

Patty Moon

MIMI & ME

FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

Patty Moon's fourth album *Mimi and Me* is their most coherent to date. The songs all share the same air of having been conceived, arranged and recorded not only in one go but also in one and the same frame of mind. It's a collection of songs that essentially taps into a common aesthetic fragility and distant happiness, indeed, a highly romantic outburst of musical diversity and integrity. Judith Heusch, a.k.a. Patty, and arranger/multi-instrumentalist Tobias Schwab deliberately share the same quest for consistency when working as Patty Moon, the duo's favourite musical outfit. Their joint endeavours into their very own personalities are crowned by a continuous narrative best explained by the songwriter herself: "I am not a lightweight, even though I've spend most of my life dreaming. I've seen a lot of bullshit around me and never quite felt comfortable anywhere but within my own notion of nature and music and the somewhat surreal memories from books and pictures that are deeply imbedded in my mind. There is something sinister in the woods out there that attracts me and by now has become a part of me. Life is such a huge mystery and at the same time such a heavy burden and task. It's so beautiful and yet so painful. Sometimes I just want to vanish and then at times I could cry over the touch of dew and the smell of early morning fog. All these disparate emotions of mine find their expression in our songs. I wouldn't know how to store my perception if I didn't have songs to keep it there."

Her truth is not just a vague perception, rather, it is an uncompromising approach to song. And it's the search for honesty and respect that defines the subtle beauty of the albums first track *Painting Horses*. While the song's chords succeed each other in common changes, her melodies never give in to the logical progression of the music. Instead, they appear to open onto something endless, even when the melodic line is merely being repeated over and over. This intransigence is only interrupted by a dreamy middle section that almost recalls bucolic English scenes. The folksy tune with piano, tom tom and a beautifully added string quartet is, by the way, the first Patty song that might actually make you want to dance.

It's the string section that underlines the following title track's strong feeling of happiness that just never seems near enough to grab. Tobias Schwab scores the Pellegrini Quartet's performance here in an almost George Martin-like manner. It's green fields and blue sky with dark clouds approaching. *Mimi and Me's* tragedy of lost confidence is perfectly summed up in the two lines:

When I sleep they all come back to me
When I sleep I know there is Mimi and me

When you feel as strongly about our fellow creatures as Patty does, you'll instantly be moved by her music. And there is no reason not to give them our deepest respect. No, you will not be entering a musical zoo, but the purity of the tunes suggests the kind of simplicity that can only be understood with an open and wounded heart. "I surround myself with cats and dogs that have been abandoned and feel like this is just what I have to do, it's not pity, rather it's sharing the same destiny." The feeling of abandonment is prolonged in *Under Water's* tastefully driving quarter beat, interrupted occasionally by Schwab's trademark interludes which at times give rise to complex multi-layered codas.

Patty Moon music always had soundtrack quality, so it comes as no surprise that these two musicians have recently been asked to do just that. Three songs from *Mimi and Me* are part of Hans W. Geissendörfer's new feature film *In der Welt habt ihr Angst* (In The World You Have Fear) which will hit German movie theatres in March 2011. It's the inherent, powerful feeling of never giving up, of ploughing on through the pain that gave Geissendörfer the idea of commissioning the songs from Patty and Tobias. The first is *Stardust*, with hints of Schubert and the Genesis of old. A haunting clarinet traces the melodies that are instantly recognizable as Patty Moon with that idiomatic harmonic ambiguity. Then there's *Landscape*, once again a song that features all the melodic trademarks we've come to know from Patty over the course of her albums. It exudes a dramatic sense of calmness with harrowing tension that builds up from bar to bar. In fact the song's climax sounds like a distant cry of what might have been. And finally the painstakingly short *Cover Me* – seldom have despair and desire created a more enchanting melody than this song's chorus. *The Dawn* sounds very much like an afterthought to *Cover Me*, making it obvious that this string of songs belongs together, no matter what – they share the same motivation, and bring all that's worth singing about into constellation.

Connoisseurs of the duo's music will find a resemblance to their classic song *Second Winter in Dare*, with Patty appearing way back in the sound pasture, as if she just accidentally happened to be singing along. An elegiac violin accompanies her in the middle section like a mutual friend. *Dare* is static, unresolved, sad. Very similar to that, *When You Go Chapter 1* recalls a final farewell recorded off the air by chance with the help of Schwab's magic mics suspended somewhere far away. On the other hand, the celestial noise that creeps up in *When You Go Chapter 2* has the impact of an electric shower similar to the sound emitted if you played all Radiohead and Muse albums simultaneously at full blast. Yet it's all very refreshing and this is one of the few numbers not preceded by piano, unmistakably Patty's favourite instrument, one that frequently restores her energy. "When I am alone with my piano, I am at my most relaxed, I forget about schedules, duties and the duress of everyday life," she reveals.

The musical diversity is further pushed by *The Raven*, a theatrical piece reciting Edgar Allen Poe's famous poem. "Only music and poetry are larger than life, they expand the truth without bending it," Patty comments. The American writer and

poet is treated with an urbane, Brecht-like feel in a rondo setting. The crossfire of genre influences is felt most smoothly in *Autumn Orchestra*. Members of this orchestra might have been Philip Glass, Brian Wilson, Komeda and the High Llamas, but the conductor is thoroughly Tobias Schwab – a bold excursion into the melancholic pop of setting suns and tripping dolphins. The composer is clearly at his best in *Swamp*. Here we find immaculate orchestration beyond the confines of acoustic instruments, with a compelling muted electric guitar driving on. The medium waltz makes you want to drill a hole on your imaginary dance floor, which at times becomes the court of the crimson king, turning and whirling in a complete frenzy. It's amazing to hear how this band actually manages to weave together the fragmented memories of their past music into a miniature piece such as *When You Go*, the album's final track. Every bar brings back another facet of their stunning and growing body of work. If there is one word that describes the album best, it's consistency. "When I am in a searching mood, I often find the answers in my music," says Patty. "Chords, melody and lyrics come quite naturally, I never feel forced by a musical idea, but in the end I always enjoy a song's compelling coherence. Especially after Tobias has given it his touch." It's a thought-provoking album, one that treats lyrical compassion with utmost respect – a perfect marriage of song and sound.

(Oliver Kaiser / Patty Moon)