up and the queue started from the entrance and went all the way around the building, and we were like 'this is not for us?' Then it turned out, we had done 3 shows in 3 days in the same city and we got all 3 venues completely full, and we're unsigned haha! So after that, we just said to ourselves, we have to do this properly.

O: And now you're coming to Profound Sound!

C: It's a pleasure. We are really excited to be in town and share the stage with amazing talent such as Miguel Noya.

O: And you're also doing the workshop?

C: Yeah the workshop is geeky side of me. I love that side. I really love passing on what I've learnt to especially younger generations too so they can come up with something new that I would never think of, it's a really satisfying feeling.

... I'm going to run a 4-part workshop, part 1 on Profound Sound then we'll figure out over the course of 4-8 months in doing 3 more. We'll just generally cover this super basic creative coding using this environment called Pure Data, which is called the visual coding environment, so instead of writing endless lines of codes, you basically connect small boxes and each box does really simple things, and if you do it in a certain way, it can start doing something super interesting. It's developed by this American computer scientist called Miller Puckette. He initially made Max/MSP, and it was developed while he was in IRCAM, but because he was the researcher, the right belonged to the institute. The institute decided to sell that to a company called Cycling '74. And then it became a staple for interactive media coding stuff, but it costs

money to run, not super expensive, it can do a lot of super cool stuff, but for the beginners you probably don't need all of that anyway. After that, he wanted to create another similar environment which is open source and accessible, so that's when he decided to move on and develop Pure Data and still to this day its completely free to use. People can openly access and re-write the environment, some people re-write so they can do more stuff with visuals, or with AI- there's loads of different iterations with it. But we're obviously going to stick with the original version, we'll do the super basics so people can just at least dip their toe in, see how they feel.

O: And then that workshop is to see if people would want to sign up to the others?

C: Yeah and then if people wanted to carry on, then we would get into things a little deeper.

O: Obviously talking about the coding, creative side, or the performing side, is there one that you prefer, or like a mix of both?

I really enjoy both sides equally, I get bored very quickly... if I do the same thing everyday I just get a bit fed up with it. I'm juggling three things which are the coding, the production and then also being a musician, and of course, being a sound-engineer. I basically do that side of the band and my solo stuff.

And having these 3 different roles which is completely different on their own but they always feed into eachother, creates this really positive feedback loop.

... For example, If I'm doing Hríms stuff I'm obviously thinking about the music side of things as well as capturing ÖSP and Anil's voice, Anil will do a lot of string and harmony arrangements and then he will send me the files that I have to incorporate to existing songs, then we'll have to re-edit certain things or move things around, then we do a lot of pinpointing stuff, not just musically but technically. For example, when we are prepping for the live set up- the Hríms set up is quite complex in many ways- we have loads of really weird time signatures and that changes half way through the song, and key changes and stuff, so I have to basically build a little few piece of codes that runs within Ableton which again runs in Max, to basically take care of that side of things. So half way through the set, I don't have to start moving things around with a mouse so I don't get distracted, I have a code that triggers the certain point of the songs to change.

...So there's these 3 things all melding together to create one cohesive work, everything is interconnected, even though it looks like it's not.

...or in fact, it wasn't like that in the beginning. I started off as a young engineer, I was focusing on that first and trying to establish myself, in the more traditional sense in having an education in that field, that was my degree, and then I started working in a recording studio.

O: Where did you study?

C: I studied at SAE London and my degree is in Recording Art. Recording art. So, that was a natural progression and made sense, back then it was the best paying work I could get.

O: And you think when you're starting out, that you have to have some cemented position, especially when people ask, what do you do?

C: Exactly, but after I also had this crazy realisation / slap in the face / wake up call. The studio I used to work in had two phenomenal producers- one is Jon Hopkins, one is Leo Abrahams, he produces Paolo Nutini and plays guitar for Pulp. Joh is Jon, phenomenal keyboard player, phenomenal composer, phenomenal producer, he collaborates with everyone, including people like Brian Eno. He's got a perfect pitch as well, you walk into his room and he's just playing this beautiful music and I was 'oh is that your tune?' And he was like 'oh no this just my practice routine' And I just used to be like 'how?!' I had that in one room, and then I go to another room where Leo would be working, once I spotted him writing down a chord on a piece of paper so I asked him what he was doing, and he said oh 'I'm writing a song', but then I asked, 'you don't even have your guitar or keyboard?' And he used to say, 'Oh that's fine, I exactly know how each chord sounds in my head.'

