



# CD Reviews

*Chosen by the New York Post as One of Ten Artists to Know (NYP 3 Dec 2010)*

***I Am A F\*%king Unicorn (from Broken Romantics: A Vicious Song Cycle EP)***



**Musictalks.xzy, 18 February 2019**

**"...Emma Dean is not your ordinary pop singer-songwriter..."**

Coming from Brisbane, Australia, with a style that could easily be transposed on stage off Broadway and that she pens herself as "Pop Cabaret" (from a previous album), Emma Dean is not your ordinary pop singer-songwriter, and a simple listen to this new EP and that song in particular will make it obvious to everyone.

Starting with a great piano driven groove which is as infectious as it is original, Emma goes all the way with a display of female empowerment that could well be the next feminist anthem, while her humorous delivery shows vocal chops definitely out of the ordinary. Where on the rest of the EP, which is a bit more restraint, you could hear shades of Tori Amos, with a knack for improbably catchy melodies coming from outer space, romantic lyrics (the broken kind), and piano driven tunes, the songstress is out for a kill with this song, and if you cannot really see the "glitter and sparkles coming out of her bum", without a doubt you can hear them coming out of her voice.

What's not to like on that tune that grooves with wah guitar, rhythmic piano, heavy bass, hypnotic percussion and a dancing flute? Hard to resist Emma Dean flamboyant style and vocals in any case, and you will tend to agree that she is indeed a "F\*%king Unicorn"!

**Verdict: 5/5 beards**

[link to review site](#) (accessible as at 21Feb19)

## Red (Pt 2 of White, Red and Black EP Trilogy)



**MyFizzyPop (myfizzypop.blogspot.co.uk), posted 28 July 2013**

**Reviewer: Paul**

**".... It's essential listening....Mellifluous, delicious, evocative....Quite literally breathtaking....Weird, wondrous....A genuinely immense piece of work..."**

I first fell for Emma Dean when her amazing album *Dr Dream and the Imaginary Pop Cabaret* was released. Led by the unforgettable single, *Sincerely Fearful*, it was a giddy journey through theatrical enchantment that still resonates over 3 years later.

Emma is still providing the world with thought provoking & mesmerising music - most recently through a series of EPs entitled *White*, *Red* and (the upcoming) *Black*. I caught up with *Red* thanks to her opening for the wonderful Jinkx Monsoon show *The Vaudevillians* - and soon became enraptured by the piano driven, passionate pop that was contained within.

If *White* was about new beginnings, *Red* embraces the crazy world of love - and often reminds me of the classic Spike line from *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*: "You'll be in love till it kills you both. You'll fight, and you'll shag, and you'll hate each other till it makes you quiver, but you'll never be friends. Love isn't brains, children, it's blood...blood screaming inside you to work its will." Emma takes that world of love and passion and heartbreak and surrounds it with sumptuous, elegant piano, lush soaring strings and her unique dramatic vocals. It's essential listening and here is my track by track review...

**My Blood My Heart** ~ I love a song where the music is as much as part of the narrative as the all important lyrics. Built around tinkling piano melodies, the music builds into swooping, emphatic chords and crescendos into a soaring anthem complete with hand-clap percussion that mirrors the growing nature of passion; that often it can start all gentle and tentative before erupting in a fiery explosion of intensity & power. All the while, Emma's flawless vocal gives nuance to the emotions in the lyrics, pouring a all encompassing yearning & longing into this gorgeous tune. Mellifluous, delicious, evocative.

**Venus De Milo** ~ When Emma taps into the lower part of her vocal register with such tentative, whispering sensuality as she does at the beginning of this song, you absolutely get the impression that something quite special is about to happen. You wouldn't be wrong. It's like some sort of mystical musical alchemy being conjured into being. A song about needing to feel, wanting that aching drive inside that love can give you, it leaves you with a sad, wistful energy as you can't help but visually recreate the titular statue in as part of a fiery relationship. The strings in this song are so exquisitely performed, so beautifully placed that it keeps the song moving forward with an innate grandiose rhythm that stirs your emotions and swells to it's pleading finale. Quite literally breathtaking.

**All The King's Horses** ~ A vibrant, erudite piano riff powers this swirling tune into existence and it's almost 3 different songs in one, expertly blended so that you feel like you are

accompanying Emma on a musical journey to exotic new destinations. Fasten your seatbelts because it's quite the ride. At time it's evocative of Eurythmics, others it is reminiscent of Alanis yet it remains distinctly Emma (most notably around the glorious "teach your children how to love" refrain). It utterly belongs as the electrifying end of Act One number to some fantastical musical that exists slightly outside the realm of our reality. Weird, wondrous and has you hitting repeat instantly to experience again and again.

**Tinkerbelle (Down)** ~ the tale of one of Disney's most well known fairies has never sounded so wicked. All those years yearning for Peter Pan yet he only has eyes for the far less magical Wendy? El Scandalo! Ominous piano in the verses soon builds to a rising intricate scale, giving way to the best piano work of the EP as Emma reveals that actually it's all a front to cover that she is on actually down. Devilishly clever lyrics given Emma free reign to do her thang as the most creative, imaginative, stimulating purveyor of words this side of Book of Mormon Broadway. She's never less than 100% committed to the music and the fact that each song has a distinctive character (yet retains an effortless flow throughout all 5 songs) is one of the many joys of this EP...

**Head In The Clouds** ~ A dazzlingly effulgent and off kilter way to close this chapter of the EP trilogy. Almost nursery rhyme like in it's execution, Emma sings to nothing more than spellbinding chimes that allow her voice to be the anchor to this floating incantation. As textured, harmonised backing vocals give the song additional layers, you feel at one with the alluring conjuration that the music holds over you. A genuinely immense piece of work...

