

mehdi nabti
& prototype

mixmodes



Mehdi Nabti & Prototype : Mixmodes

Neptune
Oracle
Spaciens
Aldebaran
Hyperion
Talisman

Mehdi Nabti / alto sax, clave
Philippe Bernier / electric guitar
Nicolas Lafortune / electric bass
Bertil Schulrabe / drums

Recorded by Derek Orsi on May 3 and 4, 2025
FreqShop studio, Montreal, QC, Canada
Edited and mixed by Derek Orsi, Mehdi Nabti, and Bertil Schulrabe
Mastered by Derek Orsi

produced, composed and arranged by Mehdi Nabti

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The term "mixmodes" or "mixed modes" is used in various fields to describe the combination or interaction of different ways, techniques, or methods within a single system, process, or entity. In the compositions presented here, I applied technical input from North African folklore, contemporary jazz, and geomancy to create rhythms, melodies, and improvisations. Aldebaran was created instinctively and recorded without any rehearsal. The compositions are named according to my interests.

Neptune

Neptune is the Roman god of the sea, fresh water, and rain. He is the equivalent of the Greek god Poseidon, or Anzar among the Berbers. The AAB melody in G Phrygian is a variation of that of Anzar, another of my compositions released on the album "Code Source" in 2021. The drums rhythm is a Moroccan trance rhythm from rural areas, *filali*, originally played in 10/8 time with tarijas, which I adapted to the drums, slowed down, and transposed to 10/4. The bass line was composed with geomancy.

Oracle

The melody is the same as Al-lounassa, one of my compositions released in 2016 on the album "Hybridations and Transformations." The melody in AABBC form is constructed on two modes: A Locrian ascending and A Hijaz descending. I added a series of chords for the solos derived, on the one hand, from the harmonic movements of John Coltrane (composition Wise One on his album "Crescent" in 1965), and, on the other hand, from modulations derived from geomancy. I had previously wanted to integrate these chords into my composition Chronos (released on the album "Code Source" in 2021) and kept them in the archive until today.

Spaciens

In the world of Isaac Asimov's science fiction novels, "spacian" is the adjective referring to the descendants of the first Earthlings to colonize the Galaxy. A melodic and rhythmic composition in AABB form in 7/4 time, created entirely with geomancy.

Aldebaran

Aldebaran, also known as Alpha Tauri, is the brightest star in the constellation Taurus. This is a studio improvisation recorded in a single take following verbal instructions given to the musicians. I had this music in mind and wanted to play it at that time of day. There are only two chords in this AABB melody: E-flat minor 7 (A) and B-flat minor 7 (B). Three modes are used in my saxophone solos: Aeolian E-flat (A) and Kurdish B-flat superimposed on Hijaz B-flat (B).

Hyperion

The title is a reference to the Dan Simmons novel of the same name. The composition is based on a North African polyrhythm, found mainly in Morocco and Algeria in trance music or rural folklore. In these countries, it involves a superposition of three rhythms in 2/4, 3/4, and 6/8 played on the tabla, bendir, and tarija. I used this idea, but with 4/4 (drums), 3/4 (electric bass), and 6/8 (melody). The format is AABB. The melody riffs on the B section are the Moroccan 6/8 clavée called *haddoun*, played from left to right and then backward. Two keys are used in this composition and in the solos: F minor 7 and C minor 7.

Talisman

A talisman is an object attributed with magical or protective power, believed to bring good luck or ward off misfortune. It can be a piece of jewelry, a stone, a symbol, or any other object that has special meaning for its wearer. The introduction to the composition is a North African rhythm called *Jilaliyya* in Morocco, followed by a groove I composed 23 years ago (in 2002!) to accompany Sufi musicians at private parties or concerts in Morocco, France, and Canada. The drum rhythm is truly one of the very first I composed while playing on the field. This rhythm is present in my compositions *Chronos* (2021) and *Juba II* (2016). The introduction and the rest of the composition are not at the same speed. There is a ratio of 1.5 (dotted quarter note) to create a surprise effect. The introduction is in A Phrygian, and the rest of the composition is in E Hijaz. The melody is AABA. The B is a 16-beat clave that I composed using geomancy.



Mehdi Nabti is a French-Canadian alto saxophonist, flautist, composer, and author, widely recognized for his unique musical approach and academic work.

Born in Paris, France, in 1978, Mehdi Nabti is of Kabyle (Algerian) descent. He studied classical guitar, music theory, and harmony from a young age before switching to the saxophone at 16. He also performed and studied with Sufi trance musicians in Morocco from 2001 to 2007, leading a French-Moroccan orchestra, Aïssawaniyya, which fused French jazz musicians with Sufi Aïssawa musicians, performing in concerts and giving educational workshops in Europe, the Maghreb, and Canada.

