

**SHANTEL**

**Anarchy + Romance**

**Catalogue no. AY CD 31** (EAN 4250536400089) **Vinyl / CD / App & Download release date: 18.10.2013**

In his new song All the Glamour Has Gone, Shantel asks:

“What’s wrong with action,  
what’s wrong with fashion,  
what’s wrong with passion?”

We ask: What’s wrong with Shantel? And discover the latest metamorphosis by this fascinating artist and producer. In the nineties, he was arguably the most in-demand downbeat act, a master and connoisseur of exotica/electronica fusion. In the early years of the new millennium he almost single-handedly invented a new musical genre with global reach that spawned a whole slew of copycats. Shantel’s most successful album to date, Disko Partizani spent weeks at the number 1 spot in Turkey, went platinum throughout southern Europe and entered the top 20 in many other European charts. He has written film scores for Fatih Akin and Sasha Baron Cohen, played at the Cannes Film Festival and was one of the first German musicians to perform at the legendary Glastonbury Festival, as well as at Montreux (to the evident delight of Prince & Quincy Jones, who were in the audience), at the Milan Fashion Week, the Cerventino Festival in Mexico, the Tim Festival in Rio de Janeiro (co-headlining with Daft Punk and the Beastie Boys) and other major festivals around the world. Shantel’s well-earned international success follows years of tireless graft in Europe, playing more than 1000 gigs with his Bucovina Club Orkestar, connecting effortlessly with his audiences to deliver a spectacularly unforgettable atmosphere. He could easily have rested on his laurels and continued in the same vein. But now we see him reinvent himself once more and are left wondering where it all fits in. Actually, it’s quite simple: Shantel creates a hybrid, bringing together subculture, music history and social history, mixing them with his own creative energy. The end result is an album that reflects his own personal experience and wanders, as he puts it, between pop culture, high culture and street cred. Music history or more precisely the early history of a popular music form that spread internationally, was the thematic focus of the album Kosher Nostra – Jewish Gangsters’ Greatest Hits, an adventurous and ambitious journey through the clubs, cabarets and casinos of the 20s to 60s. Meticulously researched and compiled by Shantel and Oz Almog, the album was highly acclaimed by Martin Scorcese.

Whereas his previous albums were conceptually oriented productions, Anarchy & Romance is his first artist-focused album. His previous albums structured basses and beats with the obvious aim of getting the dance floor moving. This time, in departing once again from the mainstream to create yet another unique world and a completely new approach, Shantel starts with the live situation to craft a more open sound that is riskier, rougher, rawer – in short, more colourful. Instead of an emphasis on electronic sounds, it has a more organic, grungy, garage-band feel. Shantel writes and sings all the tracks himself, plays guitar and various other instruments, and uses no samples (with one exception, as described below). He developed the ideas for the songs at random, on his travels or during long hours spent in hotel rooms. In addition to the tight rhythmic structure, the emphasis here is clearly on melodies and harmonies – with a consistently pumped-up energy level. With frenzied guitar riffs and howling electronic keyboard (in this case a vintage Fender Rhodes piano from the 70s) he deconstructs a boogie into syncopation, fires up a disco number with flamenco rock guitar, and indulges in sheer hedonism with minimalist shuffle beats and a pinch of rockabilly. This is not so much a departure from the Shantel we know, as much as a logical progression. Oriental scales and Middle Easter harmonies conjure the occasional hint of Smyrna, birthplace of bluesy Rembetiko. When a child of 1968 casts a glance at the late 50s and early 60s, that period is seen through a prism. One example of this is Shantel’s reinterpretation of the fulminant Finnish tango Letkis – A Touch Of Beauty, which is the only track to use a sample. Yet the 60s flavour is constantly fragmented and reworked from a new viewpoint – otherwise it wouldn’t be a Shantel production!

The secret star of the recordings is ONE analogue microphone! Or, more precisely: the legendary classic RC44 microphone by AEA with its unadulterated authenticity of sound. It puts on the pressure, demanding enormous musical discipline; even the drums were recorded using this microphone (in other words, no separate tracks). The guitar sound was created using an original 1960s Vox amplifier. Effects: the famous Fulltone Echoplex tape echo and spring reverb. This conservative approach of using only minimal technology is positively revolutionary, contributing significantly to the distinctive style of Anarchy & Romance. With studio vibes to match, courtesy of the legendary, longstanding Hans Studios in Berlin. Is a little name-dropping in order here? OK, how about Iggy Pop, David Bowie, Depeche Mode, Einstürzende Neubauten, Falco, Nick Cave? All of them and more besides have passed through the doors of this recording studio overlooking the Berlin Wall.

Guests on this album are Justin Adams, right hand man and guitarist of Robert Plant (Led Zeppelin) – the two are currently making music history once more with The Sensational Space Shifters – Cherilyn MacNeil and Emma Greenfield of neo-folk band Dear Reader, who provided the title song for the award-winning film Oh Boy, and bass legend Ken Taylor, as well as the string section of the Junge Philharmonie Frankfurt am Main.

The release of Anarchy & Romance coincides with the strictly limited-edition publication of ALRIGHT MAGAZIN, a compendium of politics, music, art and lifestyle edited by Shantel with contributions on Frankfurt’s famous red light district and its beat clubs of the 50s and 60s, an eye witness account of how 1960s Hanau became the cradle of punk, an essay on the history of rock ’n’ roll in Germany with the help of a little development aid from Indonesian rock bands, a photo series by Horst A. Friedrichs on the theme of My Wasted Youth.

But let’s leave the last word to Shantel himself: “A diamond gives me nothing. Wonderful creatures thrive only in dung heaps. In an era of hyper-accelerated trends and a globalised world in which musical genres merge to the point where their origins become unrecognisable, I‘d like to turn conservative pop and rock clichés on their heads and revolutionise them. I’m interested in a broad, critical approach to life, liberated from genres and styles. It has nothing to do with fashion, hype or hipness; it’s totally out, totally not in, a little vintage and sentimental but nevertheless the future of music and simply impossible to grasp. Songs, ballads and party burners meet the sound of the wild 60s, rock ’n’ roll and future funk, my beloved Rickenbacker guitars, roof-raising drums and a Fender Rhodes piano, rocking with the brass players in my band as if it were the last day on earth...”

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