So all in all, very good then eh?

[link to review site](#) (accessible as at 30Jul13)

### Into the Woods EP (2012)



**Sounds of Oz (<http://www.soundsofoz.com>), posted 12 October 2012**

**Reviewer: Lauren**

**"...Into the Woods is beautiful, brave, and special, and hopefully just the entrée. Bring on the main course Geppetto; I'm still hungry."**

When I heard Jake Diefenbach and Emma Dean had teamed up for a new act called Geppetto, I was thrilled. These musicians were behind two of the most creative and exciting releases I'd heard in recent years, and I was excited by the marriage of their creative talents.

Into the Woods delivers everything that I hoped it would. Emma and Jake are the perfect pair, with vocals that blend beautifully, and a shared sense of theatricality that's only heightened in their collaborative work. It feels like the score for some modern, off-Broadway show. To suggest these songs wouldn't find themselves in the mainstream theatres of New York is no criticism. There are classical elements there, but the electro beats and other

contemporary influences would probably turn off the Big Apple's more conservative theatre goers. Instead I imagine this music gaining a cult following amongst hip young things.

Into the Woods bolts out of the gate with two big showstoppers: the title track and "This is Where the Trouble Starts." The poignant and tender "Forged in Flames" which follows allows us to catch our breath. It marks a turning point in the EP, as the remaining songs are also in a gentler vein. These delicate numbers are exquisite, and show yet another side of this dynamic duo.

The only problem with Into the Woods is that it seems too big for an EP. I'm left wanting so much more than this short form can possibly provide. I like to think of it as a teaser for a full-length work, rather than a completed project. Into the Woods is beautiful, brave, and special, and hopefully just the entrée. Bring on the main course Geppetto; I'm still hungry.

[link to online review](#) (accessible as at 31Oct12)

## Q News, Issue 309, 5 October 2012

### Reviewer: Tim Spencer

....A very fresh, educating, talented album that I encourage all to discover and judge.



#### **Geppetto – Into The Woods (Jake Diefenbach and Emma Dean)**

I predict and wish for the best with this magnificent duo. So glad to hear of their success at the fringe festivals recently. Very lucky that these Brisbane based artists found each other. Into The Woods is

described by Emma as a fairytale 'Hansel and Gretel' like journey with plenty of theatrical, pop, electric song and lyrical elements. This album's music genre is developing, new and unique combining theatrics, electro-pop and classic piano which is now and then evident in modern day alternative artists like Kimbra, Florence And The Machine and Marina And The Diamonds that I predict if not currently this is going to be the new hip alternative style that the 'not so commercial' music industry is going to adore. If aware of Emma and Jake's solo repertoire be prepared to be completely warped with their new additional, electric implementation to their music. Different and effective. This duo also produce some impacting, breathtaking harmonies also so do listen out for Forged In Flames. A very fresh, educating, talented album that I encourage all to discover and judge.



tsunami mag (<http://www.tsunamimag.com>),

16 September 2012

Reviewer: Daniel Meagher

"...It's an electronic fairytale with Diefenbach's piano solos and Dean's immaculate vibrato the driving forces of *Into the Woods*...."

Following playing six dates at the New York Fringe Festival, a spate of Australian shows and the EP's release in early October, the duo consisting of Emma Dean and Jake Diefenbach are making the most of the six months they've been together. Launching into the EP with the title track, Dean immediately showcases her vocal range in an a Capella intro, followed by a musical styling typical of Digital Daggers. An almost sinister theme comes from a borderline electronic feel evoked through moog synthesisers.

The second track, 'This is Where the Trouble Starts', was the duo's first official single in July. It sounds like the soundtrack for a twisted fairytale. Diefenbach steps out from behind the piano and, though vocally weaker than Dean, the song and Diefenbach are kind to each other, resulting in perfect complementation. With a fast and almost choppy structure, the song is incredibly playful and sees the audience feel like they could be running from the big bad wolf before a captivating piano solo takes control before fading out.

'Forged in Flames' follows with Dean's vocals sounding somewhat like Missy Higgins. The music could easily be coming from a little girl's jewellery box. The piece as an entirety feels rather under-produced compared to its sister tracks. However, the vocal duets between the pair are lovely, it just lacks the pizzazz the rest of the EP has.

'Is Anybody Out There?' sounds like a ballet recital. Piano heavy, the vocals are simple and enjoyable. Dean sounds like an amateur version of Sarah Brightman; which, considering Brightman's incredible range, style and resulting success, is a compliment.

'Won this Game Before' is by far the most lyrically flawless and possesses an incredible elegance. Dean's vocals, which varies throughout the EP, sound more like Mel C mixed with KT Tunstall. It's an electronic fairytale with Diefenbach's piano solos and Dean's immaculate vibrato the driving forces of *Into the Woods*.

[link to review site](#) (accessible as at 3Oct12)



**Drum Magazine Sydney, 1 September 2012**  
**Reviewer: Unknown**

"...Dresden Dolls-style devotion seems on the cards...."

Geppetto was the man who breathed magic and life into Pinocchio, for those of you who've never seen a Disney movie. The Brisbane band of the name inhabit a theatrical cabaret area which almost screams "international cult following". Perhaps oddly for such music, their choice of puppetmaster for their *Into The Woods* EP (MGM) is Powderfinger's Darren Middleton, who keeps some of the excesses in check, but let's them have some melodrama when called for. Touring overseas as we speak, Dresden Dolls-style devotion seems on the cards....

