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Miel de Botton announces her debut album, 'Magnetic'

"Music has always given me a sense of joy and freedom. If you'd asked me as a child what my biggest dream was, it would have been to be a singer. But it was a secret dream....."

Miel de Botton's 'Magnetic', a collection of radically reinterpreted Chansons (Jacques Brel, Piaf..) plus her own material, is the sensuous, exultant sound of a woman who is finally following her path; a woman just hitting her stride.

Miel (me-el 'from God' in Hebrew, 'Honey' in French) de Botton was born in Zurich, daughter of financier and art collector Gilbert, sister of writer and philosopher Alain. Her father, a dynamic, demanding perfectionist, expected excellence from his children. It was only when he sang to them that he softened and it was through those moments that Miel fell in love with Chansons. "The songs transported me to an era of wild romance. I could feel the intensity of love, but also its tragic inconstancy, and I wanted to abandon myself to that music."

It has taken her a long time to find this depth of fulfillment. Dutifully, in her father's vision, she studied law at Oxford, but Miel wanted to become a psychologist and after qualifying as a Clinical Psychologist at the Ecole de Psychologues Praticiens she practiced for six years in drug addiction centres in Paris. Miel welcomed the challenges of this vocation and found it rewarding saying "psychology taught me to connect deeply with people, to turn emotion into a positive force for transformation. That is what I aim to do when I sing, to share human emotion, to make us feel connected. I aim for the music to have a soothing, healing effect."

On her move to London and her father's death, with a one-year old son and much of her father's estate issues to look after, she took a break. Then, four years ago and another child later, her marriage fell apart. However, within the pain there emerged a new found independence that set her voice free. Suddenly doors opened that led her to meeting record producer, Andy Wright (Mick Hucknall, Eurythmics, Jeff Beck). Miel says, "He really gets me. We have these amazing moments when I give him my songs and he sits at the piano and starts the chord arrangements, and every time I cry, because what comes out is magical."

So what is the music like?

Take a listen, and step into a timeless world...

The album was a tear- and yet joy-filled journey of self-deliverance. Miel is asking to be magnetic....to draw you in closer.... She presents to us a prolific 19 songs on two CDs in a beautiful product designed by world renowned photographer, John Swannell. Of these songs (some in English, some in her native French) half are self-penned and the other half are Miel's interpretation of those French classics from the 1940s and 1950s recalled from her childhood. The

overall sound of the album's tracks is mellifluous, harmonious, yet the songs are very different in style. Some were recorded at Abbey Road with beautiful orchestral arrangements and some are more acoustic.

'Ne me Quitte Pas' is a sensuous bolero and Piaf's 'Je ne Regrette Rien' here gets a reggae interpretation Piaf would probably love. It is a joyful, upbeat version that means what it says. Regret? Who's got time?

The swirling arrangements of 'La Java Bleue', 'Mon Amant de St. Jean' and 'Mon Manège à Moi' take us with Miel on a journey of surrender to love. She says, "when I sing my songs, I often see myself skipping down the cobbled streets of Paris, the feeling is one of lightness."

Miel has also translated some of her favourite English songs into French; a voluptuous 'Ferme les Yeux' is Cass Elliot's 'Dream a Little Dream' and the aching 'Prends ce Désir' is 'Take This Longing' from her hero, Leonard Cohen.

Miel is clearly a girl who loves passionately and she expresses this in her songs; she dreams of a kiss from a stranger in her "dark nights" in 'Embrasse Moi'; an excruciatingly painful love story becomes 'Beautiful You' ("Don't tell me that it was only a lie/I know what I saw..."), and that lost desire is also expressed in 'Something More'.

Despite all this unrequited longing, she is full of hope that things will turn out well and she believes her songs are about finding a way to heal from past pain. 'Forest Prayer' and 'Dazzle Me Diamond' are heart reaching songs about sensuality and love and the joy to be found in our lives. The charming acoustic 'Vivement la Joie' is a burst of carefree happiness, Miel sounding like a footloose Vanessa Paradis. "It's a poem I wrote to cheer myself up – a tiny ode to joy!" 'Dazzle Me Diamond' really is about diamonds – but this synth-heavy track is mystical too, expressing a longing to be in the presence of their strength, clarity and purity. "I need your rainbow lights to reach the dark corners of my mind."

Miel's debut single, the majestically bare, Morricone-esque mantra 'Bad Men', is many a woman's rallying cry, slowly stripping layers off those debonair men who talk about forever but can't seem to follow through. This honest song explores the pain and pathos that underlies such relationships. "Shame on you! I worked hard for this freedom and you want to grab it all..." In her acknowledgement that there really are "bad men" (and women) out there, she is giving half of the profits of the song to Amnesty International in the hope that they will help. In fact, Miel is very involved in philanthropy and many of her performances have been for charities close to her heart (Maggie's Cancer Care, Weizmann Institute of Science).

With her title song, 'Magnetic', she talks of making her "voice become audible", of not being "left to lie in the dark". This is an epic ballad, almost a desiderata, in which she asks to be attracted magnetically to a beautiful life.

This is no shallow pop diva. Mixing maturity and youth, it's someone flexing her muscles, making life make sense. As she says, "I'm experiencing a depth of fulfilment I have never known." Respect.

'Magnetic' is released on 26 January 2015

'Bad Men', the debut single, is released on 21 September 2014

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