ABT096 Das Beat – *Frau Fatal*

Bio

Saturated in the lascivious neon glow of Berlin's infamous club scene, Das Beat's eagerly awaited debut full-length flickers with mystery and mischief. 'Frau Fatal' shocks the city's synchronized techno heartbeat with a burst of energy, offering a dazzling display of modern pop that gestures to everything from new wave and EBM to indie rock and Italo disco. Brazenly dramatic and burning with passion, it's music that dances on the edge of the timeline; the duo are well aware of their musical history and its legacy, and augment their references with contemporary, empowering themes that pirouette through the complex realities of romance, depression, casual dating and fast-paced city life. Most of all though, 'Frau Fatal' is an album that lays its emotions bare, never following any established rules. In their own words: "We do whatever we want to do."

The band was formed in 2021 by Canadian musician Alexander Cowan (aka DJ Kerby) and German singer and performer Eddie Rabenberger, and they quickly released the 'Identitat' EP, laying out the project's blueprint and notching up significant acclaim in the process. Best known for his tenure as one half of dance-pop duo Blue Hawaii, Cowan saw the project as a way to push back against the sounds that surrounded him in Berlin. Back in Montreal, he'd been an isolated voice in a scene that prioritized indie bands, but since moving across the Atlantic, things were very different. Working as an engineer for local techno producers, Cowan was desperate to release some pressure and write proper songs. Rabenberger meanwhile was searching for an output for her flamboyant creativity, a place where she could reconcile her background in theater with her love for iconic pop music.

Since releasing 'Identitat', Cowan and Rabenberger have been restlessly figuring out their next move, releasing a handful of loose singles but always keeping the full album in mind. Writing incessantly in lengthy studio sessions, they concentrated on the mood rather than a concept, prioritizing fun and serendipity instead of forcing songs together, and it shows. Released late last year, 'Wrestling My Mind' has already been featured in Spotify's OFF POP playlist, and exemplifies the band's momentum; singing in English, Rabenberger adds fire to Cowan's taut, disco drums, slippery bassline and earworm synths. "Since the beginning of time, I've been wrestling my mind," she cries, opening up about her mental health struggles. "Please give me a sign, don't wanna lose this fight."

Thinking back to the psychic paralysis caused by a "crazy crush", she narrates in German on 'Ohrwurm' flipping from nonchalant, deadpan poetry to punky, distorted screams while Cowan replies with acidic EBM sequences that sound as if they're brawling with each other. And that's only scratching the surface. The sonic palette mutates again on 'Endstation Liebe' when Cowan's dreamy acoustic guitar strums levitate Rabenberger's most heartfelt performance. Written after the duo were invited to a wedding, the song traces the happy couple's story from meeting randomly on a train to tying the knot. It's not the album's only love song, either. "I fell in love with a fuckboy," Rabenberger spits on 'hopelessromantic', a jerky dancefloor anthem that she describes as "an ode to the fuckboys," casually admitting that "it's me being a fuckgirl." And this only makes the title track, a bi-lingual flip of Nico and The Velvet Underground's 'Femme Fatale', more hard-hitting.

Re-interpreting the iconic song for a very different time, Das Beat pay their respects to Nico's empowering presence. "I'm a frau fatal," Rabenberger sings, changing the context by putting it in the first person. It's a startling performance, and performance is a key element of the Das Beat experience; they're a live band first and foremost, and it's this physical experience that drives the music. They've already played across Europe, and are set to perform at Berlin's legendary Berghain in Feburary, giving them the opportunity to reconnect with their community. Cowan and Rabenberger see 'Frau Fatal' as a collaborative effort, whether it's the from working with local friends on the promo videos and artwork, or sharing anecdotes on various songs. It's a party that celebrates a Berlin that's not always visible - both musically and emotionally.