**Dr Dream and the Imaginary Pop-Cabaret**



**The Courier Mail, Brisbane Australia, 22 January 2011**  
**Reviewer: Noel Mengel**

"....It's just right. Move over Rufus and Tori. You have company."

## ROCK

**Emma Dean**

*Dr Dream and the Imaginary  
Pop-Cabaret*

(Independent) ★★★★★



SURE, it's quirky. But keep listening until you get past that because there is more to Emma Dean than being another piano-playing songwriter with an off-beat charm to emerge from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music. With an album title like that, you know it is going to be quirky. But what's more striking is the strength of her songwriting and the sheer joy and vitality in performance.

Dean is an independent artist so you know that this is a real labour of love. It shows, with an album which announces a writer with an authentic voice and fresh perspectives to offer. No wonder it is getting strong reviews globally. The album does have a lyrical theme: Dr Dream is the side of this Brisbane-raised songwriter who serves as her personal psychiatrist. He is a device that allows Dean to spill her guts on topics including self-doubt (*No*), the trials of the artistic life (*Sharks*) and more self-doubt (the beautiful agonies of *Stuck in the Mud*).

Lyrical, her imagery is both powerful and nuanced. It's not that easy to find fresh ways to address romantic (and sensual) love, but she finds them in the suitably dramatic *Thunder*, where she concludes: "Nothing compares to this thunder when it rumbles like the deepest bass in the choir."

*Sincerely Fearful* is emotionally intense but musically cheery; *Thieving Hearts* another twist on the aches of love in a neo-classical setting, but it all works as a piece, not too long or short, too sweet or sour. It's just right

Move over, Rufus and Tori. You have company.

Noel Mengel



## The Art of the Torch Singer, 26 December 2010 Reviewer: Piers Ford

**"Can't get her out of my head? Well Dean is certainly a bold and refreshing new voice.... (She) has combined idiosyncrasy and a strong, fetishistic visual impact with a promisingly commercial sound... hopefully, she'll soon be following that well-trodden path to London and we'll get a chance to see and hear the complete picture...."**

I know it makes me a failure on so many levels as a gay man but I've never really understood the Kylie phenomenon. Those Stock, Aitken and Waterman years were anathema to me. And give or take a couple of genuinely interesting floor fillers since then – and the lady's occasional flirtations with jazz and Nick Cave – I've always found that tiny sliver of a voice totally at odds with her diva status and the outrageous production values of her arena tours. For such a small talent, she's had a spectacular career. But now that she's post-40 and has successfully battled breast cancer, she has also earned her 'show-business survivor' stripes. So good luck to her, I guess.

Emma Dean is something altogether different: bold, edgy, clearly determined to plough her own creative furrow and to hell with the consequences, and possessed of a raw, outsize talent that will take some steering. And with a new album – Dr Dream and the Imaginary Pop-Cabaret – just out, she is in pole position to be Australia's next big cultural export.

This is a record with huge ambitions – epic arrangements (catch those strings on "Sharks"), swooping vocals (that have had some critics reaching yet again for Kate Bush comparisons), lyrics that plunge with vertigo-inducing speed from existential streams of consciousness to the gut punch of rock balladry and the occasional crude verbal laceration.

Dean herself says, "It's [the album] about letting go of all the things I'm normally too afraid and ashamed to speak of and unashamedly airing them in song." If you have sensitive pretentiousness antennae, they're probably twitching already. And the album's concept – Dean spilling the contents of her sub-conscious to the eponymous Dr Dream – is no small hurdle, for a start. But once you get beyond that and start listening to the words, the cascade of characters, dark tales, threats, dangers and sensual motifs, is innovative and promising.

It's a long while since I heard a lyric as challenging as: "Once a thieving scoundrel dared me to steal your underwear. The silk did trickle down your legs to your ankles pink as pigs," the opening lines to the hymn-like "Thieving Hearts".

Can't get her out of my head? Well Dean is certainly a bold and refreshing new voice, and there are several tracks I'll happily have on my iPod. To be honest, I don't get Kate Bush so much as Sparks ("Sincerely Fearful") with a dash of Tori Amos and Berlin cabaret. Dean's fascinating vocal texture also reminds me very much of Melinda Miel, a performer of dark, bloodstained cabaret material, who captured the imagination of London's club scene all too briefly in the early 1990s.

Dean has combined idiosyncrasy and a strong, fetishistic visual impact with a promisingly commercial sound, epitomised by one of the best tracks, the anthemic "Thunder".

At the same time, this points to another hurdle: Dr Dream is a character from her alternative cabaret show, and there is sometimes a sense with the album that the listening experience is only giving you half the story. Not all the songs are wholly effective in a pure audio format.

So hopefully, she'll soon be following that well-trodden path to London and we'll get the chance to see and hear the complete picture.

Meanwhile, if you're going to be in Australia this summer, you can catch her as Sally Bowles in Zen Zen Xo Physical Theatre's production of Cabaret in Brisbane.

[link to review site](#) (accessible as at 7Jan11)



**the pop sucker, 22 December 2010**  
**Reviewer: the pop sucker**

*Review of single Sincerely Fearful:*  
**"...in a word: timeless...."**

if ever there is a stage musical version of valley of the dolls, emma dean's "sincerely fearful" would be the perfect act one closer. it's six shades of crazy, and as addictive as a pocketful of benzedrine. the multi-instrumentalist and singer/songwriter has the pipes and personality to win you over with her brand of big, theatrical cabaret pop. "sincerely fearful" has the kind of quality that suits it to modern-day theater, old-time piano bars, top 40 radio, and saloons along the barbary coast during the gold rush days. in a word: timeless. also she was just tapped by the ny post as one of the top 10 acts to watch in 2011 (along with another Pop Sucker fave, graffiti6).

