



The life sonic

Images on this page from Kiktova's video and single *I Let You Go*. Opposite page from video and single *Déjà Vu*.

The London-based, Poprad-born singer, musician and actress Kat Kiktova – or Kat Kikta – talked to Alex Mayhew-Smith about the first two releases from her album *Moldavite*.

You have released two songs – *Déjà Vu* and *I Let You Go* – with accompanying videos on YouTube recently. Are there more to come?

Oh yes, there are many more songs to come. Both releases are from my debut album *Moldavite*.

Do you always make a video to go with every song you release? The format of the music video is incredibly important to me.

I'm very theatrically, visually, and musically creative – so all these aspects come together in a music video. But the song is really what dictates what form the video will take, or even if there is one.

How long does the video-making take? I assume you do it all yourself or do you have a camera operator?

I am lucky to collaborate with film maker Tom Cheshire on my videos – we always plan and develop the concepts together.

The time it takes to complete a video varies. *Déjà Vu* came together very quickly – we filmed it in two days and editing took about two weekends. The ideas were flowing and it all happened almost by itself. In contrast, *I Let You Go* took months. We filmed some parts of it in the summer, but weren't completely happy with it, so filmed more scenes in January.

The thing is – it is a song I wrote many years ago – I decided to produce it last year, yet it felt like the energy of it wasn't as fresh for me anymore, and also, perhaps because of the topic of it, it was more challenging to create a video I'd be excited about.



In *Déjà Vu* the character you play takes a walk in the forest in hiking clothes and then when you arrive at a lake you put on a sparkly evening dress and go into the lake. I found that quite an interesting narrative, almost as if the character is performing some sort of secret ritual just for themselves. What is the idea behind the video?

Déjà Vu is very special for me, not just because it was my first release. It's interesting to hear how you saw it – some people have interpreted it as being a dream of the woman in the car at the beginning, some people have decided that the girl in the lake is not the girl who is hiking but some kind of spirit reflecting back to her. I love that it can be seen in so many ways and people find their own way.

Ritual is a strong theme of course – rituals can take many forms, a transformation of some kind, a change of state for someone, or something. The act of walking out into the forest away from people and the city can also be a ritual. I think rituals are keys to other places and parts of ourselves, which is what the song

echoes. For me it's transforming from a place of immobilisation and helplessness, shedding the dead weight and the useless things, and becoming empowered and creative.

Do you have an intention of performing any of your songs live, setting aside the virus restrictions? Could it even be done?

Yes, I would love to perform live once we are able to, though at the moment creating and producing new work is my main focus.

Most of my songs have multiple harmonies and are produced electronically, but it can all be adapted for the stage. I would very much love to perform in unusual venues.

I'm a massive nerd when it comes to sound and resonance, and I love the idea of using the space as an instrument. There's this beautiful cave in Slovakia called Belianska Jaskyňa, which has a "music hall" section in it with absolutely amazing acoustics – it is my dream to perform there.

Your two songs released so far are quite gentle, hypnotic and ethe-

real pieces. Is that the style for your future pieces or is there any rage or anger that we will see you expressing later?

My dad was ill and then finally passed away during the time I was writing and producing this album, so I can hear many of the songs are infused with that realisation of human mortality. In particular there is a song on this album called *Life* which helped me deal with the grief after my dad transitioned, yet it is a happy and hopeful song with a message that says "No body lives forever ... All souls live forever..."

I'm certainly not afraid of involving anger or rage musically – they have their place.

Originally from Poprad, you cite British or US musicians as influences. Do you feel there are any Slovakian influences in your work?

That's a great question! I've always loved theatre and I loved songs which were quite theatrical. I loved Michal Dočolomanský as an actor as well as a singer (especially in *Na Skle Ma'lované*) – anything he sang – I'd run to the TV as a child just to kiss him. Also, I love Hana Hegerová, Marika Gombitová, Jana Kirschner and I absolutely love *Slovenské L'udovky*.

Growing up in post-communist Slovakia, I was exposed to a lot of British, American, French, Italian and German music, and since my siblings are 10 and 11 years older than me, I would absorb all the music they'd listen to (from Doors to Nirvana, Abba, Vangelis, Edith Piaf, Kate Bush,

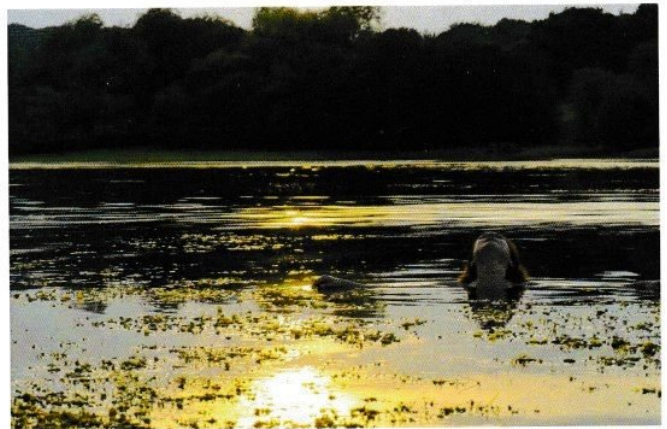
Bjork, Spice Girls). I'd also listen to all the Slovak songs played on TV and radio, as well as traditional Slovak L'udovky which my parents loved so much. I'm sure all of this blend of sounds and influences somehow comes out through my music, even if I'm not consciously drawing on my Slovak roots. Though one thing I'm strongly aware of is – because I grew up so close to the High Tatra mountains and Slovak Paradise National Park – I have a deep connection with nature which I love expressing and exploring in my work (audio as well as video).

You have been an actor in the past, is that something you have set aside for making music? I think there is something of the performance-artist in your videos – is that the intention or perhaps the outlet for your acting interests? Well spotted. I absolutely love acting and my videos are a way

to perform. It has been more important for me to bring my songs (and videos) into life as well as develop my producing skills, which is why I had to focus my time and energy there, but I would absolutely love to act more in the future. I'd love to make amazing music videos which would be like short films, but I would also love to act in films again.

How has the last year of coronavirus-drama affected you? I understand you record a lot of sounds from nature which you then use in your songs. Have the movement restrictions stopped you from getting the material for your compositions?

Not really, it's amazing how much nature thrives within the city. I don't go out hunting for a particular sound, they seem to just always come to me and when I hear an interesting sound, it announces itself in such a way, it



'lights up' and a path of possibilities becomes visible to me.

Also, I have so many sounds in my library, it's ridiculous. I'm very aware of how hard lockdown has been on so many people. In many ways it's turned out to be a blessing in disguise for

me. I finally had more time to work on my projects and much less distraction. Being forced to sit with the problems and things that I'm so easily distracted from was a very good thing for me.

<http://kiktamusic.com>