

PRESS KIT

BAB EL WEST



HOUDOUD

To be released on November 29, 2019 on Big Banana Music – Inouïe Distribution

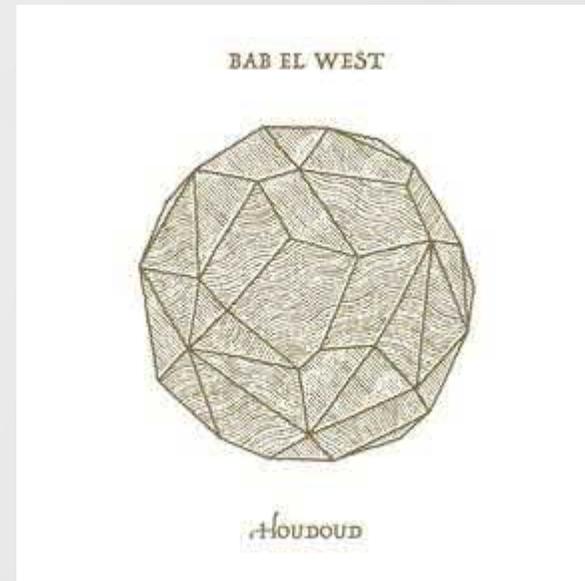
Album Launch Concert – Ermitage Studio – December 5, 2019

The Band

In 2011, the singer-guitarist **Habib Farroukh** met drummer **Marc Dupont** and travelling companion, bassist **Clement Vallin**. Through the wild jam sessions set up in numerous squats and concert across Paris, a strong bond formed between these three musicians from the west, guided by their love for adventure and groove.

At the crossroads where Maghreb folk, soul and Afro music meet, the music of **Bab El West** ("the West Gate") took shape in 2012. Playing equal parts traditional and modern-day music, the trio coalesces around guitarist **Hamza Bencherif**, who lends his blues rock touch, and **Nidhal Jaoua**, a virtuoso on the qanun, the eastern ancestor of the harp.

To wide acclaim from both the press and public for their first album **Douar**, released in 2017, **Bab El West** returns to the source: the road. Two years touring and nearly a hundred concerts later, the band recorded **Houdoud**, an ode to life on the road and all their latest encounters, slated for release on November 29, 2019.



The line-up



HABIB FARROUKH - VOCALS / GUITAR

It was while chanting the Koran and learning the Andalusian repertoire that **Habib** trained his voice and won the 9th "Mawahib Al Haouz" Regional Performance Award, in Morocco. He then set out on a quest to find a universal music, mixing his father's Berber tales with Latin sounds. In this process of blending styles, he joined the Takht Attourath ensemble, which most notably played at the Al-Quds Arabic Music Festival and the Sacred Music Festival of Fez. After numerous collaborations with artists from different backgrounds (Rachid Taha, Manu Dibango, Richard Nicolas, Nancy Murillo, Debademba, ...), he joined the Breton duo **Marc Dupont** and **Clement Vallin** to found the band **Bab El West**.



HAMZA BENCHERIF - ELECTRIC GUITAR

A fully self-taught guitarist, **Hamza Bencherif** played on several projects from very different backgrounds, such as Quartier Libre (hip-hop) and Parlez vous Anglais? (electro) before joining **Bab El West**. His numerous tours across France and Europe from 2009 to 2014 encouraged him to live free of borders, and he decided to settle in New York. Having soaked himself in the soul, blues and rhythm & blues there, **Hamza** returned to Paris to release his first solo EP. He accomplished this on his own and joined back up with his four fellow adventurers, now enriched by this new experience.



CLEMENT VALLIN – BASS

A native of the Cotes d'Armor, **Clement** started collaborating with **Marc Dupont** in the blues-rock band Sidetrack (Les Vieilles Charrues, Jazz a Vannes, Le Carre des Larrons, Les Rendez Vous de l'Erdre), a musical adventure that would last four years. He took on more projects and ended up collaborating with many other artists (Koudede, Alusao, Quartier Libre ...), he also composed music for video for Nimrod Production. He then trained with some of the greatest at the Centre des Musiques Didier Lockwood, alongside Benoit Sourisse, Andre Charlier, Didier Lockwood and many others.

Once settled in Paris in 2007, he co-founded **Bab El West** with **Habib Farroukh** and **Marc Dupont**, and co-directed **Houdoud**, the band's latest album with his cohort **Marc Dupont**.



MARC DUPONT – DRUMS

Marc started playing drums at age 10, then joined the Agostini school in St Brieuc alongside Jean-Luc Langlois. In 2001 he met the Breton bassist **Clement Vallin** and thus began a long collaboration. It was with the band Sidetrack (blues-rock) that they went pro and begin playing all across France. They founded the Brazilian funk group Alusao, which would play over 300 dates over the course of 5 years. In 2004 **Marc** trained at the Music Academy International in Nancy alongside some of the greatest French drummers (Franck Agulhon, Denis Palatin, etc.). In 2011, he co-founded **Bab El West** with **Habib Farroukh** and **Clement Vallin**.