[link to review site](#) (accessible as at 7Jan11)



**soundsofz.com, 21 December 2010**  
**Reviewer: Lauren Katulka**

**"...I wasn't prepared for exactly what a magical album it is. ...Dr Dream and the Imaginary Pop-Cabaret is a very special CD that won't be leaving my stereo any time soon."**

After hearing the New York Post rave about our own Emma Dean, I knew her sophomore album Dr Dream and the Imaginary Pop-Cabaret must be something special. But I wasn't prepared for exactly what a magical album it is.

Emma Dean pushes the envelope to create a record that lies somewhere between old school Tori Amos and the Wicked soundtrack. That sounds like a bizarre combination, and I suppose it is, but on listening to the record it all makes perfect sense.

Just like those early Tori Amos recordings, Emma keeps proceedings moving along with her driving piano notes and an innate theatricality. On the surface there doesn't seem to be the angst of a Little Earthquakes, but don't dismiss it as frothy stuff. The lyrics plumb some really dark themes, but they're presented with such color and flamboyance that the casual listener might miss them. Of course, that only makes this complex recording richer on each listen.

Tunes like "Stuck in the Mud" and the single "Sincerely Fearful" seem like they're made for a modern Broadway musical. Again there's that great sense of theatre that seems bigger than an album, but it's not as affected as an old-fashioned show tune might be.

"Something They Can Hold" is another tune worthy of note, a track with such emotional intensity and visceral lyrics that it left me floored.

With Tori Amos mellowing in her middle age, I'm thrilled to see an artist of Emma Dean's talent picking up the baton. We needed a strong, independent, and individual female voice on the musical landscape, and knowing she's Australian makes it all the better. Dr Dream and the Imaginary Pop-Cabaret is a very special CD that won't be leaving my stereo any time soon.

[link to review site](#) (accessible as at 23DEc10)



## **Crikey.com.au - Daily Proposition, 15 December 2010**

### **Reviewer: Jim Forbes**

**"...It's a satisfying serve of warmth, humour and melancholy splashed over a little rock, served up oddball, and well worth a taste....Make the investment and spend the evening acquainting yourself with a talent whose stock is on the rise."**

If there was a futures market in musicians, Emma Dean's a commodity you'd want to buy long. A Queensland Conservatorium alumnus (the institution that brought you Kate Miller-Heidke, Megan Washington and Katie Noonan, proof you can't have too much HECS in pop) now resident in Sydney, Dean has recently released her second album, Dr Dream And The Imaginary Pop-Cabaret.

It's a satisfying serve of warmth, humour and melancholy splashed over a little rock, served up oddball, and well worth a taste. And it's not just your unknown occasional Crikey correspondent saying so — Dean's recently been named in the New York Post's annual list of next big things, as one of 10 Artists to Know in 2011.

A singer-songwriter out of the Tori Amos/Alanis Morissette/Kate Bush corner of existence, Dean's lyrical skills and knack for melody are backed up by muscular-yet-nimble pipes and gloriously percussive piano riffing. The highlights on the album are many, from the angsty romp of Sincerely Fearful to the sombre Something They Can Hold, which now holds down

third place in my cheery list of Best Songs About Suicide' (shaded only by Crowded House's Hole in the River and Blink 182's Adam's Song, if you're asking).

Other notable tracks include Thunder, and the infectious-as-ebola Sharks (In My Pool), a dangerously enjoyable rockalong — dangerous, in that it frequently finds me air drumming, often when I should be concentrating on other things, such as negotiating a right-hand turn across double lanes in blinding rain. On a bicycle. (You'd think I'd know better, having written off my mother's 1991 Nissan Pintarra while holding down the backbeat to Soundgarden's Rusty Cage, instead of holding on to the steering wheel.)

The live show that goes along with this album is also something to behold, with Dean and band joined on stage by three costumed performers who clown around bringing comical life to the artist's lyrical imagery. It's a bold experiment with that perilous stuff, interpretive dance, that all involved pull off — definitely something to laugh with, not at.

Make the investment and spend the evening acquainting yourself with a talent whose stock is on the rise.

The details: The Pop-Cabaret tour's currently wending its way around the country, and the album's available on [iTunes](#), or through the artist's [website](#).

[link to review site](#) (accessible as at 19Dec10)

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**New York Post, 3 December 2010 - 10 Artists to Know in 2011**



**"....Just sample her monster Broadway single "Sincerely Fearful," which is 50% "Wicked" and 50% Tori Amos and 100% addictive, and you will find an unavoidable sound worthy of the repeat button."**

Emma Dean

Singer, songwriter and self proclaimed ringmaster Emma Dean is a hobobag full of crazy pills. Like the really awesome hallucinogenic kind. Driven by her child-like imagination and bouncy exuberance, her new album "Dr Dream and the Imaginary Pop Cabaret" has a title that describes it's sound with sheer perfection.

It's a sideshow behind a piano; it's a carnival of kook; it's a sing-along striptease; and Emma Dean is the neurotic cabaret songstress to lead the chorus of freaks. Just sample her monster Broadway single "Sincerely Fearful," which is 50% "Wicked" and 50% Tori Amos and 100% addictive, and you will find an unavoidable sound worthy of the repeat button.

