



## MAURICE LOUCA

### Elephantine

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**SUB ROSA**

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Catalog Number  
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## DESCRIPTION

On *Elephantine*, **Maurice Louca**'s new album released exclusively on Sub Rosa on vinyl LP, the Cairo-based musician guides a 12-piece ensemble through a 38-minute masterwork that might best be described as panoramic. Elements of free improvisation, **Sun Ra**'s cosmic jazz, gorgeous Arabic melody, trancelike African and Yemeni music, and minimalism meet in his wholly unique compositional vision. Louca has in recent years garnered a global reputation through two previous solo albums and an expanding, evolving lineup of genre-defying collaborations. The Wire called his 2014 sophomore solo effort, *Benhayyi Al-Baghabghan (Salute the Parrot)* (NAWA 002CD/LP/X-LP, 2014), "remarkable music-dense, driven and splashed with colour." In 2017, *Lekhfa* (MST 003CD/MST 4001LP), the debut by the trio of Louca and vocalists **Maryam Saleh** and **Tamer Abu Ghazaleh**, was praised as an "edgy triumph" by the Guardian. For Louca, 36, *Elephantine* serves as both the pinnacle of his wide-ranging experience and a bold next step in his development as a composer, arranger, and bandleader. "There was a blessed thing about the process of making this record," Louca says of the sessions, held in Stockholm. "The dynamic between us musically but also as people . . . What these musicians delivered was really more than I could ask for, Everyone played their hearts out on this record." The music-from its pensive lulls through its stretches of hard-grooving hypnosis and moments of avant-jazz catharsis-testifies to that rapport. Best absorbed as a continuous performance, *Elephantine*'s six individually named tracks nonetheless present striking self-contained landscapes. "The Leper" entrances through a deft use of repetition that Louca gleaned from cosmic jazz, African and Yemeni music, and other transcendental modal traditions. "Laika" manages to evoke the minimalists, though on the combustible terms of '60s and '70s free jazz; "One More for the Gutter", on which Louca ingeniously pits one half of his ensemble against the other, albeit in a synergistic way, mines similarly fiery terrain. "The Palm of a Ghost" distills the band to a Cairo-rooted core, featuring stirring spontaneous melodies from oud player **Natik Awayez**, violinist **Ayman Asfour**, and vocalist **Nadah El Shazly**. The album's title track follows, and it too blurs the border between composition and improvisation with gorgeously atmospheric results. "Al Khawaga", with its colossal ensemble riffs, beautifully dirty swing, and impassioned blowing, is an ideal finale. RIYL: **Sun City Girls**, '70s **Miles Davis**, **Don Cherry**, **Alice Coltrane**, **Tortoise**. Cover art by Egyptian visual artist **Maha Maamoun**.

## TRACKLISTING

A1. The Leper	B1. The Palm of a Ghost
A2. Laika	B2. Elephantine
A3. One More for the Gutter	B3. Al Khawaga

## HIGHLIGHTS

- On *Elephantine*, **Maurice Louca**'s new album released exclusively on Sub Rosa on vinyl LP, the Cairo-based musician guides a 12-piece ensemble through a 38-minute masterwork that might best be described as panoramic.
- Elements of free improvisation, **Sun Ra**'s cosmic jazz, gorgeous Arabic melody, trancelike African and Yemeni music, and minimalism meet in his wholly unique compositional vision.
- Best absorbed as a continuous performance, *Elephantine*'s six individually named tracks nonetheless present striking self-contained landscapes.
- Features oud player **Natik Awayez**, violinist **Ayman Asfour**, and vocalist **Nadah El Shazly**.
- RIYL: **Sun City Girls**, '70s **Miles Davis**, **Don Cherry**, **Alice Coltrane**, **Tortoise**.
- Cover art by Egyptian visual artist **Maha Maamoun**.

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