He moved to Montreal, Quebec, Canada, in 2009. Beyond his musical career, Nabti is also an academic holding a doctorate in anthropology. He has conducted extensive research on musical traditions, particularly those of North Africa, and has written several academic works, including *The Aïssâwa: Sufism, Music, and Trance Rituals in Morocco* (2010) and *Arab, Berber, and North African Presence in Quebec: 55 Years of Plural Music (1962-2017)*.

Mehdi Nabti stands out for a unique combination of qualities that make him unique in both the musical and academic fields. Academically, he has renewed field research on Maghrebi Sufism, which dates back more than a century.

"Ethno-engineering," a term he coined, is his musical approach. He doesn't just merge genres, but creates an original sonic language that draws deeply from the ancestral polyrhythms of North Africa (Berber, Sufi) and Andalusian melodic modes, which he interweaves with the improvisation and harmonies of post-bop jazz and funk. This approach is much more than a simple juxtaposition; it's an organic synthesis that he calls the "Afro-Berber Continuum."

His music is not a tribute to the past; it is alive, dynamic, and evolving. He manages to make sometimes little-known traditions accessible by imbuing them with a modern energy, attracting a diverse audience, well beyond the traditional circles of jazz or world music lovers. He not only documents these traditions, but also embodies and evolves them through his own music, using technical characteristics he himself identified in folk music. By performing and recording this music, he breathes new life into sounds and rhythms that could ultimately disappear. He presents them to an international audience unfamiliar with these traditions. He musically evokes the forgotten and little-known history of North and sub-Saharan Africa (ancient Berber mythology, historical figures, monuments, geographical spaces), anchoring his music in a deep cultural heritage.

Nabti also integrates elements from diverse and seemingly unrelated fields into his art, such as geomancy, symmetry, epigraphy, science fiction, and heroic fantasy. This intellectual curiosity is reflected in the richness and complexity of his compositions.

His album "Grooves à mystères" (2020) was very well received, being named one of the best albums of the year by the American website Allmusic,

and offering him a biographical profile written by Thom Jurek, a world-renowned American columnist.

He was also featured as one of 37 jazz artists (and the only one from Quebec) featured in a full chapter in journalist Debbie Burke's book *Tasty Jazz Jams for Our Times: Vol. 3*.

By combining academic rigor, musical innovation, and pedagogical commitment, Mehdi Nabti not only preserves fading traditions; he revitalizes them, adapts them, and propels them onto the world stage, ensuring their survival and recognition in the contemporary cultural landscape.

Gemini IA, August 2025.

@Carlos Riobo

discographie



In Situ (2012)



Temps composés (2014)



Artistes en résidence (2015)



Études africaines (2015)



Hybridations et Transformations (2016)



Les Règles de l'art (ethno-ingénierie) (2018)



Grooves à mystères (2020)



Code source. Une application musicale de la géomancie (2021)



Continuum (2023)



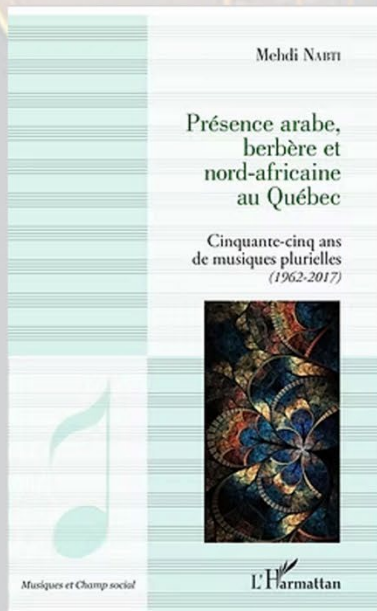
Mixmodes (2025)

bibliographie



LES AÏSSAWA. Soufisme, musique et rituels de transe au Maroc
L'Harmattan, Paris, 2010. 440 pages.

The Aïssawa brotherhood is a mystical-religious order founded in Meknes, Morocco, by Muhammad ben Aïssâ (1465-1526). By immersing himself as a ritual musician within the Aïssawa orchestras, Mehdi Nabti renewed the approach of brotherhoods in the Sufi tradition.



PRÉSENCE ARABE, BERBÈRE ET NORD-AFRICAINE AU QUÉBEC
55 ans de musiques plurielles (1962-2017)
L'Harmattan, Paris, 2017. 208 pages.

This book presents the cultural contribution of musicians and singers of Arab, Berber, and North African descent in Quebec from 1962 to 2017. Who are the most important artists from these cultures in Quebec? What have they produced? What are their artistic approaches and what challenges do they face? How do the media and the Quebec cultural sector welcome them?