[link to review site](#) (accessible as at 8Feb11)



## Rave Magazine - Brisbane Street Press, 23 November 2010

Reviewer: Denis Semchenko

**"...local songstress Emma Dean is a talent to be reckoned with....the flame-haired soprano hits full blossom on her second LP..."**

*Brisbane chanteuse puts "quality" in "quirky" on sophomore album*

Let me start with an upfront declaration: I've never been a cabaret-pop fan. Acts like Dresden Dolls and Amanda Palmer don't do anything for me and neither do pancake, trilby hats and other genre cliches. That being said, I won't be the first to openly acknowledge that for all her flamboyance, local songstress Emma Dean is a talent to be reckoned with.

Having established herself as a formidable creative force with 2008's Real Life Computer Game, the flame-haired soprano hits full blossom on her second LP Dr Dream And The Imaginary Pop-Cabaret. As ever in charge of the piano and violin, Dean is backed by bassist John Turnbull and her drummer brother Tony, with fellow theatrical-leaning muso Ben Stewart helping out on the acoustic guitar, drum programming and backing vocals.

A gifted singer to begin with, she is in superb lyrical form here. "Dr Dream has a way of twisting the truth dear... he says 'there's nothing wrong with dialogue between yourself and an imaginary friend or three', the siren confides on the opening Emma Dean Meets Dr Dream.

Sincerely Fearful is an open admission of inner dread set to racing music-hall piano, Stuck In The Mud transpires to be a widescreen pop number and Something They Can Hold – led by a delicate "heartbeat" pulse – gradually unfolds into a song of pure grace and power. If anything, Emma Dean's art offers a much more intriguing and beguiling proposition than her previous employer – the crossover success Kate Miller-Heidke.

Rating 4/5 stars

[link to online version of review](#) (accessible as at 23Nov10)



**deathtoyourspeakers.com, 16 November 2010**

**Reviewer: Jason Strange**

**"The end result is that this album is a true artistic piece...."**

Emma Dean opens her world and her imagination to the world via cleverly crafted piano based pop songs delivered with all the theatrics of a cabaret performance. In fact the term "Pop Cabaret" is her way to describe her music. Essentially think Amanda Palmer mixed with Regina Spektor's childlike qualities and Katie Noonan's amazing vocal to get a picture of what you will hear on this, Emma's second album.

Carrying on from her successful tour last year in which featured her Imaginary friends, psychotic psychiatrist Dr Dream who she states in the opening track "Emma Dean Meets Dr. Dream" "he's not making me better/i should ask for my money back". Henry, her darker personality and GG her sensual side (featured in the track "Stuck In The Mud"). These characters are designed to open up Emma Dean and expose parts of her mind held suppressed. Behind the theatrics and poppy piano, there is a vulnerability, "tell me whats wrong with the way i am/don't fit in your boxes you don't understand?" and a need to be loved in tracks such as 'Thieving Hearts' and 'Thunder'.

While there is a serious undertone, don't let that persuade you from what is a light and pop driven album. Her childlike qualities shine through and you can't help but get whisked into this world that Emma has exposed to us all to share in. The end result is that this album is a true artistic piece. The music, the theatrics, the stage shows that accompany the album all bring together Emma Dean's ultimate vision- catchy, entertaining, thought provoking and superbly played out to the final curtain.

[link to review site](#) (accessible as at 23Nov10)



**The Insomnia Radio Network, 8 November 2010**

**Reviewer: ERK**

**"If you have not heard Emma Dean's type of music before, prepare to be dazzled...."**

The music of Australian performer Emma Dean has been stuck in my head for days. After playing her song Sincerely Fearful on Insomnia Radio: Australia episode 8 and more recently my other music podcast Erk FM, the song (and therefore by extension, Emma) has been a constant co-pilot for the last few days. It is a very catchy song which for me at least is an earworm (one of those songs that you can not get out of your head no matter what you do).

The song certainly makes a nice change from the harder rock and metal that I exposed myself to during the month of October 2010. This is a key selling point in my opinion.

November 2010 sees the launch of Emma's second album, Dr Dream & the Imaginary Pop Cabaret. The music is a lot different to what I am used to. If you listen at one level, you could be excused for thinking that the music is merely up-vibe and interesting, almost as if you are at a circus or a cabaret show. In my case, it sounds like what I imagine a cabaret show to be like through watching TV. It could be argued that you only get half the effect by only listening to the music. To get the full effect, take a close listen to the music. If you are not fortunate enough to be in Emma Dean's audience, sit back and imagine what it would be like. When you do listen very closely to the words, you may be surprised at what you are actually listening to. If you do want some idea what it is like to be sitting in the audience at one of her shows, there are various performance videos and a lot more available for you to enjoy.

In her own words:

*"Essentially, I think of my original music as being piano-based cabaret-tinged pop which is presented with a theatrical flair. In short, I call it pop-cabaret. This particular body of work explores themes such as imagination, insanity, fear, obsession and dreams. Dr Dream is one of the characters from my Imaginary Friends tour and this album is all about me sitting in his office, on his big black chair and rambling on about the inner-most workings of my mind. It's about letting go of all the things I'm normally too afraid and ashamed to speak of and unashamedly airing them in song. It's been scary but therapeutic."*

History has shown that some of the best music artists in the world are those that have inner demons, the sort of people who always seems to be having an internal monologue with their inner child. Sometimes the inner child wins. Listening closely to the music, you could be forgiven for thinking that the inner child knows how to win and does so on a regular basis on this album. Unlike so many albums out there, each song sounds different and takes you on a journey of discovery. Just when you think that you have worked out the direction that the album is going, it takes you somewhere else. It does not matter if you like that direction, you are going there anyway!

