

## LP1 SIDE ONE

1. Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien (2:21)
2. Milord (4:27)
3. La Foule (2:56)
4. Cri Du Coeur (2:39)
5. Mon Dieu! (3:22)
6. Autumn Leaves (3:26)
7. Une Valse (3:18)

## LP1 SIDE TWO

1. Mon Légionnaire (3:29)
2. L'accordéoniste (3:07)
3. Mon Mânege À Moi (2:58)
4. Les Trois Cloches (4:05)
5. Jezebel (3:03)
6. Comme Moi (2:56)
7. Hymne à L'amour (3:23)

## LP2 SIDE ONE

1. La Vie En Rose (3:02)
2. Les Croix (3:26)
3. Chante-moi (3:15)
4. Les Amants D'un Jour (3:12)
5. Exodus (3:28)
6. Au Bal De La Chance (2:50)
7. La Goulante Du Pauvre Jean (2:01)

## LP2 SIDE TWO

1. C'est L'amour (2:56)
2. Les Flons-Flons Du Bal (2:28)
3. La Chanson De Catherine (3:21)
4. Amour Du Mois De Mai (2:28)
5. Heureuse (3:15)
6. My Lost Melody (3:03)
7. Miséricorde (3:26)

## LP3 SIDE ONE

1. Padam, Padam (3:13)
2. Je M'Imagine (2:41)
3. Les Amants De Demain (2:31)
4. Une Enfant (3:15)
5. Les Cloches Sonnent (2:54)
6. Marie La Française (3:51)
7. Le Chevalier De Paris (3:01)

## LP3 SIDE TWO

1. Johnny Tu N'es Pas Un Ange (2:09)
2. Boulevard Du Crime (3:00)
3. Le Chemin Des Forains (3:07)
4. C'est Peut-Etre Ça (2:47)
5. Je Hais Les Dimanches (3:19)
6. Mon Vieux Lucien (2:50)
7. Les Amants De Venise (3:09)

Born Edith Gassion in Paris in 1915, Edith Piaf grew up in unimaginable poverty but rose to become “the voice of France”. Ironically for such a French icon, her first name was taken from Edith Cavell, an English nurse shot by the Germans for spying just a few months earlier.

On the wall of 72 Rue de Belleville, where she came into the world, a plaque reads: “On the steps of this house, there was born in great destitution, Edith Piaf, whose voice later astounded the world.”

Abandoned by her mother and brought up in a brothel, by the age of seven Edith was touring with her father, a variety artist. She began her career passing the hat round and providing voices for the show’s puppets.

Much of their meagre earnings went on “the holy grass” - another name for the notoriously addictive drink absinthe. But alcoholism was just one of the addictions that dogged Edith throughout her life.

Her singing career began on the streets, and her only musical apprenticeship came from listening to singers on the capital’s popular radio stations.

A mother at 18, Edith carried her baby around the streets with her, singing for loose change. In a life characterised by tragedy, her baby Marcelle died of meningitis aged only 18 months.

Switching to the Pigalle and Montmartre districts of Paris, by the mid-1930s Edith’s luck had begun to change. Within earshot of the Arc de Triomphe, in the Place de l’Etoile, crowds began gathering to hear her sing.

Spotted by a cabaret owner, Edith was taken to his fashionable nightclub just off the Champs Elysées to perform. Making her debut at Gerny’s club, dressed in her trademark black, Piaf stunned audiences with her formidable singing: they could not believe that such raw power could come from this tiny frame – at her full height, Edith stood only 4’ 8”. Maurice Chevalier was among those who gave the chanteuse a standing ovation on that memorable opening night.

Piaf’s surname translates as small bird - which together with her diminutive stature and powerful voice soon saw Edith dubbed “the little sparrow” - a nickname that stuck throughout her life. Her fame soon began to spread beyond Paris, largely thanks to regular appearances on France’s most popular radio station.

Her emotional reading of songs typified the French chanteuse style, so popular in cafes, clubs and bistros around the capital; but in 1936 Piaf’s recording career began and she was soon enchanting audiences beyond Paris.

Following the Nazi occupation in 1940, Piaf remained in Paris, and by the time of the Liberation in 1944 her unique singing had become emblematic of French resistance. Accused of collaboration with the Nazis, she pointed out that her only ‘crime’ had been singing to French prisoners of war in Germany.

Edith Piaf was out on the streets of Paris when the liberating Allied armies arrived, dodging Nazi bullets with her lover, the singer and actor Yves Montand. Another friend was the singer and songwriter Charles Aznavour, whose *Je Hais Les Dimanches* can be heard here.

During the 1950s her fame became international, including sold-out appearances at New York’s Carnegie Hall. Television also embraced her and she appeared on America’s highly-rated *Ed Sullivan Show*.

Throughout her life, Piaf’s tiny body was tormented by pain and illness. A car crash in 1951 led to morphine addiction, and to dull the heartbreak of so many failed romances, she sought sanctuary in alcohol. But still her committed performances of songs such as *Milord*; *Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien*; *L'accordéoniste*; *Hymne à L'amour*; *La Foule* and *Padam, Padam* brought audiences around the world to their feet.

*Les Trois Cloches* would later achieve worldwide fame and an American No.1 as *The Three Bells* by the Browns. And, of course, there is the original 1947 recording of *La Vie En Rose*. The latter was also the title of the 2007 biopic which won Marion Cotillard a Best Actress Oscar for her portrayal of “the little sparrow”.

Though ravaged by illness and addiction, and broken by endless failed romances, she remained defiant to the end. Every performance drained her frail body, but Edith Piaf’s signature song was always *Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien* (“No Regrets; I regret nothing...”)

Piaf was only 47 when she died. Her friend and fellow diva, Marlene Dietrich, called her “the soul of Paris”, and an estimated 100,000 people attended her funeral in October 1963 - the largest gathering in Paris since the Liberation nearly 20 years before.

Edith Piaf lies in Père Lachaise, the French national cemetery. She died just a few hours before her friend, the poet Jean Cocteau, who had written of an earlier performance: “Every time she sings it is as though she is tearing out her soul for the last time.”

Sleeve notes by Patrick Humphries

