# Stereolab’s Instant Holograms on Metal Film reignites debate over AI and expands their sonic horizons



Stereolab's resurgence with their latest album, *Instant Holograms on Metal Film*, has sparked both excitement and controversy among fans, particularly regarding the involvement of artificial intelligence in the music video for the single “Aerial Troubles.” Speculation has surfaced that the Groop might be relying on AI technology, which some argue contradicts their ethos of embracing progressive and avant-garde artistry. Critics point to the significant environmental impact of AI, noting that the energy used by ChatGPT could sufficiently power eight million phones or sustain the Empire State Building for nearly 540 days. Yet, amidst the uncertainty surrounding the band’s creative process, one sentiment is unmistakably clear: our understanding of Stereolab may be less profound than we presume.

Tim Gane, one of the band's founders, has recounted his eclectic musical journey, revealing a transition from punk icons like Elvis Costello and the Buzzcocks to the experimental realms of Throbbing Gristle and Cabaret Voltaire within a mere year and a half. This evolution underscores the depth of Stereolab's influences, which expand far beyond the lounge or muzak that many listeners associate with their sound. The band has often been linked to diverse genres, drawing inspiration from 1970s and 80s disco, techno, and lo-fi electronic music, as confirmed by their collaboration with Cooper Crain and Rob Frye of Bitchin' Bajas—a partnership that has propelled their sound into more rhythmically adventurous and cinematic territories.

While *Instant Holograms on Metal Film* maintains the quintessential Stereolab motorik feel, it simultaneously exhibits heightened rhythmic density and innovative sonic textures. Laetitia Sadier's voice, a foundation of the band’s identity, sounds richer than ever, imbued with an earthy warmth that amplifies the emotional depth of her lyrics. Tracks like “Transmuted Matter” reflect a journey into the spiritual and philosophical, as Sadier's exploration of her vocal range resonates with themes that juxtapose the divine and the human experience. Her lyrics, with lines like “holy human fully divine, fully entwined,” echo the complexities of faith and materialism, especially relevant in today's politically charged climate.

The album’s expansive sound evokes a cinematic quality that may be influenced by Gane’s recent soundtrack projects, such as for the film *In Fabric*. The result is an album packed with vibrant transitions that traverse diverse musical landscapes. While rooted in repetition—a hallmark of Stereolab's style—this release introduces subtle variations that keep the listener engaged, blending loose instrumentation with tightly structured rhythms. Notably, the track “Electrified Teenybop!” features energetic synth arpeggios reminiscent of the band’s earlier work, revealing influences from punk and new wave.

A particularly delightful surprise in this album is the introduction of dance-friendly tracks that could seamlessly fit into a club environment. “Immortal Hands” transitions midway into a groove laden with flanged riffs and playful piano motifs, firmly placing it within the realm of disco while still honouring Stereolab’s distinctive rhythmic language. This combination of styles fosters a seamless experience, where each transition feels like a cohesive part of a larger tapestry rather than standalone pieces.

After a prolonged hiatus, Stereolab’s return feels remarkably potent, as if they have meticulously crafted what may be their strongest album in years. Compared to their previous release, *Not Music*, which maintained their melodic charm yet felt constricted in production, *Instant Holograms on Metal Film* strikes an open, vibrant chord. The collaboration with Bitchin' Bajas appears to have unlocked new levels of creativity and exploration, resulting in a collection of tracks that are as emotionally resonant as they are sonically adventurous. The album's striking yolk-yellow cover art further complements its vibrant auditory palette, hinting at the bright, layered experiences that await within.

As Stereolab continues to evolve, they challenge listeners to reconsider preconceived notions of their music and its cultural implications, embracing innovation while honouring their storied past. In doing so, they reaffirm their place within the contemporary music landscape, inviting us all to explore the intersections of sound, history, and identity in our ongoing journey.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
2. Paragraph 2
3. Paragraphs 2, 7
4. Paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 6
5. Paragraph 3
6. Paragraph 2
7. Paragraph 3

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://thequietus.com/quietus-reviews/album-of-the-week/higher-frequencies-instant-holograms-on-metal-film-by-stereolab/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/playlist-music-shaped-stereolab/> - This article explores the diverse musical influences that shaped Stereolab's unique sound. It highlights the band's incorporation of avant-garde artists like Suicide and Cabaret Voltaire, as well as their appreciation for krautrock pioneers such as Neu! and Faust. The piece also delves into the band's use of vintage electronic instruments, including Farfisa and Vox organs, and Moog synthesizers, which contributed to their distinctive style. Additionally, the article discusses the band's eclectic mix of genres, from lounge music to Brazilian rhythms, showcasing their broad musical palette.
3. <https://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/stereolab-the-nineties-art-of-influence/> - This article examines Stereolab's early material, emphasizing their heavy influence from krautrock sounds, particularly from bands like Neu! and Faust. It discusses the band's use of droning, repetitive guitar and keyboard riffs, often accompanied by female backing vocals. The piece also highlights the band's incorporation of vintage electronic instruments, such as Farfisa combo organs and Moog synthesizers, and their politically and philosophically charged lyrics, which often reference Surrealist and Situationist movements.
4. <https://www.liquisearch.com/stereolab/musical_style> - This article provides an overview of Stereolab's musical style, describing their combination of droning rock sounds with lounge instrumentals, overlaid with sing-song female vocals and pop melodies. It highlights their heavy influence from krautrock groups like Neu! and Faust, and their use of vintage electronic instruments such as Farfisa and Vox organs, and Moog synthesizers. The piece also notes the band's incorporation of easy-listening music from the 1950s and 1960s, referencing artists like Esquivel and Burt Bacharach.
5. <https://www.shazam.com/playlist/pl.7bee412fdd1d4a7c931c9b0233254c11/stereolab-les-influences> - This playlist curated by Shazam showcases the diverse musical influences that shaped Stereolab's sound. It includes tracks from krautrock bands like Neu! and Can, as well as classic pop from artists such as Burt Bacharach and Caetano Veloso. The playlist also features lounge music and exotica pioneers like Esquivel and Martin Denny, highlighting the band's eclectic mix of genres and their ability to blend disparate sounds into a cohesive musical style.
6. <https://theartsdesk.com/new-music/10-questions-avant-pop-icons-stereolab> - In this interview, Stereolab's Tim Gane discusses the evolution of the band's sound, particularly the shift away from motorik rhythms in their 1996 album 'Emperor Tomato Ketchup'. He mentions being inspired by Sun Ra's approach to constructing interlocking melodies and rhythms, leading to a transformation in their rhythmic style while maintaining the process of repetition. The interview provides insight into the band's creative process and their exploration of new musical territories.
7. <https://musichearts.fm/artist/2282-stereolab/history/> - This article traces the history of Stereolab, highlighting their formation in 1990 and their early material's heavy influence from krautrock sounds, particularly from bands like Neu! and Faust. It discusses the band's use of droning, repetitive guitar and keyboard riffs, and their incorporation of vintage electronic instruments such as Farfisa combo organs and Moog synthesizers. The piece also touches on the band's politically and philosophically charged lyrics, referencing Surrealist and Situationist movements.