If you have not heard Emma Dean's type of music before, prepare to be dazzled. She has a massive vocal range. If you did not know any better, you might think that there are several different people singing as the album progresses. I am looking forward to see one of her upcoming shows as she launches Dr Dream & the Imaginary Pop Cabaret on the east coast of Australia during November 2010. I am keen to see the live performance aspect, especially because I have not been to a professional cabaret show before. I think only then will I get the full effect of her music. It will be interesting to compare the two experiences.

As a sneak preview into the internal monologue that is contained within the album, have a look at the video for Sincerely Fearful. It is well put together, it is funny and quirky. There are also some nods to the comic book genre as well as Ninjas. So who will win in the battle between Dr Dream & Emma Dean? I'll leave the diagnostics of the mental anguish to someone more qualified. To me, the true winner is the audience. How can the listener or the audience member lose? If you are prepared to listen to something out of your comfort zone, you will enjoy the experience even if you think of it as a audio trip down Sideshow Alley.

Thank you to SGC Media for allowing me to feature Emma Dean's music and for providing a review copy of the album, available on November 12, 2010. For more information about the album, upcoming performances & how to socially network with Emma, visit the official Emma Dean website.

[Link to review site](#) (accessible as at 9Nov10)



**Fizzypop, 5 November 2010**

**Reviewer: Paul**

**Review of *Sincerely Fearful* from Dr Dream and the Imaginary Pop-Cabaret**

**"She puts together this insanely off kilter, quirky cabaret pop that is sort of Kate Bush mixed with Alanis Morissette singing over the Wicked soundtrack - it's entirely undescrivable..."**

I have Mike at PopTrash Addicts to thank for introducing me to the wonderful Emma Dean. She puts together this insanely off kilter, quirky cabaret pop that is sort of Kate Bush mixed with Alanis Morissette singing over the Wicked soundtrack - it's entirely undescrivable, shouldn't work but oh my god is such a joy to listen to. Her first single off her incredible second album Dr Dream & The Imaginary Pop Cabaret is a whirling dervish of a piano driven track with theatrical, dramatic beats, crashing cymbal and a vocal that seduces the tunes as much as it attacks it. You get the impression Emma completely throws herself into the tune, living and breathing each word, note and beat. And the result is a vivid tune that comes to life each time you listen. More about Emma soon. IMMENSICLES!

[Link to review site](#) (accessible as at 9Nov10)

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**adriandrdedi.com, 1st July, 2010**

**Reviewer: Martyn Badoui**

**Includes review of *Thieving Hearts* from Dr Dream and the Imaginary Pop-Cabaret**

**"... If you have not heard Dean, then you surely will at some stage...."**

**"... She[Emma] is a girl who can perfectly craft a song into that important mix of musical sophistication and substance....."**

I first saw Singer Songwriter Emma Dean perform at The Raval Room in Surry Hills. She sat erect at the piano, statuesque and with her body bound by a white corset. It grabbed around her tiny waist, and made her appear vulnerable though her performance prowess was strong. Red wine coloured hair spilled down and outwards. Twisting around her body wildly.

Emma's voice is like her hair – It twists wildly – but only when she wants it too. It is at her disposal. When singing, the control, ease and grace of her voice means that she goes deepy

INSIDE her melodies and is escorted to an emotional place of sincerity by her exceptional use of melismas and turns, which can be primal and arabesque.

After the concert, I was mesmerised, but was in a terrible hurry to get home to my Chihuahua, whom I had accidentally left out in the garden. It wasn't until the following week that I was able to catch up with Dean and learn more about her work.

Emma's latest Single 'Thieving Hearts', (composed by Dean, and with lyrics co-written by Ben Stewart) is a poetic, dark song, which reminds me of the NY artist 'Our Lady J's' song 'Africa' because of it's catchy choral like chorus'. The lyrics oscillate between very gently teasing sexual imagery, and more descriptive passages. It has a very haunting melody.

Her previous album 'Real Life Computer Game' features a song entitled 'End Of the Table' which was written solely by Dean and about feeling left out at a dinner party. The music is far more serious and dramatic than the situation, which leads me to believe that she is a girl who feels things very deeply. It captures the essence of a certain human sadness and the desperate disconnect that one feels when one does not fit in. It is easy to fall desperately in love with this song.

If you have not heard Dean, then you surely will at some stage. Her Hit 'Thunder' was Number #1 on Triple J, and with Thieving Hearts debuting at No #11 it is fast tracking itself to No #1.

Emma croons in her song 'End of the Table' "I'm just a girl who like's to write songs". But she isn't JUST a girl who likes to write songs. She is too modest. She is a girl who can perfectly craft a song into that important mix of musical sophistication and substance.

### Real Life Computer Game (2008)



## **allgigs.co.uk, United Kingdom, 12 September 2009** **Reviewer: Patrick McKiernan**

**"... it is certainly an attention grabbing album. Curious, funny, astute and above all, weird. She could well stake a good claim to be the new Millennium's Kate Bush with her theatrical approach to music...."**

Emma Dean is a Brisbane based multi instrumentalist that has followed up the quick release of two very promising E.P's with her debut long player and it is certainly an attention grabbing album. Curious, funny, astute and above all, weird. She could well stake a good claim to be the new Millennium's Kate Bush with her theatrical approach to music.

