



Jean-Michel Blais is a 31 year-old pianist from Montreal, Canada. His enchanting instrumental compositions pairs the melodic pop sensibilities of Amélie-era Yann Tiersen and Arts & Crafts alumni Chilly Gonzales with the breathtaking technical skill of classical minimalists like Philip Glass and Erik Satie. *II*, his debut album of original compositions is set to be released on April 8th 2016 by Arts & Crafts.

Blais grew up in a rural French Catholic town in Quebec bereft of Culture save for a giant Encyclopedia he'd read feverishly as a child. At age 11, Blais began tinkering on his family's organ, improvising, and writing original compositions. A natural talent, by 17 he was invited to the Trois-Rivieres Music Conservatory and began training as a classical pianist. Had he attended the conservatory from childhood perhaps the rigid structure wouldn't have been an issue, but Blais was entering the throes of teenage rebellion and found the constraints of formal training cumbersome. Gravitating towards experimentation, Blais wasn't content to be told how to improvise and left the school after three years.

A few years later, Blais placed second in *Cégeps en spectacle*, a popular annual French Canadian arts competition. This attracted the attention of famed playwright and director, Robert Lepage, who introduced Blais to the who's who of Quebec's entertainment industry. With no particular plan for a music career, he quickly took a step back and decided it was time for more explorations.

He moved to Europe in his mid-20s with stints living in Barcelona and Berlin. During that time he'd intermittently compose music with long gaps of not even touching a piano. After a year in Guatemala, finally settling in Montreal, Blais rediscovered his love for composing and performing which caught the ear of Arts & Crafts. Written over a number of years improvising every morning Jean-Michel Blais' debut album, *II*, is set to be released on April 8th 2016.