



Miu
Watercoloured
Borderlines

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Miu – Watercoloured Borderlines

Who wants to go pony-riding?

'Watercoloured Borderlines' is Miu's debut album. It presents a collection of well-balanced, soulful songs which, though there is a lot happening, are nevertheless very much at peace with themselves. There is nothing missing and nothing superfluous either. The charming Hamburg native with radiant blond hair, black eye lashes and an exciting NuSoul voice did not exactly grow up in a musical family. Instead of fulfilling her dearest wish to take piano lessons, her parents decide to send her pony-riding!

Destined for a life of music

Miu comes from a classic family of radio listeners. Records are in very short supply and music generally doesn't play a prominent role. "In my family no-one had anything to do with music," remembers Miu. "Still, my parents sent me to early musical education classes and I was immediately hooked. I loved it. So why should I go pony-riding?" From this moment onwards, she is irrevocably destined for a life of music. "On car journeys I always wanted to listen to classical radio stations," continues the singer, "to try and hear which instruments were playing." Certainly not the worst way to train one's ear! Eventually, the parents fulfil her heart's desire and allow Miu to take piano lessons. It doesn't end there. "When I was eleven, I also played flute in the orchestra, I wasn't super proficient, but I still played," says Miu, "and I was always singing away in the shower or in my room." She doesn't do any serious singing before turning 15, but then she really goes for it. "I had a teacher in school who made us write songs," says Miu, the delight in her voice still there today, "we all had to compose little pieces and sing them to the class." Just as well, for Miu hasn't stopped writing songs ever since. But, even then, singing remains no more than a hobby and Miu embarks on a normal bread-and-butter job in advertising. "At least it was

something creative that had to do with language,” reflects Miu, “and when one prepares presentations and finally presents them, one is also on a kind of stage. It’s almost like a dance performance. Nevertheless, music was never far from my mind.”

I’ve never been to New York

Miu always wanted to go to New York but never made it. Once her professional training is completed and the first real wages are coming in, her wish to visit New York flares up again. “In the end I did actually go. I wanted to take a real girly tour of the city, visiting the stairs that lead up to Carrie Bradshaw’s apartment in ‘Sex and the City’, buying outrageously expensive shoes and sitting on Times Square every day looking at the coloured lights.”

When planning her trip, music is however never far from Miu’s mind. Couldn’t she perhaps perform her music in the Big Apple? Get to sing somewhere? Looking around, she comes across The Bitter End, a New York club legend which has hosted open-mic folk evenings every Tuesday since the start of the 1960s. Many artists who went on to become legends themselves, such as Donny Hathaway and Marvin Gaye, have performed in the club. “They had introduced a songwriter session on Sunday, just the thing for me,” Miu finds out. “So I sent in a demo tape, a real lousy one that I had recorded at home on our piano using a computer microphone.” Nevertheless, Miu is given a 15-minute spot to perform her songs. These are not her only 15 minutes of fame (as Andy Warhol put it). Change is in the air. Step by step, Miu disentangles herself from the advertising industry and puts all her energy into music. Her sketchbooks are crammed full of ideas that virtually cry out to be turned into great songs. She gets a band together – Joscha Farries on keys, Nando Schäfer on drums, Daniel Otte on bass and last but not least Arne Vogeler on guitar. On top of this, she has a brass section consisting of trombone-player Matti Wagemann, saxophonist David Jedeck and trumpet-player János P. Löber - a tip of the hat to Motown and Stax.

Three million language fragments

“The little archive that I carry around on my mobile phone contains something like three million language fragments. Things I have observed or experienced,” says Miu with a smile, “and maybe even more slivers of music.” This is what her songs are made of. “Sometimes ideas for songs come when I am fiddling around on the piano searching for beautiful melodies,” she continues, “others are triggered off by riffs or chord sequences sent by Arne, our guitarist.” These ideas are then subjected to the acid test in band rehearsals. The band lovingly transforms Miu’s ideas, which already work splendidly just with her voice and one harmony instrument, into big arrangements with all the trimmings. The kind of thing that can’t be done off the cuff, these arrangements require a lot of time and energy. “Nevertheless, we are not the type of nerds and tinkerers that think a song to death,” says Miu, “our tracks must be able to breathe and have a lot of space. Especially when there is a lot going on.” And there is a lot going on! The music is cinematic in its scope. Is it pop? Jazz? Something entirely different? No matter – what is important to Miu is music. Pure music that is not limited to specific genres, because for Miu such limitations do not make sense.

“We were working on a solo track, for instance, and suddenly a disco beat had crept into the groove. On first thought it didn’t really fit, on second thought it was absolutely cool,” she reports, “you could either call it risqué or simply soul-pop with leanings to both left and right.” These leanings delve into the musical worlds of Alicia Keys, Norah Jones, Lauryn Hill, Adele, Ella Fitzgerald and all the way to Amy Winehouse. Miu’s captivating voice is imbued with the warmth and timbre of these

great singers. Credit for the fervour, earthiness and genuineness of her recorded voice is also due to producer Dennis Rux (former member of the Trashmonkeys and Rhonda) and the sonic qualities of his Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! analogue studio. 'Watercoloured Borderlines' is an album brimming with unique charm. Candid and genuine with an edge and lots of personality. What more could a well-disposed listener ask for?

(Franz X.A. Zipperer)



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