

The success and worldwide recognition of math-rock duo Angine de Poitrine

Louis Girard
24 June 2026

Since their concert was posted on the YouTube channel of the American radio station KEXP, the math rock duo Angine de Poitrine has generated considerable excitement and quickly gained worldwide recognition.

The concert, originally performed at a music festival in France in December 2025, garnered over 16 million views in just four months. In April, one of the standout tracks from their latest album, “Fabiensk,” topped Spotify’s Viral 50: Global chart, which takes into account factors such as how often a song is shared and the number of new listeners who have discovered it.

The band, based in Quebec and whose name translates roughly as “Chest Pain” in English, has embarked on a tour of cities across Europe and North America and most of these concerts are already sold out.

The musicians, anonymous individuals that have adopted pseudonyms as brothers, guitarist Khn de Poitrine and drummer Klek de Poitrine. The math rock genre is a progressive, experimental subgenre of alternative rock that uses complex rhythms, unconventional time signatures, angular guitar riffs and an “electro-infused rock” sound.

Math rock emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s and sought to break out of the conventional time signatures to utilize complex rhythmic structures pioneered by progressive rock bands such as King Crimson, who used multiple time signatures. Like those polyrhythms, math rock groups use unconventional time signatures such as 7/8 or 11/8 which pose statistical and timing challenges for the performers.

To these math rock features, Angine de Poitrine also includes microtonality. Departing from the whole-tone and half-tone octave intervals commonly associated with Western music and found in most rock and pop music, the band makes effective use of quarter- and eighth-tone intervals.

As is evident in the YouTube video, the Angine de Poitrine duo plays freely with the audience’s musical expectations as the structure of their songs remains rooted in dance. They make remarkable use of microtonality and odd

time signatures and keep their music very accessible. They do not shy away from repetition or simplicity. They skillfully use loop pedals to create a “build-up,” while also deviating from standard song structures.

The comical costumes worn by the two conceal the identities of two very accomplished musicians who are masters of their instruments and equipment. The performance demonstrates remarkable skill and groove. We see Khn, barefoot, managing a range of loopers with his toes while playing a microtonal double-neck guitar/bass hybrid, while Klek, unwavering, produces a rhythmic body and coherence with the subtlety of a jazz musician and the energy of a metalhead.

Their flawless coordination and theatrical stage presence are themselves enough to make a strong impression on the audience. However, what really sets them apart is the way they incorporate the complexity typically associated with exotic or experimental music within the framework of electronic and rock music.

The songs of Angine de Poitrine are peppered with bluffs—or surprises—that could almost be called “musical teasing.” The duo admits they enjoy playing tricks on their audience in various ways. They thus deliberately push the limits of our attention and expectations and defy certain popular musical conventions.

Some online music critics have welcomed the duo’s distinctive sound and extravagant costumes with curiosity, enthusiasm and an open mind. Some of the online comments speak to the impact of this music. For example, some describe their first encounter with the group as the “discovery of a new color” or “a breath of fresh air.” There is also frequent mention, not without a touch of humor, of a feeling of outright “hypnotic” fascination. Online reactions also often contrast the band’s novelty with the “old world in decline.”

What explains this sudden popularity, especially given the genre? In an interview with the duo, the *Guardian* writes, “There was undoubtedly a novelty factor, but novelty alone can’t drive you to 16 million YouTube views.” There is also

no shortage of comments regarding the band's countless influences and predecessors that include, among others, Gentle Giant, Lounge Lizards, King Crimson, Turkish rock, etc.

Guitarist Khn has also revealed that he is a fan of Indian music, Japanese music, and other Asian musical traditions where microtonality is common. The band's success is likely due less to its originality—though real—and more to the social and historical context in which it emerged. One internet user poses the provocative question: “Is it Angine de Poitrine that's good, or is everything else just mundane and boring?”

While the band's melodies and rhythms are rarely predictable at first, they do repeat with the systematic use of loops, giving the listener time to find their bearings and opportunities to dance. This appears as a challenge given that the guitarist's 24-beats is accompanied by the drummer's variations on four, six, or eight beats, but the partners always return to each other on the 24th beat.

Angine de Poitrine wants to be heard and appreciated. They tap into existing forms and give them a content that might previously have seemed incompatible with musical complexity. Their unpretentiousness is well summed up in what Khn says about their process:

We improvise and mess around a lot, then we stumble upon a little spark. For many tracks on the second album, I found a riff that had something to it, and we built the rest from there.

To their credit, they don't reduce their music to an exercise in self-expression. Being half-serious, they explain that their music serves to “stimulate the neurons, sweat in the pure present moment, and hear the geometry.”

And what about their costumes? Some have claimed that it was a “publicity stunt to attract attention,” but the origin of their costumes is more modest. Unable to play two consecutive weeks at the same venue in a small town in their home region, Saguenay Lac-St-Jean—a remote industrial region of Quebec known for its aluminum smelters—they decided to dress up “just for fun.”

They later carried over the costume idea when they formed Angine de Poitrine. Despite the added difficulty posed for their musical performances, the costumes provide anonymity for the artists. As Klek told the *Guardian*, “We're not Lady Gaga or Elton John; we're two random dudes.”

Their unorthodox attire—as well as their obsession with triangles and pyramids—could very well have served as a pretext for rejecting them. Following their appearance on

Tout le monde en parle, a television talk show on Ici Radio-Canada Télé, some internet users denounced Angine de Poitrine as cultural trash imposed on Quebec by the federal government. This line of commentary is typical of Quebec's far right.

Le Journal de Montréal, a tabloid that plays a central role in stoking anti-immigrant chauvinism and owned by billionaire Pierre-Karl Péladeau, criticized Angine de Poitrine's music for being, basically, bad. No doubt alarmed by the enthusiasm for something different, columnist Sophie Durocher titled her article: “Angine de Poitrine: Let's Calm Down!” This is reminiscent of the clergy or right-wing conservatives in the 1950s who watched in panic as crowds of young people went wild at rock 'n' roll concerts.

The reasons behind the cultural stagnation in recent decades have been analyzed in detail on the *World Socialist Web Site*. The working class has faced a widespread assault by the ruling class on social conditions, including attacks on funding for and access to the arts. Capitalism subordinates all of society to the pursuit of profit in every sphere.

Add to this the influence of postmodernism and the turn by artists toward subjectivity and their “inner self” rather than toward social reality and the damage done to art by identity politics, which accuses artists of “cultural appropriation.” It is refreshing and encouraging that Angine de Poitrine has “appropriated” elements of Eastern and Asian music to create something new.

The immense artistic void that has emerged is just waiting to be filled. It is into this void that the duo of Khn and Klek de Poitrine has stepped and they are pointing in a direction as the audience responds with enthusiasm. Time will tell how the band will evolve musically. But the explosive social and political context suggest that more captivating musical surprises are on the horizon.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact