



Louis Philippe

Sean O'Hagan Presents: The Sunshine World Of Louis Philippe



CD / LP / digital

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Louis Philippe is living the big dream: He's a famous football journalist AND a pop star. He writes, arranges, sings and plays the most elegant pop songs on our side of the Atlantic, he released on the legendary label él Records and his influence on the great Japanese Shibuya sound cannot be underestimated. So we are very pleased to present a long overdue compilation of some of the greatest Louis Philippe songs from the years 1994-2007. Many of these songs are from albums that have been out of print for a long time, and some of them are being released on vinyl for the first time. The album was expertly compiled by Louis Philippe's friend and sometime musical partner Sean O'Hagan (The High Llamas), who also wrote the liner notes. In them O'Hagan writes and recommends: „Lose yourself in this record and let me warn you. You'll be humming the tunes and reliving the chorus's and key changes for an age, and if you're a songwriter you will probably be lifting the melodies without realising it. That's the sign of a timeless classic.“

Anyone who knows the works of Louis Philippe will immediately agree with O'Hagan. Those who do not yet know Louis Philippe will agree with O'Hagan at the latest after listening to this album for the first time. They say that when Smokey Robinson sings, you hear violins. And when the great Louis Philippe sings, the sun rises, even on 21 December at midnight.

I first encountered Louis Philippe as a collaborator with The King Of Luxembourg on Cherry Red, the label that was redefining the notion of 'the alternative', resolutely showcasing European eccentricity and melody in the sea of early 80s DIY pop. I was confused and excited all at the same time and recruited to follow the career of this strange fellow. I remember catching a glimpse of him in the buzzing corridors of Cherry Red one afternoon as someone whispered "That's him, that's Louis Philippe"

Cherry Red (pre él Records) were publishing early Microdisney songs and the Kensington Garden offices served as a sort of West London hub for Cathal Coughlan and myself. Cherry Red were offering something odd and unique, and getting to know Louis Philippe's early work was also an introduction to new musical context and fresh visual representation of fringe pop. His journey through the 80s, 90s and 2000s established Louis Philippe not only as a brilliant impressionistic songwriter and gifted tenor but also a unique arranger. No one could touch his string arrangements.

As songwriters, we all assimilate our influences and Louis Philippe was learning from the special school of Bones Howe, John Phillips, Maurice Ravel, Paul Williams, Brian Wilson, Michel Legrand, Judee Sill and Boris Vian, The Tamba Trio... the pattern here was that of an artist who was building a practise based on the pursuit of the exotic soul of harmony and arrangement. This music also extended a European perspective on a pop culture content to accept the Anglo/US axis of influence as a given. But Louis was in love with London and wrote love letters to his new home in song. Alas, some things can never last.

Louis Philippe's relationship with Tokyo was also remarkable and important in establishing the Shibuya Sound ,a triangular relationship between London, Tokyo and Paris which also swept up Philippe's collaborators like Bertrand Burgalet and Simon Fisher Turner.

And so to be a bit more specific.

I would hope that a new listener might be drawn in by An Ordinary Street, working hard to to navigate the path of ideas, knowing the rewards might be bountiful, whereas I Picked A Flower repays straight away. So it was worth it. Le Voyageur demonstrates a knowledge of arrangement that quietly suggests what was to come in the hipper circles of Tokyo, London and Berlin as soundtrack and exotica became a reference of choice. This song should have established the bench mark. No such confusion with Sweet Dollar Bill. The immediacy of this melody is almost shocking. Wonderful draws on reflections of Sondheim, Michel Legrand and Brian Wilson and succeeds in creating the classic Louis Philippe tune. Delta Kiss cuts bossa pop with a pinch of XTC, and it's seamless. The spacy summer cocktail of L'Hiver Te Va Bien reminds us that this son of Normandy has not forgotten his boyhood memories of radio. The burst of spring voiced on tuned percussion and strings that opens I Can't Own Her again demonstrates Philippe's understanding of 20th Century composition before an uncharacteristic moment of pathos in Wild Eyed And Dishevelled, which closes the record with a tug on the heart that might be flawless.

This record is the retrospective of a songwriter, arranger and singer who understands the gift of the chord change, the endless intrigue of arrangement and always knows where and when the sun rises and falls.

Lose yourself in this record and let me warn you. You'll be humming the tunes and reliving the chorus's and key changes for an age, and if you're a songwriter you will probably be lifting the melodies without realising it. That is the sign of a timeless classic, and you're holding a bunch in your hands right now.

Sean O'Hagan

**Tracklisting:**

1. My Favourite Part Of You
2. Boxing Clever
3. An Ordinary Street
4. I Picked A Flower In Ispahan
5. Le Voyageur
6. Sweet Dollar Bill
7. Wonderfull
8. Wichi Tai To
9. Delta Kiss
10. L'Hiver Te Va Bien
11. I Can't Own Her
12. An Ordinary Girl
13. Wild-eyed And Dishevelled
14. Lights Were Dancing On The Ceiling

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