Opening track 'Waiting Room' is all performance theatre with her emphatic vocals on display and intricate piano and guitar licks. It's a very fun song to lead into the title track, which is a perfectly constructed pop song that would make a fantastic single. Her voice is enough on it's own, her yips and yelps adding great dimensions to the sound. 'Most Of The Time' is a good piano led ballad with great string arrangements and 'Sorry' is a song that builds in intensity

with every passing sentence and grows to a great finale. 'Get What You Paid For' is a fantastic track pulsating with wicked energy and then 'Orange Red' is again a great string soaked song with a beautiful vocal. Short track 'Addicted To' uneasily leads into 'Cocaine' is pure energy and theatrics as she kicks through a fantastic response to false rumours she was on the white powder. 'Henry' starts with a wonderfully dark cello and violin, which sets the tone for a very sombre piece of music. 'End Of The Table' is slightly stuttering in its approach but nothing cannot be taken from the vocals, yet again pristine. 'Dry Land' is again a rather stretched song, which is a shame. The final track (you can read the title in the listing) picks the album up from what could have been a disappointing finale. It is the embodiment of the attitude with which this album was produced, sounding almost like a song from a Musical. The vocal is the best from a great choice of strong performances.

Emma Dean is deserving of greatness with her dedication to making music as wide screen as possible and this album continues her standard of high quality releases. A minor lull towards the end does not overshadow the fantastic show put on throughout.



## **Rave Magazine, Brisbane, Australia, 22 June 2009**

### **Reviewer: Bill Holdsworth**

**"An exceptional effort from this rising local performer... It's an undeniably accomplished, imaginative effort with plenty of colour and movement but, more importantly, with lots of heart and soul."**

Emma Dean has been around the Brisbane scene now for a few years in various guises, including the trio Bittersuite, the theatre troupe Zen Zen Zo and as part of Kate Miller-Heidke's band. But it's as a solo performer that's she's really begun to shine.

After 2007's impressive EP Face Painter, this first longplayer, co-produced with Ben Stewart and featuring a number of up-and-coming locals, arrives as a fully-fledged showcase of this singer-songwriter's talents.

You can see how comparisons to everybody from Regina Spektor and Fiona Apple to Clare Bowditch and Kate Miller-Heidke have some sort of currency but Dean doesn't really stand in their shadow at all.

Drawing on her extensive training and background, particularly with piano and violin, she melds elements of classical and cabaret for a style that sounds both theatrical and thoughtful. And just when you think it's heading into prog-rock territory, as in Cocaine's chop-and-change mood or, as in Henry's swooping strings, maybe getting too orchestral, it's all focussed by a rock attitude nailing the melodies and by Dean's own vivid voice. It's an undeniably accomplished, imaginative effort with plenty of colour and movement but, more importantly, with lots of heart and soul.



<http://www.subba-cultcha.com>, undated  
**Reviewer: Michael Ajayi**

"...Real Life Computer is an awesome debut from an awesome artist."

**Quirky and super talented; Emma Dean wows us with her amazing blend of elastic pop theatre.**

Off the back of her debut EP 'Face Painter', the sensual and sultry Emma Dean returns with band of Dane Pollock (guitar), John Turnbull (bass), Rachel Meredith (cello) and Anthony Dean (drums) in toe to release her first full length album. Produced by Ben Stewart (Hot Sex Liquid, The Boat People); 'Real Life Computer Game' draws on her extensive training and background, as a theatre performer, music teacher, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist to create a dangerously catchy and dramatic piece of work; that many will agree is her best to date

Every song on the album is a wonderfully crafted; whether it be the highly theatrical yet slightly off kilt opening track 'Waiting Room' starting off peacefully before exploding into a theatrical rocker or the tear jerking and doleful 'Henry' or the harrowing lead song and release 'Cocaine' with it's frantic piano thrashing; she combines elements of classical and cabaret to create an all together fresh and organic sound. Her vocals are undoubtedly captivating, but this album does more than to just showcase Dean as an accomplished singer but better yet prove her to be an equally adept song writer too.

Falling somewhere on the radar between Florence Welshe and Regina Spektor, The Brisbane native creates her own sound that is self described as a blend of "Elastic Pop Theatre", result, not only because of its infectious nature but through the manner in which it dips, soars and evolves like a stage musical. Whatever you want to call it, with 12 enchanting and larger than life tracks of such varied yet high calibre, Real Life Computer is an awesome debut from an awesome artist.

4/5



**brisbanemusic.myfunforum.org, 25 September 2008**  
**Reviewer: Dario Western**

**"This is a dangerously catchy and dramatic album that demands your attention...it's one of those rare albums that repays repeated listening."**

Intelligent female pop music in Australia is not exactly a crowded field, but for that matter Emma Dean is a very crowded and multi-coloured renaissance woman. Being a theatre performer, music teacher, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist she is every much in a class of her own despite the many hats she proudly wears.

Starting out fresh from the Brisbane Conservatorium as a jazz student having excelled in piano and violin, she formed her own act Bittersuite which she worked in from 2002 - 2005 and collaborated with Kate Miller-Heidke and the physical theatre troupe Zen Zen Zo before she finally decided to proclaim herself as a performer in her own right.

The last few years have been summed up in the intriguingly titled debut album "Real Life Computer Game". Her vocals are sensual and sultry, but at the same time with an authoritative 'don't fuck with me cos I've been there and done it before' rock attitude.

Every song on the album is a wonderfully crafted gem with the soft and lilting opener 'Waiting Room' that starts peacefully then explodes into a theatrical rocker towards the end, the pizzicato-ish waltz and triangle filled 'Sorry', the Lisa Loeb-ish 'Orange Red' (which came No.2 in the Courier Mail's People's Choice songs this year), the tearjerking and despondent 'Henry', the frantic piano led thrash of the harrowing 'Cocaine' about muck-raking internet journalists who spread rumours about her alleged drug use, and the boppy pomp rock stomp of the title track with quirky harmonies and biting guitar licks (which I personally think should have been saved for the last track). Speaking of which, the final track is the unsuccint "Could This Mean If Everyone Is Alone We're Together? in The Way That We're All Together Alone" in which she demonstrates her vocal acrobatics in a homage to her best friend Angie Miles.

