

YARA LAPIDUS

“JUST A DREAM AWAY”

Biography

Blessed with a voice that has inspired comparisons to “a sigh,” “melting honey,” and “a warm breeze through a cedar forest at moonlight,” French Lebanese singer Yara enchants all those who hear her. Her self-penned lyrics tell of love and its origins in desire, loneliness, and obsession. Her spacious, largely acoustic music can be epic or spare, but always in service to her extraordinary voice.

With the soul of a poet, and a cosmopolitan’s multilingual ease, Yara releases *Just a Dream Away*, her first U.S. album, on August 29. “I never dared to think that one day I might make a beautiful, timeless record featuring artists I adore,” says the former fashion designer in her fluent, accented English. “*Just a Dream Away* has exceeded my wildest imaginings.”

These songs are realized with help from some of the finest musicians currently working in any genre, including Brazilian singer-songwriter Chico César, Palestinian oud virtuosos Simon Shaheen and Adnan Joubran, and the iconic American singer Iggy Pop. Oscar-winning composer, musician and producer Gabriel Yared brings the same virtuosic vision that graced soundtracks for such unforgettable films as “Cold Mountain,” “The English Patient” and the cult 1986 classic “Betty Blue” (“ 37 °2 le matin”) to 10 of the 12 tracks on *Just a Dream Away*.

Yared and Yara collaborated for over the course of two years. Their ties run deep. Both were born in the Lebanese capital, Beirut. Yared was bedazzled by that gold-and-fire voice. It made him nostalgic for his country, which was ravaged by a 15-year civil war (1975 – 1990). From the start, Yared set about composing melodies that would complement Yara’s unique aesthetic. He felt that her wordplay and transparent emotions placed her in the tradition of Middle Eastern divas Fairuz and Um Kalthoum, and French heroes Serge Gainsbourg and Françoise Hardy.

“Images have always come easily to me,” says Yara. A mother-of-two herself, her imagination was aroused from stories read by candlelight as a child, from the stacks of notebooks she continues to fill with poetry, and from a literary sensibility inspired by French scribes Rimbaud and Verlaine, and contemporary wordsmith Boris Vian.

This album was conceived in London’s legendary Abbey Road Studios, but really given birth in Los Angeles at the historic Sunset Sound, with a sprawling cast of over 40 musicians, in London, and another Grammy all-star group of in LA it gave together with love and great teamwork. The earliest results were featured on Yara’s domestically released sophomore album, 2018’s *Indéfiniment*. On *Just a Dream Away*, the songs spread their wings and fly.

Three songs from *Indéfiniment* were re-recorded at Sunset Sounds in Los Angeles, where the ten songs on *Just a Dream Away* were produced by award-winning Lebanese-American music producer Dawn Elder, widely acclaimed for her productions of major global artists. In some cases, French lyrics were rendered in English with help from British singer-songwriter Ed Harcourt. Later, as the head of her own

company, Yara Music, she added two additional songs. “Just A Dream Away” was written by American composers Steve Dorff and Michael Jay, and adapted to Lebanese Arabic by Yara and Dawn Elder, who produced eight of the twelve tracks on the album. John Lennon’s “How,” recorded in both English and Lebanese Arabic versions, is a milestone. Yara is the first artist ever authorized by Lennon’s estate to translate and interpret this song in a foreign language.

“I love to sing in different languages,” says Yara. “French. English. Lebanese Arabic, my mother tongue, which is soft and sweet. Because of the war I grew up changing schools, leaving Lebanon to live in other countries – Egypt, France, – and coming back again. Adapting to other cultures is something I am used to.” After 18 years in France, and now married to a Frenchman (couturier Olivier Lapidus), Yara considers herself “very much a Parisian,” adding, “Now when I dream, I dream in French.”

Yara is the youngest of two children born to an architect-turned-sculptor father, and a mother who painted colorful Fauves-style abstracts. Dreaming comes naturally to a person who, at age seven, dodged a sniper’s bullet. “I bent down to my schoolbag and it went over me.” From a young age, she played guitar and piano, and wrote constantly. In Paris, Yara initially made her name as a designer. She worked as an assistant to the celebrated Oscar de La Renta and at fashion houses including Dior. Then she launched her own label, Y by Yara, with an exclusive range of jeans, embellished with Ming-era silk embroidery, which she personally delivered to chic boutiques of Paris behind the wheel of a truck.

“I like difficult things,” she says, her dark eyes flashing. “I like facing challenges.”

In 2010, that Yara’s mettle was tested in a way no one could have foreseen. “A straight forward operation on my collarbone went wrong and I lost the use of my left hand,” she says, holding up slim, elegant fingers adorned with large authentic rings. “Suddenly I was unable to work in fashion, and I could no longer play my guitar.”

Yara had released her eponymous solo debut the previous year. Her voice, with its trademark mix of vulnerability and strength, sent ripples through the French music industry. She’d always sung at home, for herself, for her husband and daughters. But after the accident, her course was clear: it was time to bring her deeply felt music to the world.

Yara’s early showings included memorable performances at leftfield venues including Silencio, the Paris club owned by film director David Lynch, and at the 2018 London Jazz Festival. Her outfits were constructed with a stylist’s eye, her jewellery including a miniature guitar on a chain around her neck, and that flare for visual style also animated her videos. In a touch of serendipity, Yara’s father-in-law, French couturier Ted Lapidus designed the white two-piece suit worn by John Lennon on the cover of the Beatles’ *Abbey Road*, named for the studio where her recording career blossomed.

For *Just a Dream Away*, Yara chose her collaborators carefully. Chico César contributes velvety Portuguese vocals to the shimmering, bossa nova duet, ‘Saudade De Voce’. Adnan Joubran from Le Trio Joubran—three brothers renowned for their powerful performances on the oud—conjures a virtuosic swirl on “Depuis Toi.” “I have an oriental side that is very emotional and the oud captures this very well,” says Yara. “My European side is more self-contained, reflective. I like to think my music is a bridge from one to the other.”

And Iggy Pop? Only the voice of Yara could tame the godfather of punk, who croons alongside her – in English and in French – on ‘Encor Encor’ with a tenderness made

all the more delightful for the tune's curiously familiar music: Yared's theme from '37 °2 le matin' – or in English, 'Betty Blue'.

Just a Dream Away, is a work crafted with love, and polished over years to yield music sure to stand the test of time. "Dream big," says Yara. "When you dream big, you catch a star."

"Just a Dream Away"

ref album : YM02777

UPC : 377001441679

Label : Yara Music distributed by TuneCore & CD Baby in US