



Bureau of Ethnology, he relocated permanently. “I wanted to participate in the reconstruction of Haiti’s national heritage,” says Josué. “I needed to be there.”

He to-and-froed from his base in Haiti, continuing to record, compose, collaborate. He sang lead vocals for *Jazz Racine Haiti*, the project founded by US-based French/Guadeloupean saxophonist Jacques Schwarz-Bart (who co-arranges three of *Pelerinaj*’s tracks, including ‘Gede Nibo’, a song for the lwa Papa Gede). *Jazz Racine Haiti* won acclaim for its lightness of touch and spiritual heft, much of which came from its singer. At the 2014 Gnawa Festival in Essaouira, Morocco, before a 100,000 strong crowd that included this writer, Josué was a mesmeric frontman, a sinuous figure cloaked in white, his voice passionate, dignified, otherworldly.

In Port-au-Prince he met Glasgow-born singer/songwriter Mark Mulholland, and they performed together live; their collaborative album, *Afro-Haitian Experimental Orchestra*, also featuring late Afrobeat drummer Tony Allen, was released on Glitterbeat Records in 2016. Now in situ in Paris, Mulholland recalls recording ‘Badji’ (also the term for the altar within the vodou temple) at the Bureau National d’Ethnologie: “Erol said to just bring a few microphones, and I turned up to find a 60-piece choir (of the National Theatre of Haiti). The traffic noise was so loud I had to put Érol in a cupboard to record his

**“I wanted to participate in the reconstruction of Haiti’s national heritage. I needed to be there”**

lead vocals! He’s an inspired and inspiring musician.”

It is little wonder, perhaps, that Josué’s many talents and authenticity, his preternatural ability to move between worlds, has seen him embraced by the global music community. The

Gotan Project’s Philippe Cohen Solal arranges ‘Erzulie’, *Pelerinaj*’s glorious lead single; in Paris Josué is regularly invited to perform at the distinguished likes of the Musée du Quai Branly; and he attended the 2022 Førde Festival in Norway as a delegate, with a view to creating a Haitian/Norwegian crossover. “Erol is such a powerful and political artist,” says Førde’s Torill Faleide. “I met him at a restaurant in Paris and felt he should meet some of the Sámi artists at our festival. We’re hoping that a Norwegian-Haitian collaboration will happen.”

But for now – or at least, at the time of writing – Josué is tucked away in Port-au-Prince, waiting for this most recent catastrophe to subside. *Pelerinaj*, then, is his calling card, a testament to the richness and beauty of Haiti, a land of craggy mountains and wild rivers, sacred sites and seismic faultlines. And to vodou, that magical, oh-so-musical religion, with its cast of colourful lwas and spellbinding words of langaj – a hotline to the spirit world, and to togetherness and healing. ♦

+ **ALBUM** *Pelerinaj* is a *Top of the World* this issue, see p56

**WIN**

We have three copies of the CD *Pelerinaj* to give away. To enter, answer: Of what institute is Erol Josué general director?

See p21 for competition rules and deadline



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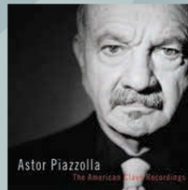
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