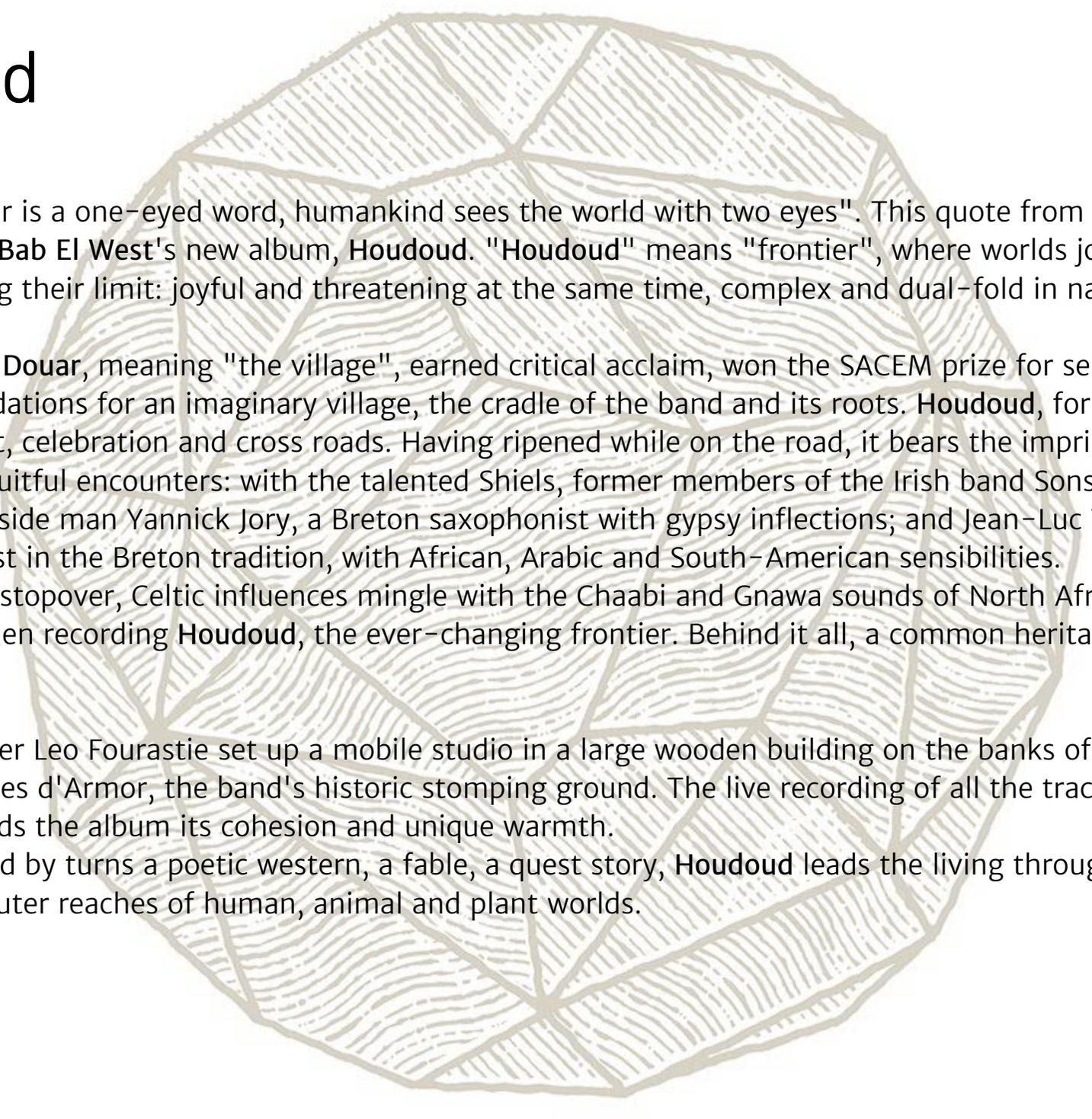


NIDHAL JAOUA – QANUN

Having graduated in Arabic music from the Higher Institute of Music in Tunis, the young virtuoso **Nidhal Jaoua** has always been interested in new techniques of playing the qanun.

He has played on several projects (Rachid Gholam, Ghalia Ben Ali, Wael Jassar, Rami Ayech...) while also opening himself up to the world of jazz, which he discovered alongside big names like Pierre Vaiana, Pirly Zurstrassen, Alain Pierre, Barbara Wiernic and others. He then began his career as a musician-composer in world music and jazz-world bands. During his first world tour in 2009, his playing took on an ever more personal style, especially as co-founder of Jazz Oil (Tunisian jazz-groove) and when joining **Bab El West**.

Houdoud



"The word frontier is a one-eyed word, humankind sees the world with two eyes". This quote from Eluard serves as inspiration for Bab El West's new album, **Houdoud**. "Houdoud" means "frontier", where worlds join together, while also marking their limit: joyful and threatening at the same time, complex and dual-fold in nature.

