

PROMO

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EMILIE SIMON André gives singer her just desert



Inspired by the fragile, gamine charm of the artist, Philippe André has created an engaging promo for *Desert*, the first single by French singer Emilie Simon. It opens with a wide shot of a doll-sized Emilie perched lifelessly on a full-size chair, her face blank and expressionless as she struggles to form the lyrics to the song. Distractedly she picks at long cuts on her arm and chest, pulling out strands of stuffing which begin to grow and blossom, ladybirds and butterflies emerging as she sings her wistful song. Salvation arrives in the form of a rough-looking pair of hands, which gently remove the trailing flora and fauna and stitch up the wounds. By now Emilie is singing with new confidence and, as the camera pulls back, we see that not only has she been mended, but she has become a full-size and independent person.

"This mix of surrealism and emotion is what I am interested at the moment," says André, who developed the fairytale feel from the tone of pictures from the 1910s and 1920s. "I wanted it to feel like an old movie, but using a lot of colours in a very very muted way. I used everything old: a very old camera, very old lenses and a very old telecine that no-one uses any more."

The special effects also had to have an un-slick feel, and the staff at Buf in Paris worked hard to make the flowering branches look untouched by technological intervention. "Casting the hands was not easy," says the director, but the ideal mitts were eventually found on the crew's grip, whose work-worn hands had an extra-weathered look acquired by working on a boat. For good measure he was asked not to wash his hands or cut his nails for the fortnight preceding the shoot!

André likens the transformation to the relationship between a new artist and a label – the initial manipulation eventually giving way to autonomy, but there are other issues here too. He also wanted to push the self-harming motif to the limits of what would still be palatable for MTV.

Katrina Dodd

dir: Philippe André; **prod co:** Wanda; **record co:** Barclay/Universal (France)