

OHM'S LAW 10 Analog sequences to play with a “Ximbomba”

Majoral Biel: Ximbomba\*

Miquel Brunet, analog instruments\*\*

Lyrics: Macià Ferrer



\*Ximbomba is a percussion musical instrument of the frictional family or indirect fry membranophones. It has three parts: a container acting as a sound box, a membrane and a stick producing the sound when vibrating. The Ximbomba is a resilient element of my little country.

\*\* Hammond/Leslie, Theremin, Moog and Roland System 500 modular synthesizers, Roland JUNO 60, Jupiter 6, Yamaha CS60, Rhodes Suitcase 88 electric Piano, Wurlitzer Electric Piano, Hohner Clavinet D6, Fretless Bass, Steinway Piano, Electric and Acoustic guitars .

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“Ohm's law” consists of 10 movements interpreted with analog and acoustic electronic instruments over the rhythmic and uninterrupted pattern of a Ximbomba, a genuine, symbolic and resilient element of Mallorca's culture.

Each sequence responds to a mood which expresses the solitude suffered from an increasingly minoritized and endangered Mallorcan culture. The Ximbomba symbolically represents the resistance to the increasingly strong trend of cultural substitution for other cultures that we suffer. In this project, the choice of the Ximbomba player offered no other option. It would be almost impossible to find someone who, throughout his career, both artistic and vital, has shown more resistance, coherence and vehemence in the defense of the Catalan language, culture and not to mention, the country, but Biel Majoral.

I've been lucky enough to share experiences, scenarios, trips or conversations with the Master of Masters and learned from him every day. I have personally learned that either language and

culture of their own is not protected, but enjoyed and practiced. I do not have enough gratitude and admiration for him; therefore, I could not imagine a better player to share this project than him.

I cannot but mention, emotively, the words that, from the prison of Lledoners, the activist and the then president of Òmnium Cultural, wrote to Biel Majoral in a hopeful and felt letter:

“In the cell your unmistakable Ximbomba resonates, and in the distance it still marks the fighting rhythm for all the trenches as well. For school, for culture and for a future of dignity (...) In the hope of embracing us in the depressed Majorca. Always ahead.” (Jordi Cuixart)

The rhythmic patterns of the Ximbomba that support “Ohm’s law” are only two: binary and ternary.. In this austereness of resources lies the connection with the simplicity and greatness of the island character: the excellent simplicity that can sometimes become philosophical and magnificence, such as in Ramon Llull works.

In contrast of it, almost in opposition, I would say, we find electronics (not computers ) which play an essential role in the instrumentation of this work. Most of the electronic instruments you will hear on this record were part of the musical corpus of the juvenile rebellion between the 1960s and 1970s, years of psychedelia, rock and counterculture. Those Anglo-Saxon instruments came to be naturally incorporated and welcomed into the Balearics soundscape. It is extraordinary that trans-culturality takes place. But is also desirable that if different music cultures are fused, one of them does not eclipse the other, leading the eclipsed one to its disappearance.

The challenge of “Ohm’s Law” has been to avoid the use of stereotypical rhythmic patterns found in most current electronic dance music (EDM). The Ximbomba can essentially successfully replace the strong and weak percussive time authority of the so wrong-called “modern” music: bassdrum on the first and third time and snaredrum on the second and fourth. Hal Blaine’s epitaph says “Should rest in peace on 2 and 4”, in clear allusion to the marked times of the rhythmic patterns of both pop and rock. You will not therefore find another percussive instrument in this work, than the Ximbomba.

In the book *The Société de l’Espectacle*, Debord states that “capitalism ends up turning society into a spectacle and individuals into mere spectators. At the same time, he claims (in a proposal as Marxist) that every man is his own artist, as it happens in a Ximbomba’s party at the end of a dinner in Mallorca.”

