



Marie Electra Violinist

Bringing a unique sound to the Riviera

By NICOLE RUSKELL

The very first electric violinist in the Côte d'Azur, Marie Electra has been performing for 15 years. She speaks with Riviera Insider about her fascinating career.

What inspired you to play the electric violin?

My education started in classical language and classical music. I started playing the violin at seven years old. At 26, I discovered electric violin by chance and I was really amazed by the musical possibilities that it offered. I decided to invest and try to use it as best I could.

How different is it from classical violin?

Even if you have a base in classical music, you still have to adapt a lot of things like your technique and how you hear music. I have two violins, one Yamaha 4-string electric and a classic wood 5-string. You have to really open your mind to find the same notes and create the same sound. There are so many possibilities.

In terms of playing, it's just a difference in the amount of pressure with the bow. Because of the electrification, if you press too hard or make a mistake it can cause a cracking sound. So you really have to find a balance in the way you move your bow.

In terms of repertoire, I am able to play cool songs that I couldn't play with my classical violin!

See Marie Electra live at the Grand Hotel St Jean Cap-Ferrat. She plays every Sunday from 7 pm - 11 pm until 29 September.

When it's just you, which violin do you prefer?

When it's the beginning of the day, I always start with my acoustic violin and some Bach. It helps me to centre and dive into my technique. Don't think that with electric music, the loop pedal and dancing that I can forget about my classical training!

So each day, I start with a suite of Johann Sebastian Bach to warm up, empty my head and get back into the right posture balance with the violin. It's like sports when you stretch your body to get ready. So after about 45 minutes or so I take a 15 min break and then pick up my electric violin to be in a good space for creating something fun.

Not only do you play, but you also sing. That can't be as easy as you make it look.

They are two separate brain functions that you have to do simultaneously, so it was hard to pass from voice to violin at first. But it's good for the brain! So I have to remember the words -in English- and remember the notes of the violin, play it and make it look easy and like I'm just improvising - but I'm not!

Also, I work with sound architect Jean-Claude Ducasse. I wouldn't be able to do what I do without him - we are a team. It's very difficult to mix vocals with electric violin. If it's not done just right it can sound really bad. He knows what to put where and when to put it.

What are some of your favourite collaborations?

I created a song and video on YouTube called 'Electric Sundance.' It's a collaboration with DJ Faylasuf. It was something that we created together and worked on adapting the melody with the violin. I like it because it starts from a really calm melody and then moves to a real rhythm.

I also had the chance to collaborate with *Givenchy* and MB14, a famous beat-boxer. We had a really nice session mixing classical music and beat-box. It was so fun and interesting.

You have toured the world. Now you love to play intimate gatherings like weddings and luxury corporate events. Why is that?

In the beginning, we were going here and there and I can remember waking up in a hotel in Japan and not knowing where we were. It was hard, but it was good money and it was fun.

I love to create but I'm also really realistic. I will always play where I can give pleasure to people. Seeing pleasure in people's eyes gives me pleasure and I enjoy taking a melody and playing it with my violin. I love what I do, actually. I'm having fun with people, sharing my music.

Any advice for someone considering this instrument?

Music is a language and it needs to be spoken with communication. I love to take people into my music world and give them good entertainment. Knowledge is something to share, you can't take it with you when you die. I used to teach, so I love to share my knowledge and if people have questions about how it is to make the change from classical to electric, I am very happy to discuss it.

Follow Marie on Instagram and Facebook @MarieElectraViolinist
www.violoniste-electrique.fr