



The World According to
Petite Meller

STYLIST: DRETTA CORDELLI, HAIR: ROBERT STEINKEN, MAKE UP: MINA ABRAMOVIC

WORDS BY ROBERTO CROCI, PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOEY MATTIOLI



Dress WeareHAIH

Her signature rouged cheeks, platinum-blond braids, paired with her carefully curated style—“*I love pink, my fav color*”—and a very subtle, low-pitch voice that gets under your skin reminded me of fragile exquisite Capodimonte porcelain. And at the same time she evokes an urban 21st-century mixture of Little Red Riding Hood meets Alice in an acid-fueled Wonderland. But don't let her fool you, the convergence of her sound and look proves she is one of the most exciting singers to emerge from the French pop scene in years. (Her single “Baby Love” landed her on the UK Top 30, and she was nominated for an MTV European Music Award in 2017.) I know that's a bold statement, but that does not make it less true.

The World According to Petite Meller

As soon as you meet her, you know she is a special human being. A few minutes into our conversation, I know that she is also a creative person. You can tell by the way she develops her thoughts, frog-leaps from one subject to another, explaining how she is able to use her mind and body as vehicles for self-expression.

Creativity shapes our entire being, our mind, and our very soul. It rules the world in every field of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics), and sometimes, if we are lucky enough to meet such an imaginative visionary, we realize we find ourselves in the presence of a very sweet soul indeed. To be able to create anything, you need a special relationship between the conscious and the subconscious.

The first is analytic, logical, and rational, enabling you to get the results you want, while the second is inventive, radical, exploratory, and, above all, passionate, because you need to find the inspiration within yourself and everything you soak up during the process. Petite Meller is a great combination of both worlds, able to live in the moment, quick enough to pick up ideas from her surroundings, thoughtful in her studies, humorous with her curiosity but exhaustive in the choices she makes, all of which are well aimed to achieve what she has in mind. Born in Paris, raised in Israel, now a resident of Los Angeles, she graduated from the Sorbonne in philosophy, but music became her life, her mission, her journey, her quest for an existential free will. We got to sit down and chat with her at the Hollywood Standard Hotel in L.A., all the while drinking (oddly enough) the only two beverages she finds both amusing and amazing: hot chocolate and champagne. While she is currently getting her PhD in philosophy at UCLA, here are some slices of her unparalleled universe, her particular, precocious perspective on the world as she experiences it.

Check her music. Follow her on Instagram.
<https://www.instagram.com/petitemeller>
 —R.C.

My Music

What is really interesting to me is the process that goes through the absorption of things you see and hear in order to make your own creation. Take the ear for example, music for me starts in the ear. It is the most important organ in a musician's body. The ears are very sensitive, and through them I absorb the sounds in my brain, after which I put them into music. Music gives me inspiration, takes me places like Mongolia, just because I wanted to know more about the origin of the flute, which I used in my song “The Flute” (nominated by MTV for Best Push Artist in 2017). Or the bongos from a street musician brought me mentally to Africa, so I went there and used the same bongos for the “Baby Love” video. I strongly believe in the unconscious. I just use the microphone to let it out. Just like Fela Kuti, the African singer who used music as a means of information to educate his countrymen. Loved also Paul Simon's Graceland. It taught me you can use classical, pop, rock, even tribal sound, all sorts of music to express yourself.

Performance & Image

are concepts deeply rooted in me, both connected to me as an artist. I wear my pink blush as my signature, a reminder of a personal trauma. I like when people wear their trauma proudly. I like to emphasize the growing out of pain through music. I think my image is myself. I don't pretend to be someone I'm not. I like to wear clothes made by students and underground Russian and Chinese designers, because they lived through communism and think outside the box, like Angel Chen, my favorite hands down. For visual style I was always inspired by classic cinema like Visconti's *Death in Venice*, Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, Antonioni's *L'Avventura*, and Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*.

The Sublime

Immanuel Kant said, “Whereas the beautiful is limited, the sublime is limitless, so that the mind in the presence of the sublime, attempting to imagine what it cannot, has pain in the failure but pleasure in contemplating the immensity of the attempt.” The concept of my album is about Kant and the sublime. The Sublime can be found in nature, like a hurricane, or in a man-made wonder, like a pyramid. Something bigger than ourselves exists in the world. When you enjoy a work of art, or listen to a beautiful song, it only expands your mind. It enables you to leave this planet, and when you travel in another dimension, or your mind goes beyond your imagination, you find another reality, and I think that people with psychosis can see multiple realities, even though (unfortunately) in a painful way.







Saint Laurent Paris
Paris, March 2011

New Album

I'm working on a new album, it will come out maybe this March or April. In it I confront my inner wounds. As the poet and Islamic scholar Rumi said, "The wound is the place where the Light enters you." This album is very different from the first one. I still have my voice, but it's deeper. This is the right sound to unveil myself to the world. It's hard to be original, and I want to try new things and be unique. I want to discover modern sounds that belong to now. This album is also cinematic, with a lot of violins and cellos, I recorded with a 40-string-piece orchestra in Moscow. It sounds crazy, but it reminded me of... *Star Wars!* A big influence is David Bowie and his *Space Oddity*. I get it, it's like meeting yourself in space. I have also been collaborating with songwriter Diane Warren. (She wrote hit songs for Whitney Houston, Beyoncé, Elton John, and Lady Gaga.) She is wonderful, she can really look inside people's souls. Stay tuned.

Collaborations

My sound is constantly evolving. On "Barbaric" and "Baby Love" I worked with Joakim Åhlund, a great musician from Stockholm. We share a lot of common interests. He loves the '70s aesthetic and collects old records. For my debut album I worked with Joakim and the writer/producer Craigie Dodds, who worked with a lot of artists I admire, like Nitin Sawhney, Amy Winehouse, and Gorillaz. I shot all my videos with the fabulous director A. T. Mann and photographer Napoleón Habeica—who are mine, only mine [Laughs].