The recording of “Ohm’s Law” can be understood as a collection of sound paintings that can be enjoyed and reproduced infinitely and repeatedly at home in order to recreate the feeling of being in Mallorca, in the atemporal and kaleidoscopic Mallorca, even if you are not present, when you feel that you are not really allowed to be. It can happen. Now, it happens to me that I often feel excluded.

The Ximbomba calls the party, as the Xeremia (bagpipe) does, and both together calls the revolution.

Think about this work as an act of sound subversion, as well as an act of reactionary revolt towards the substitution practiced over one’s own culture.

Perhaps some people will find this work unrespectable toward conventional aesthetic canons and at some point it may even sound offensive to ears. But this is what I wanted to do. Let’s kill the canons!! I have also had this feeling throughout the process of creating it.

However, I needed to know how this little instrument was able to survive the 40 minute shoots of punchy and invasive electronics wall of sound, as much as I needed to know how your ears would be able to withstand the impertinence of some nasty sound moments.

Only then, can you understand how difficult it is to resist, as a Majorcan person, the oppression of being practiced on a depressed and trimmed island by predators.

But as long as there’s a Ximbomba sounding, we will survive.

## OHM'S LAW. The making off

The process of this disc's recording started with a simple Ximbomba's beat and sound. This was the generating element of musical ideas, and it served as the inspiration and engine to design sounds and set up tempos. That is why the BPM tempo that Biel Majoral played the Ximbomba was not altered, because somehow, in this beat, it radiates the sincere feeling of the people, the life clock of the earth with which he dialogues, the beating drum of the cultural agitator that is in Biel. The primordial Ximbomba was recorded in an analog tape machine, where the tapes were cropped and joined for looping sound patterns, repeatedly, because the path that remained was long, and the Ximbomba's player awaited as the farmer awaited the cultivation of his land.

From the very beginning, the goal was that none of the sounds were generated from digital technology-based processes. This self-imposed "limitation" in the age of sampling, plugins and copy-paste may seem like a backward step. However, it always comes to my mind when Nadia Boulanger told his pupils, "Without limits, there can be no creativity, just chaos."

The frequent confusion between Electronics and Computing needs to be cleared up here. In traditional electronic processes what we have is an electron current circulating through a circuit to produce the desired sound, but without any sort of binary conversion. In digital technology, which is based on audio computing, the sounds need to be first coded, and then converted and transformed into numeric codes of zeros and ones. It is precisely in this process that the sound is altered depending on the quality of the converters used. Similarly, the digital synthesis that pretends to emulate traditional synthesizer sounds (and even more, traditional instrument sounds) are precisely this: a simple emulation trying to simulate those sounds.

To make this understood: electronics can snap, or produce an electric shock on whichever it comes into contact with the device. A digital device (excepting the power source) will hardly produce this "motivating" energy discharge.

Thus the sound design that occurs in an analog synthesizer, such as a Moog modular, sound is not prefabricated, it is the player himself who scribbles it in real time, using a palette without limits, either dynamics or colour. From a simple sound wave, a voltage-controlled amplifier module, a voltage-controlled filter module and an envelope module, allow us to create sound and a musical idea all at once, in a polyhedral dimension unusual in other conventional instruments, where the sound is already prefabricated by the luthier in the instrument itself. The process is, I confess, of an emotional intensity that is difficult to explain, and probably gives more pleasure to the player than to the listener.

There are other sounds you will hear, such as the piano Rhodes, Wurlitzer, the Clavinet Hohner D6 or the Hammond organ with Leslie, which are nowadays frequently imitated by software, imitations that I have avoided. Instead, I wanted to use the original instruments because of the organic nature and warmth they bring not only when listening to them, but also the sound it makes when playing them.

In conclusion, I suggest not listening to this record on a mobile phone, tablet or small computer. I am sure that some of you have a better soundsystem, with a player connected to an amplifier or speaker capable of playing all the frequency music range within the minimum quality, or you may have some friends or relatives who have it. Only then, sitting with your eyes closed, you can feel the beat that this music wants to transmit, which is an island and its culture that refuses to die, that refuses to become just a tourist parade track.