

OSCAR LOUISE - Empty house

Phx12-003 - Phénix Records



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***Empty House*, the first album of Lausanne singer Rachel Hamel, aka Oscar Louise, offers thirteen nuggets of subtle pop pep. This album of 'melancholy rock' with folk and jazz influences swings between Nick Cave's dark moods, Kurt Weill's irony and Emiliana Torrini's soft pop. The songs, written by Michael Frei (*Hemlock Smith*), tell stories of our daily life when faced with emptiness ('Empty house', 'Absence'), the impossibility of sharing love ('A tale of the sea') or our physical ('Beyond the wall') or mental ('Lucinda') limitations.**

Fabrizio Di Donato (*Hemlock Smith*)'s subtle arrangements are interpreted by savvy pros: Julien Feltin (*Yaël Naim* etc.) on guitar; Fabien Sevilla (Thierry Romanens etc.) on double bass; Massimo Zampieri (*Yodelice* etc.) on drum kit; Fabrizio di Donato (*Hemlock Smith*) on keyboards; *Barbouze de chez Fior* (*Young Gods*, Pascal Auberson etc.) as string quartet; Rachel Hamel as lead voice; and Michael Frei (*Hemlock Smith*) as occasional vocal partner.

A songstress no stranger to the stage, Rachel Hamel reveals in this new setting a more personal facet. After graduating from the *Institut Ribeaupierre* in Lausanne and then the *Conservatoire de Lausanne*, she has been a professional chorister at *Opéra de Lausanne* since the year 2000 and with the *Ensemble Vocal de Lausanne*, led by Michel Corboz, since 2005. She trod the boards with *Les Swinging Bikinis* quartet's cabaret repertoire at Vevey's *Théâtre de Poche* (2009) and *Casino Théâtre de Rolle* (2011) and has bloomed in the intimacy of jazz singing recitals with Julien Galland's piano accompaniment (*OYO*, Lausanne, 2010) and in a quintet with Christophe Duplan (*Casino de Paris*, 2011).

Oscar Louise is a storyteller. She takes us into the highs and lows of a few destinies, whispers in our ears universal stories in a modern setting, stories of you and me, tender, moving, sad at times. A modern-day troubadour, *Oscar Louise* tells of universal feelings and of minute details of daily life – and what is more important than that? Poetic and misty, her universe is of autumn in the heart, of the part of us kept under wraps, of infinite dreamscapes.

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RACHEL HAMEL – Biography

Born in Lausanne, Rachel Hamel grew up in Thailand and then Madagascar. Back in Switzerland, she studied music and architecture. She received her diplôme de chant at *Institut Ribeaupierre* in Lausanne shortly after graduating in architecture at **École Polytechnique de Lausanne (EPFL)**. The Société Vaudoise des Ingénieurs et Architectes (**SIA**) awarded her its annual prize in 1996 for her diploma-related work. As an architect, she worked notably alongside Werner Jeker (**Les Ateliers du Nord**) for whom she conceived the SignalDouleur pavilion (**Expo 02**, Yverdon) while pursuing vocal training at the Conservatoire de Lausanne. For **Opéra de Lausanne**, she signed the decors of *Der SchauspielDirector* and *Amélia all Ballo*. She has been a professional chorister with Opéra de Lausanne since the year 2000 and with **Ensemble Vocal de Lausanne** since 2005. With four vocal partners in crime, she created *Les Swinging Bikinis*, a lyrical cabaret show (*Théâtre de Poche*, Vevey, 2009, and *Casino Théâtre de Rolle*, 2011, among others), and she has appeared in jazz singing recitals accompanied on the piano by Julien Galland (*OYO*, Lausanne, 2010) and with Christophe Duplan's quintet (*Casino de Paris*, Paris, 2011).

MICHAEL FREI - Biography

Singer-songwriter of the Lausanne band **Hemlock Smith**, present in 2010 at **Paléo** and **Label Suisse** with his third album, *Keep the Devil out of Hillsboro*.

Born in German-speaking Switzerland, Michael Frei was 10 when he discovered the French language. A single child, and a solitary one, he developed a passion for reading and for writing. Learning a new culture exacerbated his feeling of otherness and it was first through poems and then songs that he tried to convey what he felt. By 1984 he was playing in various rock bands, as drummer and then as singer. A first group, *KàFKà CiTy*, recorded two albums. He wrote texts for other artists and formed in 1998 *Greenhouse Effect*, of which *Hemlock Smith* is the very personal mutation.

Besides *Hemlock Smith*, Michael Frei has collaborated with the noise music duo **Les Poissons Autistes** on *Three Times Dead*, a record ranked by several magazines among the best of the year 2008. He produced and directed the **Sir Arne's Treasure** show, a musical adaptation of Mauritz Stiller's silent film, with CD and DVD releases. More recently he has contributed to the two albums of Vevey-based Frédéric Merk (aka **17f**) the second of which, entitled *The Boy who Cried Wolf* and a most original mix of very diverse influences, came out in September 2012.