

Stella Zekri

BILLING

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Stella Zekri describes her mixing style as one led by emotion, rather than an adherence to razor-sharp beatmatching – one could also simply call this playing soulfully. Soon after moving to Berlin in 2015, she came upon a passion for collecting records – starting with hip-hop, funk, soul, jazz and boogie. At a certain point, she began to receive some invitations to play her collection out at bars, which was around the same time she began going out to dance in the city's clubs – her wider investigation of electronic dance music soon followed. So one could say Stella's DJ practice began with collecting, then gained dimension as a selector and dancer, and this is audible in her sound – she plays sets that stoke a warmth in the body and keep it lit, sequences of deep-dug cuts that are mixed with a tactile intuition and trust in the track that only a vinyl DJ could have.

Over the years, Stella has become a signature member of Berlin's club community, enacting an old-school ethic of the DJ as a community-driven role. Today she is well-known for her wide knowledge of classic, groove-driven house and disco, as well as deep dubs and acid, but her rise as a DJ came hand-in-hand with booking and curating. After a number of years organizing parties at the DIY venue Kake Stella founded Body Language with Camilla Rae and Caitlin Russell in 2021. Gaining a committed crowd over the last years, Body Language has hosted a vibrant array of international and local DJs. Rather than needing to brand the party with markers of identity, Stella emphasizes the core ethic of the party being its openness – the function encourages a range of sounds and styles (one can hear everything from clever, groovy house and techno to classic Chicago cuts to RnB-laced high-NRG in recorded sets on SoundCloud) and so welcomes a heterogenous crowd. In this way, Body Language is part of a shift into a new line of queer parties in Berlin – “queer” precisely because diversity runs through its bookings, its sound systems, its dancefloors, and isn't just a catchword printed on a statement.

Although Stella's original plans to become a singer were quickly overtaken by the drive to play out her record collection, 2022 saw the release of *Détends-Toi* and the formation of Stella and the Longos, a band and collaborative project with DJ and musician Ed Longo. Released on Cosmic Records, the album is a sensual tribute to 80s Zouk and Boogie, with Stella's silky, sultry vocals taking the fore. Much like her DJ-practice, the project pays loving homage to sounds of the past while spinning them into the present, never simply lapsing into nostalgia. The 6-piece band has toured extensively over the last years, which has provided a counterpoint to Stella's increasingly international DJ gigs – some notable bookings include Nowadays, De School, Gay Haze and a stint of sets in China last year. Closer to home, she has been a resident at Cocktail D'Amore since its heyday years at Griessmühle and has played several times at Panorama Bar. She also hosts the Breakfast Show once a week on Refuge Worldwide. On the airwaves, in Berlin or abroad, a DJ-set or studio recording or upcoming edition of Body Language – whatever it may be, make sure to catch the singular warmth and deeply cultivated love of music Stella brings to the table. There's nothing quite like it.

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For any questions please get in touch with her agent: ilyas@minor-am.com