

Carla Bruni

Carla Bruni hasn't just been making music throughout her colorful and singular life; she's also been a fan. The singer-songwriter, since her youth, assembled a trove (in her mind and on vinyl) of all-time sentimental favorites—pop songs forever associated with a person or place or moment in time, the sort of records that she says, borrowing the French term for love at first sight, “have been a *coup de foudre*.”

Could a first encounter with Carla Bruni—the woman, the myth, the music—lead to anything less? *Coup de foudre* more or less describes what happened when Bruni met legendary producer, composer, and musician David Foster after an L.A. performance in 2014. The two instantly hit it off, and Foster volunteered to produce Bruni's next record on the spot.

“But my music is so French,” Bruni recalls with a laugh. “So he said to me, ‘what about some English songs?’ But I can't write in English; I'd love to, but it doesn't come.”

The solution, arrived upon after a series of trans-Atlantic demo swaps and shaped during twin recording sessions in Paris and L.A., was for Bruni to reinterpret her all-time favorite pop songs—the songs, in other words, that the world's most seductive woman has been most seduced by. A Carla Bruni covers record! It's an idea so right, it's as if it should have already existed.

French Touch is a label used for the turn-of-the-millennium school of Parisian electronic music, but the term has broader meaning: it's about a certain effortless elegance, a sexiness worn lightly, a *je ne sais quoi*. Bruni, of course, embodies this quality as much as anyone on earth. And on her new LP, even the most canonical American pop anthems—songs that otherwise feel as far away from France as, say, the Sunset Strip—have it, too.

Of course, Foster's artful arranging brought to the table “something bigger than my music usually has,” Bruni says. “There's some sort of mineral thing that he puts in his sound. Something like the sky.” Richly melodic, warm yet minimal, and often slyly playful, the covers have all the universal appeal as the originals, albeit with a sultry flavor all their own—almost as though Bruni and Foster had written them themselves.

Take the lead single, “Enjoy the Silence.” Depeche Mode's dark yet soaring 1990 pop classic is the sort of anthem most musicians wouldn't dare mess with—“a song that doesn't *need* a cover,” as Bruni puts it—yet the *French Touch* take is something else altogether. The new version strips the original's soaring, gothic spectacle down to its essence: a spare, moody ballad, a moving meditation. Reimagined as a simple dance of guitar, piano, and Bruni's signature smoky vocals, it opens up the in-between spaces—the silence, there to be enjoyed.

And who would take Bruni for an “AC/DC geek”? But she has been, she admits, for decades. On the many occasions when she's seen the band play, Bruni has always been struck by what she calls the “explosive” audience response to “Highway to Hell.” (“Who wants to go to heaven, right?”) But her own version *is* heaven, a jazzy, playful little ditty that feels tailor-made for her smoky alto and devil-may-care persona.

The rest of the album spans the gamut from rock classics (The Rolling Stones' "Miss You," Lou Reed's "A Perfect Day") to old standards ("Moon River," "Love Hurts," "Crazy"), but all the tracks share a quality of, as Bruni aptly describes, "intimacy."

Bruni, for her part, imagines the record being played "in the car when you go somewhere with someone you like, or a quiet evening, or maybe on a Sunday morning. It's made for being in a warm, cozy place with someone sweet. some sweet moments. That's my dream, you know? That people would listen to my music when they're relaxing and in love."

Carla Bruni has been writing and performing music since 1997, with her first album, *Quelqu'un m'a dit* (Someone Told Me), being released in 2002. Since then she has had 3 more critically acclaimed releases, selling over 3 million albums worldwide, including 2007's, *No Promises*, which set English poems to music, 2008's *Comme si de rien n'était* (As If Nothing Happened), and 2013's *Little French Songs*.