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## SWEET LE VOLUME COURBE THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

“**ALEX LAWSON**

It would be really fun to play in a glass box,” says Charlotte Marionneau, laughing, “as long as it had holes to breathe.”

Marionneau is an extremely shy, well-humoured London-based French woman who, in an hour, could single-handedly improve our two countries' relations better than a lifetime of eating those lovely chocolate croissants would. With her musical project, *Le Volume Courbe* ('The Volume Curve'), she has also found a way to enter into our hearts through rickety, sweet electronic pop and refreshing ego-less humour.

Marionneau's first gig was a four-minute Nico tribute and she reveals her love of both 'Le Petit Chevalier' and Andy Warhol's idea of imprisoning his German icon in transparent casing. From there, her career has gone from strength-to-strength - 10 minutes in front of 650 people in Glasgow and an epic 20-minute blow-out in Nantes the following day. You'd imagine she'd want to get through a few more shows before she'd consider recording, but with Marionneau everything is the wrong way round.

Perhaps it was the influence of wisened friends Kevin Shields and Hope Sandoval that steered Charlotte towards her home studio. With the help of those two and members of Primal Scream, team *Le Volume Courbe*'s first album, *I Killed My Best Friend*, became an acclaimed small-time hit. That's not surprising: it's a half hour of classy, soporific

beauty, with Marionneau's sweet, brittle voice filling the listener with the kind of calm only the likes of Rachael Dadd and Josephine Foster can instil.

So why the seeming lack of confidence? “To me, my work is experimental because I can't really play music,” she says. “I can play guitar really badly, but the melodica or the banjo is where I'm aiming. But when I get on stage I start to shake. Having the focus on me makes me uncomfortable.”

Marionneau's nerves affect her so much that even a summoning from the Great Lord of the Indieground, Alan McGee, was put off for an age. He finally got to hear a cassette comprising one *Le Volume Courbe* song twice and promptly released it on Poptones.

She has converted this self-doubt well on her new single, 'Freight Train', a cover of an Elizabeth Cotten song to which she adds an ethereal tone and some seriously cheery banjo. “She sings with so much soul, but she's not the best singer, so it gets rid of some of my complex!” says Marionneau in a statement rendered ridiculous when you hear how glorious her vocal interpretation is.

Perhaps it is her lack of ego and bravado, but Marionneau is the kind of character audiences will absolutely adore. She's cute, full of giggled tales (“My mum bought me my first album, *Sex On The Beach*, when I was 10”) and she's got a killer sense of humour. Notice the multiple James Browns in their coffins on her new single sleeve.

Let her climb into the glass box, she'll make for an intriguing exhibit.





## WHAT'S ON THE NME STEREO?

### LAURA MARLING

Night Terror (Virgin)

Imagine Kate Bush backed by Beirut and you're starting to get the picture of what this beautiful-but-terrifying hymn is like.

### BRITNEY SPEARS

Piece Of Me (Jive)

The one-woman car crash answers back with this slightly menacing slice of robo-pop.

### THE WHITEST BOY ALIVE

Dreams (Modular)

Smooth beats, surf guitars and blissed-out vocals, Kings Of Convenience's Erlend Øye resurfaces on this Berlin-based side-project.

### CASS McCOMBS

Dropping The Writ (Domino)

Note to a Peñate, *this is what a singer-songwriter with soul sounds like. Assured, yet beautiful.*

### OPERATOR PLEASE

Leave It Alone (EMI)

More dynamite pocket-rock from the NME Freshers' Tour alumni and Australia's coolest band.

### POLLY SCATTERGOOD

Nitrogen Pink (Mute)

The Essex-born singer-songwriter's single is massive, ascending and fragile, like it's made from crystals.

### LE VOLUME COURBE

Freight Train (Trouble)

Wonderfully weird version of the old country standard, performed by French songstress Charlotte Marionneau, with the help of a few Primal Screamers.

### Le Volume Courbe *Freight Train/The House*

TROUBLE 7" Charlotte Marionneau follows her glazed, dreamy debut album *I Killed My Best Friend* with a cover of one of Elizabeth Cotten's best known songs. Featuring Andrew Innes and Martin Duffy, both renegades from the Primal Scream crowd, Marionneau turns the song into a huffing, stomping hoedown, like Nico fronting The Band at their hokiest. Lascelle Lascelles provides the music for the flipside, burying wistful, vaguely shoegazer guitar under a bleeping, near-malfunctioning drum machine. Marionneau sings as though she's finding it hard to keep her eyelids lifted, feigning disinterest as Lascelles drifts off on a warbly keyboard melody.

**Pumice** Providence 8MM 7" The cover to "Providence" features one of New Zealand artist Stefan Neville's fantastic cartoon drawings: mics in front of birdcages, set against a backdrop of rudely rendered amplifiers. Its droll humour suits the colloquial groan of his voice, reflecting on aging on "Awful And Awesome", while plunking guitars are ghosted by their crackly, trebly shadow. "We Piss On Their Stuff" repeatedly falls apart before gathering energy for another sprint at the prize. Neville's a great songwriter who's happy to pull his songs both ways, watching their melodies buckle and fizzle under layers of distortion.

JON DALE