Their first album, **Douar**, meaning "the village", earned critical acclaim, won the SACEM prize for self-production and laid the foundations for an imaginary village, the cradle of the band and its roots. **Houdoud**, for its part, is steeped in asphalt, celebration and cross roads. Having ripened while on the road, it bears the imprint of the music scene and their fruitful encounters: with the talented Shiels, former members of the Irish band Sons of the Desert; the ever-present side man Yannick Jory, a Breton saxophonist with gypsy inflections; and Jean-Luc Thomas, an exceptional flautist in the Breton tradition, with African, Arabic and South-American sensibilities. From stopover to stopover, Celtic influences mingle with the Chaabi and Gnawa sounds of North Africa, from which the band drew when recording **Houdoud**, the ever-changing frontier. Behind it all, a common heritage: rock, pop and Afro music.

The sound engineer Leo Fourastie set up a mobile studio in a large wooden building on the banks of the Jaudy estuary in the Cotes d'Armor, the band's historic stomping ground. The live recording of all the tracks, from voice to percussion, lends the album its cohesion and unique warmth. Deeply organic and by turns a poetic western, a fable, a quest story, **Houdoud** leads the living through catchy melodies to the outer reaches of human, animal and plant worlds.

The Tracklist

Al Khil, "the horse", is the evocation of a prayer inspired by Gnawa ritual ceremonies. Traditional Moroccan rhythms mingle with Celtic passages in a fusion of genres that will leave no one indifferent. It's all about healing here: "The outside of the horse heals the inside of the man", this is how **Bab El West** proposes salvation!

Al Borj, "one-eyed", originates from a phrase by Paul Eluard: "The word frontier is a one-eyed word, humankind sees the world with two eyes". This pulsing soul ballad speaks of the inherent duality of frontiers, their two facets, which complement each other and at times clash...

A frontier is also a limit, that of language and speech. **Kelma**, a spinning North African cumbia, deals with the themes of incomprehension and betrayed promises.

Adrar, which means "mountain" in the Berber language, is a nature-lover's lament. Accompanied by the Irish Mandolin players Ewan and Ruby Shiels, this very cheerful folk song leads us from the Connemara hills to Mount Toubkal in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco.

Escargot starts off as a dialogue of the deaf between a man and a snail. Over its Afro-Caribbean rhythms, the animal takes it upon itself to refresh the memory of the proud Man: "I stay even in autumn, when you forget the spring".

In **El Baz**, we learn of the impossible love a woman has for a hawk, which she can never follow through the clouds.... This pop song, with its ravaging electric guitars, strikes a balance through a chaabi rhythm that hearkens back to the great times of Rai!

Nouara brings us back down to earth, against the backdrop of Tuareg rhythms. Airy flutes and organic guitars imbue this track with contemplative and obsessive poetry.

Britt n12, or the story of a man who "wants to pass". What at first appears to be a classical romance actually tells about the quest for an ideal, that of a liberated being. Zouk rhythm predominates in this sensual track, in which the surging quanun (traditional Middle Eastern instrument) mixes with Latino percussions!

Talkzdouft is a Gnawa incantation, very minimalist in its orchestration. This track's mission is to awaken a trance in everyone!



The production

The texts are written by **Habib Farroukh**, the compositions and arrangements are signed by the whole band.

The production of **Houdoud** is entrusted to the pair bass-drums, **Clément Vallin** and **Marc Dupont**. The album is recorded by sound engineer **Léo Fourastié**, at La Maison Noire in Plouguiel (22), where he installed a mobile studio. Bertrand Belin, VRP, Brigitte Fontaine, among others, have moved into this unusual place.

Houdoud is mixed and mastered by sound engineer **Christophe Chavanon** at **Kerwax studio** in Loquivy Plougras (22).



LÉO FOURASTIÉ - SOUND RECORDING ENGINEER

Léo Fourastié has been Sound Engineer in the audiovisual industry since 1994. He has mixed documentaries for TF1 (Okavango, Ushuaia Nature), Arte (Tracks, Corpus Christi, Darius Milhaud and his Music). In 1998, he worked in Finland for the Bone Voyage label. He directed several albums and sounded groups of the label (22 Pistepirkko, Micragirls, Johensuu 1685, Stereo 8000) but also Homeworks Records (Steafan Hanvey), Suomen Jazzliitto (Sylvain Kassap quartet, Hasse Poulsen). Back in France in 2008, he worked in editing and mixing for INA (ARTE The fight of the leaders, Bernstein Karajan, etc), Avidia (Mezzo Tribute to Roy Ayers, Gnawa ARTE Music, Body and souls), Tigre Production (France 2) Sound engineer since 2008 for Paco Sery (en) The Shiels (en) (ex Sons of the Desert), Certain General (us), Acoustic Ladyland (uk) Mazad Café (fr) 22 Pistepirkko (fin), **Bab el West** (fr)



CHRISTOPHE CHAVANON - SOUND ENGINEER MIXING AND MASTERING

Christophe Chavanon is the founder of the studio Kerwax in the Côtes d'Armor. His approach to sound is based on strong concepts: vintage equipment, analogue work and residential in the countryside. He records and mixes more than 300 albums, sometimes going as far as production. Thomas Fersen, Lou Doillon, uKanDanz and Rover are some of his main collaborations.

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