



PROLOG:

FEDERWEG 22 3008 BERN +41(0)79 222 69 75 WWW.PROLOG-MUSIC.CH

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With her 3rd full-length (and the 2nd one cut with **Swiss producers GR! & HOOK**), **Muthoni Drummer Queen** gives the “Motown formula” a truly post-Millennial makeover. The 11-song-deep concept LP, **simply titled SHE**, is the perfect cross-over record – packed to the brim with soul-nourishing hits. It’s a long-player that manages to distill the best from **the rich spectrum of contemporary Afro-Diasporic sound to create an infectious, club and radio-friendly hybrid**. This is intelligent, timeless Pop music written to **celebrate the beauty, strength, innovation and resilience of African women**.

SHE was recorded in Switzerland, in what Muthoni dubbed a series of three “bootcamp” sessions. Every time **Muthoni flew in from Nairobi, Kenya**, she would drop into a ruthless itinerary that not only included the writing and recording sessions, but, also, a host of media engagements, live shows and video productions. Being that this LP is a sophomore affair (for this particular production constellation), the writing, this time around, **was a truly collaborative process across the board**. The bulk of this material was written in the way that a well seasoned band writes; the past recording history with **GR! and HOOK**, their experiences with playing live shows together, as well as the fact that they became great friends definitely added extra depth to this new body of work. As a result, not only does this material elicit a high level of intimacy from the listener, but it also brims with the type of pure joy found in the act of music making. Even at its darkest and most introspective, **SHE** is still a fun record!

Every title on SHE literally plays **like a scene lifted from a movie**, each with a different female protagonist who happens to find herself in a unique predicament – more often than not – one that forces her to reevaluate her life thoroughly and undergo a deep transformation. As listeners, we witness the

inter-generational struggle, with art as the key point of tension (Caged Bird); the intense life of a political activist (Kenyan Message); breaking out of a stagnant and emotionally oppressive relationship (No More); the fight for financial independence (Suzie Noma); coming into the fullness of sexual expression as a woman (Lover); a successful woman's bouts with alcoholism (Time Bomb); and the biting bitterness of betrayal (Criminal). There's also a song on here that celebrates women in rugby (Squad Up), as well as



what could be deemed as two uplifting feminist manifestos (Elevate and Dear Mathilde). Muthoni says she didn't initially intend to write a concept record of this sort, but after the first few songs were on tape, it became evident to her that she was, in fact, channeling a prismatic array of stories about women. She admits that some of these characters she knew intimately, others she only heard about or had only met in passing – but each and every one of them deeply resonated with her. The women in these songs are complex, multi-dimensional beings. This is not only a testament to great writing skills, but also to a gift for deep empathy. From a purely musical point of view, SHE is a record packed with anthems that treat the idea of genre in the same playful manner that golden-age hip hop used to treat sampling. Almost every song on here, is an amalgam of numerous styles, either by the virtue of fluidly switching between them (every few bars) or running several genre signifiers simultaneously. There are overt allusions to just about everything from old school hip hop, through blues, dancehall, retro-soul, future r&b, all types of African club inflections and a variety of global bass specimens. What fuses all of these disparate sonic elements and creates an overall stylistic cohesion on the record, is GR! and HOOK's signature production. It's a sound that comes off both modern and timeless, clubby and radio compatible. The arrangements throughout are fun, tricky and highly nuanced, invoking the skills of great producers and arrangers of the last 30-plus years (before songs turned into tracks). Too bad, though, that custom car sound systems are a relic of the past (at least momentarily), because this record would be tearing up trunks right about now.

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/muthonidrummerqueen/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/muthonidrummerqueen>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/muthonimusic>

Promotion Switzerland:

PROLOG, Andreas Ryser, Federweg 22, 3008 Bern ar@prolog-music.ch +41 79 222 69 75 / www.prolog-music.ch