

The Duchess

Playing bass with Poplar Jake and the Electric Delta Review is a new adventure for the Duchess. 'When I was ten years old, I played a $\frac{3}{4}$ size acoustic cello with gut strings'. She smiles: 'As it's not polite to ask a lady her age, you may have to figure out for yourself how long ago that was'. She started her classical training with Eva Bodnar and Marius Lansdorp, and played with the North Holland youth symphony orchestra. 'Playing in the orchestra was the best way to gain lots of stamina and experience, while having fun and learning about making music together – I have very fond memories of those years', she says. She studied Music Therapy, while also taking Flamenco dance lessons in Amsterdam. 'As a Flamenco aficionado I approach the Blues. Both old traditions have a lot in common; powerful solo vocals (both male and female) accompanied by guitar, originally coming from a dark skinned people finding themselves in the deep south of an unfamiliar continent, facing misery, injustice, poverty and persecution. This is the sad history of both the Gypsy/Roma people in Europe and the African slaves in the United States of America. A lot of the songs have similar themes; love, loss, sex, religion, and death. Musically, Blues and Flamenco run on parallel tracks with regards to syncopation rhythm and a 12 bar / 12 beat structure. Within that structure, the artist has the freedom to improvise and express her or himself personally'.

With support from Dave, Jake and Dan, the Duchess is now developing her own style, finding her way on the electric cello. 'Because I have a hearing impairment, I felt the need to have more control over the volume of my cello. That's why I went electric a few years ago. And five strings instead of four simply allow for a wider and lower range, which is what you need in blues bass – you'll have to feel it as well as hear it'.

The Duchess currently plays a red and black coloured Draco electric 5-string cello made by Bridge (thanks to Wolfnote). 'It's a wonderful cello; it just feels right and sounds amazing through my Ampeg amp. This is a small but powerful rig, the top is the size of a ladies handbag.' she says jokingly. She uses D'Addario NS electric strings, and five perfection planetary pegs for easy tuning. On the pedal train sits an MXR equalizer and bass octave pedal – have a listen to spot on which songs the sub-bass can be heard ...

The Electric Delta Review has been playing original songs by Poplar Jake as well as the more traditional blues repertoire. They've recorded some of their best material at Mooncalf Studio in Wiltshire. 'It's an absolute privilege to be playing with such talented musicians who are mostly self-thought, I really respect that. Our sound engineer in the recording studio, Nick Beere, has been very supportive and is a star in capturing our unique sound. I'm looking forward to playing live at different venues around the country, and even abroad if they'll have us.'

