

CLARE MULDAUR MANCHON

The Clare & the Reasons front-lady takes advantage of the theatrical side of being in a band

By Laura Leebove
Photography by Sherri O'Connor
(sherriphoto.com)
Makeup by Michelle Coursey for Artists
by Timothy Priano
Hair by Vanessa Mitchell

Often dressed slyly in long trench coats and spy hats, Clare & the Reasons could easily be mistaken for private detectives — and leading lady Clare Muldaur Manchon says it's not uncommon. "I would say half the people get the joke and then half the people think we're actually private detectives," she says. The spy gear was inspired by Muldaur Manchon's favorite film, the late-'60s comedy *Stolen Kisses*, in which the clumsy, bumbling main character lands a detective job. "It's all very tongue-in-cheek, of course," she says. "It's paying homage to an era I love but it's not taking it too seriously."

The image fits perfectly with the Brooklyn-based seven-piece's 2007 full-length debut, *The Movie* (Frog Stand). With its full string arrangements and jazzy vocals — composed and arranged by the 28-year-old Muldaur Manchon and husband Olivier Manchon — the album could double as a film soundtrack. Aside from *The Movie*'s theatrical sound, each song is like a short film because most are fictional rather than biographical, Muldaur Manchon says. For example, album opener "Pluto" is a charming ode to the former planet and "Rodie" is an imaginative look at the couple's endearing 50-some-year-old neighbor when she was in her 20s. "Most of the ideas behind [the songs] are sort of 'What world can I write about?' 'What thing can I enter into?'" she says.

Muldaur Manchon, who performed in musicals in high school and will appear on the BBC's *The Culture Show* in April, says it's definitely important to play into the persona created onstage. "I'm very into not necessarily being myself onstage because I enjoy that more," she says. "I think visuals are important when performing ... and they enhance the whole experience with the audience."

Dress by Three As Four (threeasfour.com); shoes by Sergio Rossi (sergiorossi.com/us); earrings are Clare Muldaur Manchon's own.

Coat dress by Three As Four (threeasfour.com); shoes by Anne Klein (anneklein.com).