If you like the quirky dark sophistication of acts like 10cc, Sparks and Dresden Dolls together with the cool and collected rock princesses like Kate Bush, Bjork, Danielle Dax, Fiona Apple, and Kate Nash then Emma Dean is definitely worth checking out not only as a recording artist but as one of Brisbane's most exciting and captivating performers of this decade.

This is a dangerously catchy and dramatic album that demands your attention with so much more than meets the ear every time you hear it, it's one of those rare albums that repays repeated listening.



**Inpress Magazine, Melbourne, 6 August 2008  
Reviewer: Kaz Mitchell**

**"...a masterpiece; no doubt about it...as fresh and inventive as I had hoped it would be and easily fits into my top 10 albums of the year so far."**

Brisbane artist Emma Dean follows up her highly imaginative and quirky Face Painter EP with her first full length album, Real Life Computer Game. Teaming up once again with co producer Ben Stewart, they have given us a masterpiece; no doubt about it.

Dean has a way with words and melody that can match Clare Bowditch and Kate Miller Heidke, and should find her-self as important as those two glorious Aussie songwriters. Dean has best described her musical style by coining her music Elastic Pop Theatre. It's dynamic, epic and never sits still for a second. Just when you think you have a grasp of things, off she bounces in another direction. Don't misunderstand me and think that means this album doesn't have focus, or is so disjointed as to be irritating. It flows magnificently, with a torrent of emotions and sounds that will leave you gasping for breath. Take for instance the title track, a blistering song about seizing the day, before it's all too late. Cocaine, a song written after reading a false report that said she was a cocaine addict, is frenetic, jagged and deliriously sexy. Even the gentler songs never quite allow you to settle, and keep dipping and diving into complex themes both musically and lyrically.

Death and the afterlife are common themes. For instance the final track, the wordy *Could this mean if everyone is alone we're together? / In the way that we're all together alone?*, are the lines *His arms are reaching to her but he's blinded / By skin over eyes and she's always reminded / That when we die we're always alone*. In Dry Land, a song about the after life (the one after the death of a relationship) Dean sings *Now all I need is time just on my own / To get used to this body and its new home*.

There are many elements to this album which will take repeat listens to fully appreciate. Real Life Computer Game is as fresh and inventive as I had hoped it would be, and easily fits into my top 10 albums of the year so far.

**Face Painter (2006)**



**Rave Magazine, Brisbane, 27 Feb - 5 Mar 2007  
Reviewer: Bill Holdsworth**

**"This new face of Emma Dean's shines surely and brightly."**

*Local singer-songwriter continues to impress*

The title reflects the fact that Emma Dean has been around in various guises over the years (like, more recently, a member of Kate Miller-Heidke's band and a participant in last year's Women In Voice). But this second solo effort shows how the risks she's taken in her career moves continue to pay off.

More a mini-LP than the EP it's billed as, it has seven wonderfully diverse songs over 25 minutes. She has her band very much in evidence here, especially on more pumping tracks like Good Song, but the sound is clearly shaped by Dean's piano, violin and Hammond organ playing. Listen, for example, to how she leans into the keys on Sunday, then pulls back for a more vulnerable feel. She plays with a confidence that allows the songs to take some quirky turns along the way without losing their melodic core. A case in point? 3 Meals. It has a curious bounce to it, while Dean puts a few extra twists into her vocal— yet it ends up being thoroughly engaging. Meanwhile, try not being moved by the intimacy of Chai Tea or the lilt-to-full-tilt emotion of Too Fat For Ballet.

This new face of Emma Dean's shines surely and brightly.



**Collected Sounds (collectedsounds.com), 18 Feb 2007  
Reviewer: Anna Maria Stjärnell**

**" Dean's EP is a great listen."**

Emma Dean comes across as a cousin of Nellie McKay at times on this EP. She has a unique take on the sound though.

She makes the spunky "3 meals" sting.

A more sensitive number like "Chai tea" is equally well handled. Dean's vocals and piano resonate as she sings an intriguing song.

The wonderfully titled "Too Fat for Ballet" resembles Frente's Angie Hart vocally, the words of accepting yourself for who you are become striking.

*Good song* is easy to sing along to.

Dean's EP is a great listen.



**Time Off, Brisbane, 20-26 Dec 2006**

**Reviewer: DCR**

**"This second EP...further showcases the extraordinary talent this 23-year-old possesses."**

This second EP from Brisbane piano chanteuse Emma Dean explodes with life, and further showcases the extraordinary talent this 23-year-old possesses.

From the highly infectious opener '3 Meals' and its killer chorus (seriously, you can't hit the repeat button quick enough); "Where do I belong? Is it in your arms or is it somewhere I can learn to be strong?" to the stunning 'Chai Tea', where Dean delivers an intimate and graceful serenade.

The record echoes Regina Spektor in its flawless exchanges between rock, pop, jazz and folk; at times you'll be jumping around your lounge ('Good Song') and at others you'll be sharing a revealing glass of wine with the lady herself ('Too Fat For Ballet').

If the thought of finding yourself in a record entices you, then let Emma Dean guide you.

### **Hanging Out The Washing (2005)**



**Time Off, Brisbane, August 2005**

**"Dean... pulls off every lilted note with absolute class and chilling intuitiveness."**

When has this inventive singer/songwriter ever put a foot wrong? Retiring her folk-pop duo Bittersuite to strike out on her own, 21-year-old Dean continues to take risks with her solo work and still pulls off every lilted note with absolute class and chilling intuitiveness."