



# diane cluck

interview by alan pedder photos by luca etter



diane cluck is telling stories but giving nothing away. so far, so journalistic cliché you may think, but there are precious few better ways to describe the emotional snapshots that constitute her uniquely and unflinchingly poetic songs. from her coolly narrative early work to the electric internalising of this year's **oh vanille/ova nil**, cluck has a way of sequestering secrets and smuggling them into your heart. stylistically, her origins lie closer to the circumference of the new york antifolk movement, a seemingly boundless reservoir of the offbeat and arty, than to the lilith generation – her assorted satellites and contemporaries include cocorosie, regina spektor, julie doiron, the moldy peaches' kimya dawson and newcomers jana hunter, rachel lipson, and marissa nadler. but ask diane if she feels like a part of something cohesive, a unit of sorts, and you'll get short shrift. in fact, ask her anything and you'll rarely get a fully-formed, straight down the middle, neat as you like packaged response. i warned you in the first sentence, remember.

integrity, it seems, is her plot device, the thing that keeps her going, delivering truths and unconventional homilies in a revelatory and queerly clipped vocal. though she describes herself simply as “seamstress, songstress, cook and wife”, she does still parade a minor artistic conceit – when i catch up with her over email she instructs me not to rearrange her sentences, or add punctuation or capital letters because she finds them “sort of depressing”. what the heck, conformity is the refuge of the imaginatively challenged anyway. punctuation be damned.

**there seems to be a definite rural and worldly quality to your lyrics which makes me wonder if you've always been a new yorker? does the city influence your music?**

i grew up in lancaster county, pennsylvania it was quite rural then, less so now tho it still has a noticeable amish population city life seemed to bring on or at least

speed up my need to make music tho i don't feel the city as an influence anymore

**rumour has it that you're a nutritionist by trade. any top tips for staying in good voice?**

i often drink sage tea with honey before and during shows it helps to open up my voice and ward off infection

**is there a story behind the title oh vanille/ova nil?**

there is a story i actually just deleted it after typing it out and reveling in its cuteness i was walking over the williamsburg bridge last night thinking about how when i was a kid i had this bossy habit of telling my little sister what the 'right' lyrics were to the pop songs she was singing she'd have her own language and associations all worked out happily singing away then i'd come in telling her she was wrong i still remember the look of hurt and bewilderment on her face then i was like 'why should i tell people what things mean?' i don't enjoy it i feel like i'm robbing someone of the experience of standing in the wonder of their own interpretation i mean, i could tell you exactly what the title meant, to me but i'd be more interested in hearing what the title means to you *[when i later offer her a somewhat convoluted explanation involving juxtaposition of the vital and the mundane, ignition and extinguishing, she sweetly thanks me for my opinion and says no more about it]*

**do you consider yourself a feminist? does it hold any meaning for you?**

i don't consider myself a feminist the word or concept has never interested me i know it's loaded for some people so it's better left to them

**what made you first pick up a guitar/sit down at the piano?**

i have early memories of being fascinated and shy around pianos like i was in love or had a crush

i don't know what made me pick up guitar for the first time i picked it up for the second time

when i began losing interest in piano guitar felt more mutable and subtle i like the way guitar works with my body

**how hard has it been for you to sell your music? are illegal downloads really harming independent artists?**

i haven't been trying to sell music so it hasn't been hard sometimes i sell cds or get paid for shows and sometimes i don't

i've never been harmed by an illegal download people should do what they like upload, download, freeload it doesn't bother me as an artist

**what does the term "antifolk" represent to you? do you think it's a true reflection of your songs?**

okay a n t i f o l k to me at this point if it means anything means people who don't give or get points for having technical chops without an open heart to back it up

basically, you could be all heart and no technique and you would be respected the antifolk crowd i knew was very keen and discerning on this point in some ways it's the only identifying characteristic behind a widely diverse group of individuals i don't call myself antifolk tho i don't fight the label

**what's next for you? are you playing in europe any time soon?**

next i am going to go to sleep i thought too much about these questions and it made me tired thinking uses up lots of energy if i'm going to be interviewed again i'd like to be more thoughtless about it

next i am moving house to live with my friend lauren luloff who makes amazing paintings

next i am finishing work on an album and then another one and then i would like for there to be a break from next

i made a six-week tour of europe and the u.k. (sic) with herman dune this past spring that was by far the longest tour i've done i was glad to find myself falling apart and holding up along the way now my belly feels full of touring for awhile what's soon? what's awhile? ■