

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU

Le Volume Courbe
Interview by Yan Céh,
portrait by Grant Fleming



ONE OF THE SWEETEST, WEIRDEST SURPRISES OF last year was "Le Volume Courbe", a.k.a. Charlotte Marianneau, who've created a hybrid album of chansons françaises and Anglo-eclectic indie rock. Living and working in England for ten years she enlisted the help of Hope Sandoval, Kevin Shields (My Bloody Valentine), David Roback and Colm O'Ciosoig for her first album, "I Killed My Best Friend."

YAN CÉH — *What was your childhood ambition?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — To become an inventor and then a fashion designer. I was obsessed with magazines and used to make loads of drawings. I was a fan of Yohji Yamamoto.

YAN CÉH — *What is your fondest memory?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — Rehearsing and doing gigs with my first band, "Toyns".

YAN CÉH — *What's the soundtrack of your life?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — Right now, the first Love album. I love that group.

YAN CÉH — *What's your form of retreat?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — My flat in London.

YAN CÉH — *What was your wildest dream?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — Recording a track with David Bowie. He was my first influence. I just wanted to be Ziggy. When I was a teenager, I used to go to school dressed like an astronaut.

YAN CÉH — *What was your proudest moment?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — Probably getting signed the first time by Alan McGee [head of the Creation label (Primal Scream, The Jesus & Mary Chain, My Bloody Valentine, Teenage Fanclub, Ride, Oasis, The House of Love)]. It was in 2000. I went to his office, and played the first song I ever wrote, "Harmony," twice, and he offered me a deal, on the spot. It was very unexpected.

YAN CÉH — *What's your biggest challenge?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — To not spend years recording the second album.

YAN CÉH — *What is a perfect day for you?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — Not having to get up in the morning.

YAN CÉH — *What was your first song?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — The first song I recorded was a duet called "Your Tears are Bigger than Mine", with Philippe Katerine on his first demo.

YAN CÉH — *What is your indulgence?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — Chain smoking.

YAN CÉH — *Your last purchase?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — Two pairs of Eileen Shields shoes.

YAN CÉH — *Your main inspiration?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — Right now, a Dutch artist named Bas Jan Ader inspires me. He did some filmed performances based on falling—out of trees, off his bike, off roofs, into canals, and off his feet. His films are melancholic yet funny. There's also a 16-year-old kid from Ohio who plays in band called One Cool Kid. He wrote to me a little while ago, and since then we decided to make music together long distance. We share the same sense of humour and taste in music. I quite like the idea of making music with someone I may never meet.

YAN CÉH — *What do you think life is about?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — Experimenting with our existence, and procreating, I guess.

YAN CÉH — *What living person do you most admire?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — Robert Wyatt. Despite being in a wheelchair, he emanates freedom.

YAN CÉH — *Who are your favorite writers?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — I don't read much fiction, although one of my favorite books is

Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. I've always felt I shared many of the struggles and desires of Emma Bovary. I mainly read art books and biographies. The last one I read was *Nico Icon*, though it was partly fiction... And I read music magazines.

YAN CÉH — *Do you ever lie?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — Yes. We all do. Out of fear. I wrote a song about it called "Born to Lie" that may appear on the next record.

YAN CÉH — *You're singing in English. Why?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — I sing in English because instinctively words come to me in English. I've been living in London for 11 years, so I don't practice my French very often. The name comes from a sculpture one of my old French friends made in 1984. When I was looking for a name, "Le Volume Courbe" came to me. I like the fact that it has a resonant and visual connotation.

YAN CÉH — *When about fashion?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — I love Alexander McQueen, it's beyond fashion.

YAN CÉH — *Do you prefer London to Paris?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — No. I don't think any place is better than another. It depends on what you're looking for. I like London's music scene.

YAN CÉH — *Is it true that Patti Smith gave you her socks?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — Yes it's true. It was after her show in London last year. I was wearing really high heels for the first time, trying to be a lady, and was in so much pain I had to take them off. Patti sat on the floor and insisted on giving me her socks. I told her I didn't want them, but she insisted. One pink, one blue. So I put them on and walked in her socks.

YAN CÉH — *How would you like to die?*

CHARLOTTE MARIONNEAU — As quickly and pleasantly as possible.