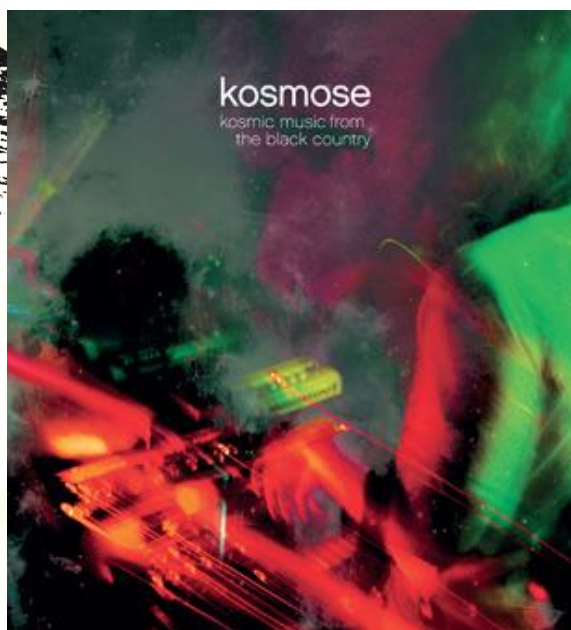


## M.A.L. – “My Sixteen Little Planets”

by Jerry Kranitz

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The only previous appearance that I’m aware of Belgian guitarist Daniel Malempré’s M.A.L. was on the first volume of Alain Neffe’s Insane Music For Insane People compilation in 1981. Malempré also collaborated with Neffe in Subject and was in the first lineup (1973-74) of Neffe’s German Kosmiche in Belgium band, Kosmose. In 2015 the Sub Rosa label released a fantastic 2-CD/LP set of archival Kosmose live recordings from 1973-78, [kosmic music from the black country](#), including detailed historical notes from Neffe.



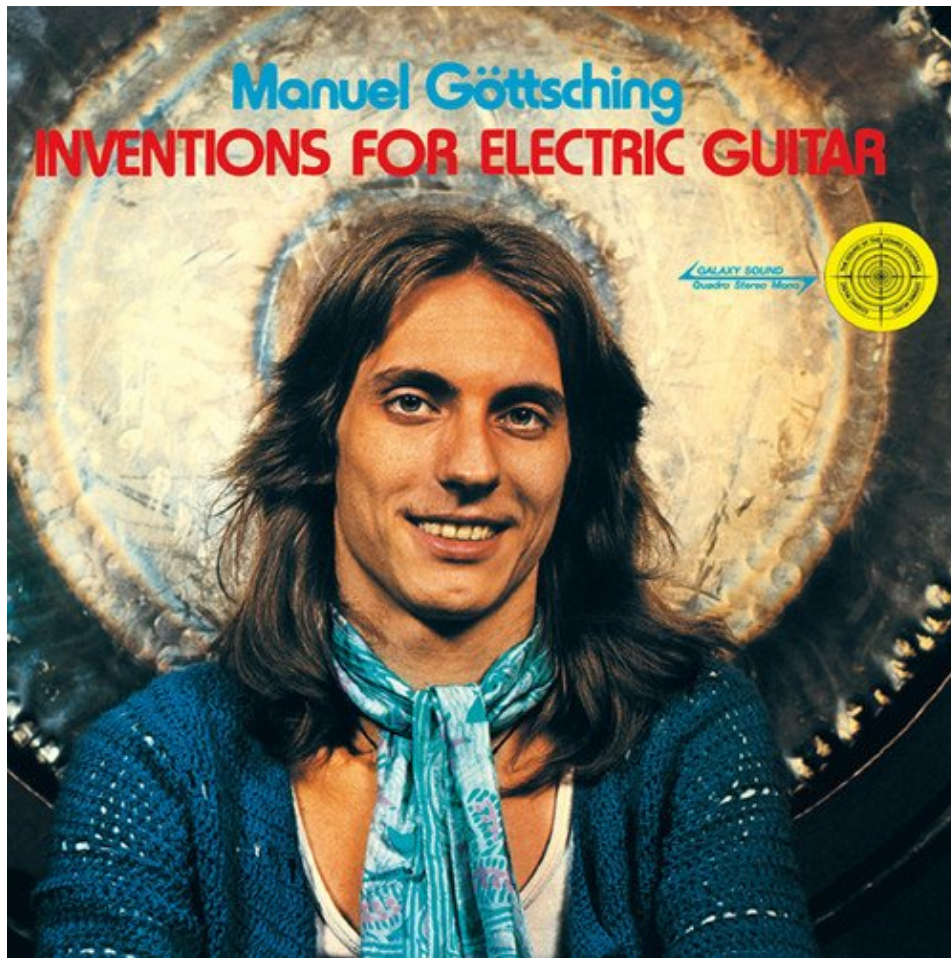
Sub Rosa has now released [My 16 Little Planets](#), a set of M.A.L. tracks recorded by Malempré from 1972-76. The package doesn’t include the multi-page booklet the Kosmose set was stacked with, but the story in the notes makes a remarkable claim that adds a touch of tabloid journalism to this review.



