



## EMILIE SIMON BIOGRAPHY

**Emilie Simon** was born in Montpellier, in the south of France and was surrounded by music when she was growing up. She used to accompany her sound engineer father to recording studios and live jazz shows, while studying music at the local conservatoire but she found her musical voice after studying in Paris. Moving there, she studied medieval music and contemporary electronic music at the Sorbonne, which led her to *IRCAM* – the *Conservatoire et l'Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique* - the institution founded and directed by the French composer Pierre Boulez. Four years later, she had gained a masters degree in musicology.

Equally at home with English and French, Emilie looked to her fondness for pop and dance music and decided that, instead of a career in experimental music, she would find her way in the mainstream. Her debut album, 2003's self-titled *Emilie Simon*, was an instant success, winning her a prestigious *Victoires de la Musique* in 2004 award for best electronic album. France had fallen under her spell.

Her debut album's unique approach was best illustrated by the cover version of The Stooges' "I Wanna Be Your Dog", which Emilie recast as melodic, yet introspective, electronica. By the end of 2003, her debut album was so popular that it was reissued with a newly-recorded English-language version of the song *Désert*. In 2007, *Emilie Simon* was still in the French album charts. Emilie's international outlook was underlined by the album being mixed by Markus Dravs, who had worked with that other unique female artist Bjork.

Instead of revisiting the sonic territory of her debut, Emilie chose to make a second album that was breathtakingly audacious: the soundtrack to *La Marche de l'Empereur* – Luc Jacquet's documentary about the penguin migration that was released to the rest of the world as *March Of The Penguins*. Emilie was already thinking about exploring the sounds of water and the ocean in the new music she was composing. The approach from Jacquet to see if she would be interested in composing the soundtrack to his new film was a coincidence. Her growing interest in the sounds that surround everyday life and turning them into music was used to full effect for *La Marche de l'Empereur*, which married the ambient to the melodic to stunning effect in 2005. The musical hybrid perfectly suited Emilie's evolving interest in exploring and removing the barriers between the natural and technological worlds. Unfortunately, when *La Marche de l'Empereur* was released internationally the newly titled *March Of The Penguins* did not feature Emilie's music – the American producers decided that Emilie's music would be too challenging for their audience. Despite this, in France Emilie was nominated for a César (the French Oscar) for her soundtrack and won the *Victoires de la Musique* for best soundtrack album in 2006.

Her next album, 2006's *Végétal*, was another landmark. Britain's *MOJO* magazine described it as a "beguilingly mysterious sound world." The story of a half-girl, half-flower named Alicia, *Végétal* was filmic in scope with electronics blending seamlessly with orchestral instruments, but it was intimate too. By this time Emilie played live with orchestras and was recognising no musical boundaries. She had a home studio in Paris and was evolving a new way of playing

live, with “the arm”. Developed by Cyrille Brissot of IRCAM for Emilie, the arm encases Emilie’s left arm and enables her to trigger and play instruments live – she no longer needs to beat at an instrument to play it. Live, she would become a hybrid herself: part instrument, part performer. Needless to say, *Végétal* was another smash in France, picking up 2007’s *Victoires de la Musique* for best electronic album.

Established in France, and despite the *March Of The Penguins* sleight, Emilie was picking up attention in America. The US label Milan Records issued a compilation of her works to date, entitled *The Flower Book*, in late 2006. And, in time, it was America that would be calling to Emilie. Her first US dates were complemented by shows in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Canada, Iceland and Poland as well as a tough schedule in France. Somehow she managed to also compose the soundtrack for Vera Belmont’s film *Survivre Avec Les Loups*, the harrowing story of a young Jewish girl from Belgium during the WWII Holocaust years.

The touring after *Végétal* was followed by a late 2007 break in New York. Emilie fell in love with the city and is now resident in Brooklyn. The relocation gave her the opportunity to make things more intimate again, not to have to play to audiences expecting the multiple award winner. A residence at the New York club The Cutting Room gave Emilie the opportunity to showcase newly-composed songs as works in progress and develop them in front of a small audience. This new approach laid the ground for her new album *The Big Machine*, the title of which is Emilie’s comment on New York. Featuring musicians like Kelly Pratt and Jeremy Gara of Arcade Fire, and John Natchez of Beirut, Emilie has used her relocation to draw on the organic once more. Recorded in a New York studio, rather than her home, there are co-writers too but *The Big Machine*’s keyboards, programming, arrangements and production are Emilie’s.

From the beginning, Emilie has always looked beyond France. *The Big Machine* is the culmination of that journey.

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