Growing Up

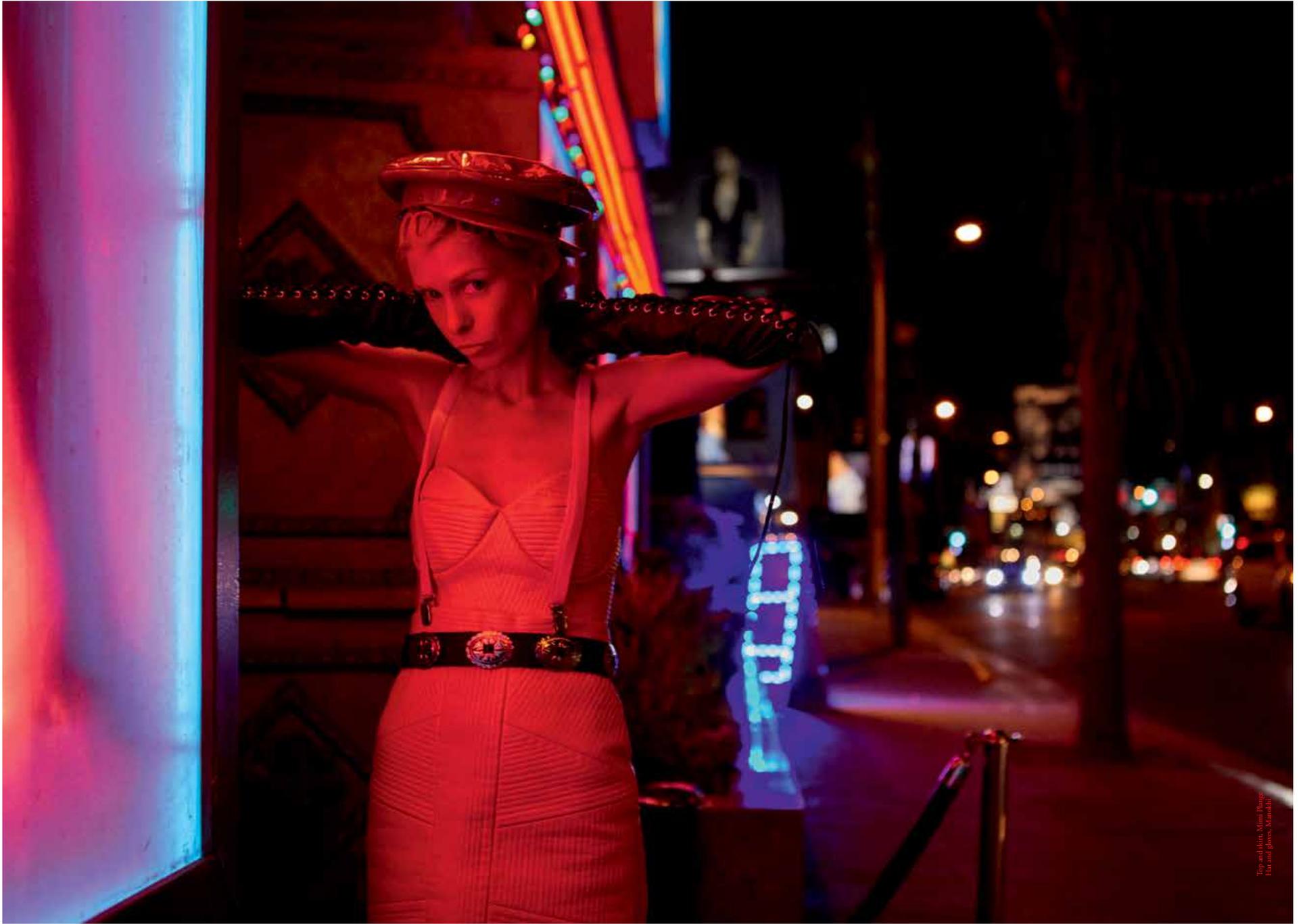
My father is Polish and loved '70s Italian pop, while Mom is French and loved French music—Charles Aznavour, Francis Goya, Brigitte Bardot, and Jacques Brel. We also listened to jazz, gospel and blues—Gillespie, Ellington, Van McCoy. I grew up in Israel, amid war and terrorism. It was scary but, at the same time, when you live in terror you want to live fast, so you can say that fear was instrumental in giving me a push to go to New York, be creative, be a musician, shoot my first video there. Then I went to London, and although I became a full-fledged musician, life was not easy. I had anxiety to go on the bus, or take the underground, I was afraid to become a victim of terrorist violence. So I left again. Los Angeles right now brings me joy, and I like the weather. I'm discovering the roots of who I am.

Pain

There is a word in French, *jouissance*, that means "pleasure out of pain." That's why I write music, to **uplift the soul and get rid of pain**. I get a lot of messages on social media from different people, thanking me for my songs. They say listening to my songs help them heal and rejoice. I live and create in pain, and my relief comes with music. I feel better only when I hear a song. I needed to make this album to dance the pain away.

Happy and Sad Songs

Everyone has a list of fav movies, fav food. For me there are Happy and Sad songs. I absolutely love sad songs, because I can dance to them. My three sad songs are: "Lovesong" by The Cure, "Only You" by Elvis, and "This Old Heart of Mine" by the Isley Brothers. My three happy songs are: "All Night Long" by Lionel Ritchie, "My Way" by Sinatra, and "Sarà perché ti Amo" by the Italian band Ricchi e Poveri, which I play every time before I go onstage, because it makes everybody happy. — R.C.



Top and skirt, Mimi Plange
Hat and gloves, Mandali