



PARLEZ VOUS POP –

German and British singers do it in French.

16 enchanting songs in broken French from the 60s and 70s

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French is the language of love. The words flow as smoothly as a vintage Bordeaux, like the suggestively sweet nothings Serge Gainsbourg whispered into Jane Birkin's ear. Ah, France, famed for *laisser faire*, *laisser aller* and exquisite cuisine – something patently lacking in the wirtschafts-wonderful Germany of the 50s and 60s (not to mention the United Kingdom). Songs sung in French were not only pleasant to the ear, they promised a better, more luxurious life. Even chansons laced with melancholy hinted at a certain lightness of heart.

Some artists – or their record labels – simply wanted to see if they could make an impression on the French market, singers like Roy Black, Mary Roos, Peter Kraus or Freddy Quinn, as well as British stars such as Dusty Springfield and Sandy Shaw. Others, notably Reinhard / Frédéric Mey, Caterina Valente, Vicky Leandros, were genuine Francophiles and released entire albums in the French language. For some – Manfred Krug, Alexandra, Marianne Faithful or Ireen Sheer, for example – it was more a question of having a bit of fun singing one or two French numbers to include on their LPs.

The majority of them may have struggled to perfect their French accent, but the near misses are perhaps the most charming of all. Whilst some of the German performers get very close indeed, with Marlene Dietrich and Manfred Krug earning particular recognition from their French counterparts, the British singers just cannot roll their Rs or accentuate the E at the end of a word. Elsewhere, Alexandra sounds like an exiled East Prussian and Lys Assia gets her tenses in a twist but *ce n'est pas grave* – as long as it swings. Cha-Cha-Cha!

The booklet contains linernotes from the unique, *magnifique* Françoise Cactus, vocalist with the Franco-German band Stereo Total.