The notes begin by acknowledging Manuel Göttsching's (Ash Ra Tempel) 1975 released *[Inventions For Electric Guitar](#)* as a classic. Recorded using only an electric guitar and 4-track tape recorder, Göttsching created a guitar excursion unlike anything I had heard, even though I didn't discover it until the early 1980s.

The explanation continues to describe why the album was so influential, before launching into a claim about how in 1974 the Ohr label had received a tape sent by M.A.L., "same design, same configuration, almost the same tracks." In fact, it was sent to both Ohr and Virgin, with the A side labeled 'M.A.L.' and the B side labeled 'Alain Neffe'. (I wonder what was on the Neffe side?) And then the blatant claim is made that "Malempré is the actual

inventor of this technique, which Götttsching reproduced a few months later.”



So... make of that what you will. I relate the story without opinion or judgment. In my upcoming book, *Cassette Culture: Homemade Music and the Creative Spirit in the Pre-Internet Age* (to be published 2019 by Vinyl-on-Demand), I add an index with representative reviews, including the *Insane Music For Insane People Vol. 1* compilation. Of the M.A.L. contribution, written prior to being aware of Malempré’s accusations, I said, “M.A.L. is a Daniel Malempré solo project and the two featured tracks (dated 1974) are intricately beautiful kosmiche guitar explorations. The first consists of gradually developing guitar patterns that would appeal to fans of Manual Götttsching, and the second has a meditative soundtrack feel with lusciously multi-layered guitar and melodic solos.”

That, of course, doesn’t in any way support the claim. Interestingly, what escaped me when I wrote that was that Malempré’s story goes back to the

1981 release of the compilation. I realize now that the track "[Manuel Ist Unehrllich](#)" translates to Manuel Is Dishonest. The grudge has persisted for decades.

Anyway, I mean no disrespect to Malempré's concerns by now putting the controversial stuff aside. Instead I'll focus on the content, which is a stunning, 16 track, 76 minute set of deep space kosmiche guitar exploration that is absolutely on the same playing field with what Göttsching accomplished on *Inventions*. The set consists of stretch out tracks and shorter pieces in the 1-4 minute range. I'll focus on the longer tracks...

**[Deimos](#)** features 9 luscious minutes of multiple floating and trippily soloing layers of guitar, with a steady beat of gently rippling pulsations.

**[Elara](#)** alternates between guitars that sing like cosmic acid queen sirens and shimmering palpitations, before settling into a groove that brings to mind a blend of Ash Ra Tempel and Virgin era Tangerine Dream with beautiful swirly organ. The last two emotional minutes are hauntingly somber and among my favorite moments of the set.

**[Thor](#)** is pure cosmic angst, combining a Forbidden Planet mélange of sci-fi soundtrack effects with eerily playful kosmiche guitar and a commanding battery of low drone bass rumbling riffs.

**[Thethys](#)** is the surprise rocker of the set, though it's an adventurously avant-kosmiche one. Malempré cranks out trippy rocking solos while bassist Maya maintains the rhythmic pulse, along with spaced out pipe organ by Alain Neffe.

But my hands down favorite of the set is the 15 minute epic **[Pandore](#)**, which is on par with the best of the album but spices up the proceedings with additional instrumentation. Malempré solos freely on guitar along with his now trademark atmospheric backing. But we've also got spacey melodic flute. Some of the segments sound like early Genesis with a heavy dose of space kosmiche influence. Clarinet and pipe organ are also credited, though the clarinet must be efx'd and absorbed because I couldn't detect it. This piece nicely utilizes its length to develop a continually evolving parade of themes. Slowly churning drones and soundscapes intermesh with one another as they rotate, expand and contract. The guitar is ever present, some of which sounds like a heavily efx'd gliss style. The last minutes are

like a harrowing ride through some of the darkest, most cavernously droning yet atmospherically drifting reaches of space. If any single track stands out for soaring into space and taking the listener with it, this baby is the one.

In summary, I'll leave it to those who know the truth to settle any disputes. I am, however, curious about what was actually submitted to Ohr. The notes say that it was almost the same tracks as *Inventions For Electric Guitar*. That album consisted of three tracks clocking in at 17:45, 6:34, and 21:36, while this set has 16 of wildly varying lengths.

Regardless, the important thing is that these wonderful recordings have finally been made available. They also contribute to the larger Alain Neffe/Insane Music history, who Malempré endearingly credits in the notes.

For more information visit the [Sub Rosa label](#).

