

Emilia Mitiku - I Belong To You (2013)

Written by bluesever

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1. So Wonderful 2. Lost Inside 3. I Belong to You 4. Ooh La La 5. Zou Bisou Bisou (English) 6. You're Not Right for Me 7. Dream a Little Dream 8. Officially a Fool 9. Again 10. You're Breaking My Heart (feat. Klaus Doldinger) 11. Winter Beach 12. Substitute Arms (feat. Till Brönner) 13. Witchcraft 14. Forgive Me (feat. Magnus Lindgren)

Back in 1998, Swedish singer Emilia scored a Top 5 hit with Big Big World, a catchy pop song that sounded a bit like a Disney ballad. But a follow-up single failed to crack the top 40, and British music fans never heard from her again... until now. Emilia has returned with a surname, which turns out to be Mitiku, and a completely different sound. She calls I Belong to You a "vintage pop" record, inspired by music from the 30s, 40s and 50s. At first, this looks like a tricky makeover for a singer weaned on Sweden's 90s pop scene. And actually, it's an opposite move to one of her contemporaries from the time. After a lengthy absence, Robyn returned to the UK charts as a forward-thinking electro act. Emilia has turned the other way and gone retro. But from the album's first track, it's clear this music suits Mitiku. A visit to YouTube confirms she's the same girl who sang Big Big World, but her voice has ripened over the years. It's a versatile instrument, allowing Mitiku to mix up those "vintage pop" sounds across the album. Ooh La La is a jaunty jazz shimmy, there's bossa nova on Winter Beach, and You're Not Right for Me could almost pass for an old Dolly Parton single. Perhaps most impressively, Mitiku keeps a straight face while covering Zou Bisou Bisou, the French pop song that left Don Draper so unimpressed during series five of Mad Men. Sadly, not everything is quite as successful. A cover of Dream a Little Dream is pleasant but pointless, while some of Mitiku's originals are as bland and forgettable as their titles: So Wonderful, I Belong to You, Lost Inside. Her own songwriting is better when she ditches the mushy stuff for edgier themes. Substitute Arms is a classy take on the old Mr Right/Mr Right Now idea, and You're Breaking My Heart offers a neat metaphor for what some guys are after: "You didn't want fulfilling / Just a piece of cake." Both suggest Emilia did some living in that big big world while she was away. --- Nick Levine, BBC Review

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