...And then there was just me straight outta college bumping into those two people in my work space, and I just realised, ok I can't be like them, because I never had a classical training or was crazy good at an instrument. I was questioning, what can I do to feel the niche that they don't have? So, I started looking into what I'm good at and what I enjoy, I'm quite tech-minded, I can understand more of a technical side of things. So straight after that, I met the artist Tim Exile- he was at Profound Sound last year- I saw him playing live and you know you just see him jump on the stage and say 'what do you wanna hear? I don't have any songs, I'm just going to make it up as I go along.' For me, that was just mind boggling...for me, electronic music is where you sit in

the studio, you spend hours on end changing stuff and programming stuff. So I went to his backstage and I went up to him, and said 'I'm really sorry I don't like to be the guy saying like oh what do you use to make your music mate, *but no seriously, what do you use?*' (laughs)

... He said, I use this thing called native instrument Reaktor, which is a similar thing to Max or PD, I use this to make my own instrument, so I was like, I'm gonna do that. I tried to use Reaktor, didn't make any sense to me, so I started to explore different environments, and eventually settled in Max as found that had the most comprehensive learning material that was really easily accessible. So basically spent 10 years off the bat just doing it, everyone in the studio thought I was going completely mad, cause every spare moment- in the studio you have a lot of waiting time- so every time I had to wait a couple of hours, I just opened up the mac.

O: That's how it begins though right?

C: Eventually you become good at it, and think, oh actually I can do this- and can incorporate all 3.

O: So going on that, has anything changed for you in the last year musically, your perception of stuff? Do you want to change anything for the future, are you thinking about that?

C: Well, it's kind of yes and no...

O: Do you even have to think about it?

C: Well the thing is I use love listening to new music so I generally notice different trends in a way, or you just listen to other people's music and wonder how they're doing that, and you kinda start to experiment with your own set up, and think, oh this is how they're doing it, if they're doing that I could probably use that instead, and see if it fits into my own music. In that sense I'm constantly evolving, Hrím is constantly evolving, and having 3 of us in the band accelerates that. And also with Hrím stuff, actually releasing music and getting the feedback from people, I started to understand what works, what doesn't work, sometimes it's really strange your perception of your music compared to what the audiences' perception is, it can be strangely really surprising and astonishing.

You're like, "oh is that how you think this is?" I thought we were making this, what they think is that, it's not better or worse.

O: You learn something?

C: Yeah exactly, you start to figure out what works, and also playing your song or production, making it in the studio vs playing it in a massive pa system, it's like 'ah ok, so this is how it sounds? Oh ok, then there's a lot of bass, more than I thought?'

O: I bet Iceland was the coolest place to see too?

C: Iceland is really becoming this amazing spawning ground for phenomenal artists especially in the music world, and actually physically being there and seeing the city and meeting people and even getting to have a look around the environment it makes sense- it's got such a vibe. The city itself is very vibrant, very creative, it's small but full of people, full of art, full of music and then you look up and see these epic looking mountains on the yonder with a little snow trail on the top, it's like woooooow. We had such a warm welcome, and we're going back there this year as well. I really do recommend Icelandic Airwaves.... I think it's the first or second week of November and it goes on for 3-4 days, we normally just book the whole week, we fly in on like Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday is rehearsal, and then Thursday, Friday, Saturday is the show, and then Sunday you want more chill time.

O: This brings me onto my last question, do you think festivals like Profound Sound are important to the cultural landscape of Folkestone? Do you like having a part in that?

C: Oh absolutely otherwise I wouldn't be doing it, this is the third time. I genuinely believe that also being a DFL, for me I really just didn't want to be just that- and Anil too- we didn't want to move into a new town and just not contribute to the community at all, we could do that in a way because our work is still primarily focused in London, you know my sound engineer work has started to get more international recognition, I get work from France, Korea, all these different places- we could just say oh yeah we could do that and this is just a town, and not mingle with people from here. As well as Profound Sound 3 years ago happening on the first week of moving here. We just felt like we were instantly part of the community, when that happens, you feel like you owe some gratitude to the community, and having Profound Sound which felt like so fitting to what we're doing. So yeah just having that realisation, that was probably one of the best ways for us to integrate and to give something back to the community.