



Soffy O. “The Beauty Of It”

The scene: Berlin’s ultra-hip Prenzlauer Berg quarter. Two girls in drainpipe jeans, striped shirts and oversized sunglasses are talking.

Girl A: Did you hear Soffy O.’s putting out a solo album?

Girl B: Soffy who?

Girl A: Soffy O. Don’t you remember? “Missy Queen’s Gonna Die”? We *loved* that song!

Girl B: Wait, that was her? I thought that was Tok Tok?

Girl A: Yeah, it was Tok Tok—featuring Soffy. She was the blonde with the great voice.

Girl B: Of course I remember that voice...but the name Soffy O.?

This is a conversation that’s been endlessly repeated—particularly in the vicinity of dance floors around the world. And it’s also no exaggeration to say around the world in this case. “Missy Queen’s Gonna Die” by TOK TOK vs. SOFFY O. was indeed an international dancefloor hit, and even made the Top 20 of the German charts. The track was originally released on Ellen Alien’s BPitch Control label and made some major noise in Berlin’s underground techno scene. How did it go from there to the charts? To a lot of listeners, the tune had nothing to do with the sound of the underground where TOK TOK had made their name before teaming with Soffy O. For many, the fascination was with the blonde in the video to “Missy Queen’s Gonna Die,” a girl who seemed both slyly introverted and innocently cute at the same time. Lost in reverie, she just stood there and sang exactly what she was feeling in, as we now know, signature Soffy O. style.

Sofia Larsson Ocklind is from Sweden. She moved from Stockholm to Berlin in 1998 because she was intrigued by the city, a place where - in those days, at least - thrilling new clubs would mushroom every week, one after the other, from the post-socialist soil. SOFFY O. quickly decided to stay for good. “In Berlin,” explains Soffy O. “I could live differently than I had ever imaged. Here I live in complete freedom, with no idea what I might be doing two months from now. It has an inspiring effect on me.”

In the legendary club Galerie BerlinTokyo, the creative center of 90s Berlin, she met the crew of expat Canadians who would become Feist, Peaches and Gonzales. These artists were just on the verge of turning the Berlin music scene on its head. Soon after, Gonzales, a trained jazz pianist, released his first album "Gonzales Ueber Alles" on Berlin's Kitty-Yo label. Other LPs followed in quick succession until, in 2003, Gonzalez relocated to Paris to work as producer and arranger for artists including Feist and Jane Birkin. Soffy O., who had always dreamed of taking to the stage, found herself part of a scene that offered all sorts of opportunities and broadened her horizon to places she had until then only dreamt about. Somehow it seemed logical that Soffy O. did meet TOK TOK and start working with the duo - a partnership that, until 2003, when both parties decided to go separate ways, proved a very successful and productive match. Between 2000 and 2003, the trio played more or less in every corner of the earth.

Through Gonzales, Soffy O. met another Canadian at some point, the multi-instrumentalist Mocky. While performing with TOK TOK at numerous international festivals, a desire grew in Soffy O. to make her own music, write her own songs and, someday, to perform them with her own band. Mocky proved to be just the right person to help her realize these dreams. Soffy started dropping by Mocky's studio in Berlin's multi-ethnic Kreuzberg district with little ideas she had scribbled on post-its, little tunes she had recorded on her dictaphone, or just humming little melodies. Mocky would give Soffy a beat and Soffy would then imbue that beat with her emotional power. These fragments developed into more than 20 songs, many of which featured random visitors from Berlin's international music avantgarde who happened to pop into the studio, as well as illustrious guests like Gonzales (just listen to those piano parts!) and Jamie Lidell. Eleven of these songs grace "The Beauty Of It", a sophisticated pop album that, with its many different sounds and rhythms, takes you on a journey through musical history and back.

Soffy O.'s songs are tales of urban life culled from her own life. She sings about love, which seems to get increasingly complicated the more individualistic the environment is. She sings about loneliness, separation and depressing days. But in the end, the sun always breaks through as a funky Prince-guitar, a Charleston piano or a chorus of joyous handclaps dispels all sadness and makes your legs - and emotions - dance again.

How does it sound? Mocky calls it "sweet music," and there's no better description of the essence of this album. Every song on "The Beauty Of It" combines Mocky's exceptional instinct for catchy melodies and his virtuoso arrangements with Soffy's icily charming voice. It's a rare and winning combination.

Emotions, soul, beats, songs: These form the perfect foundation. And Soffy O builds on them with her highly idiosyncratic view of life and her playful but refreshingly irony-free lyrics. With a gorgeous album already in the can, her collaborations with visionary musicians like Mocky, Gonzales and Jamie Lidell are just gravy.

Spring is around the corner, and there's already a candidate for album of the year. In other words: if the future of pop sounds like Soffy O., bring it on.

Happy listening!