

## Recalling Experimental Music In '70s New York

by GEETA DAYAL

### JUSTINE & THE VICTORIAN PUNKS - "STILL YOU"



Source: YouTube

Two tracks on the Peter Gordon and the Love of Life Orchestra reissue are credited to Justine and the Victorian Punks. "That was a project that was really initiated by the performance artist and visual artist ... Colette," explains Gordon. "She would do these installations, which might be in galleries, or installations in windows, and this one, 'Beautiful Dreamer,' was a very lush bedroom environment, in which she would sleep or be lying in bed during the duration of the installation." "Beautiful Dreamer" is one of two disco tracks on *Peter Gordon* — the other is "Still You," a cover of an Italian song by Lucio Battisti. Both were made to accompany the installation.

Colette changed her name to "Justine" for the project. "In 1978, I invented my death and became Justine," she says. "It was, in a way, to make an art statement ... it was really difficult to make myself heard and respected. Artists are really revered, but it seemed like the interior designers were more respected at places like Studio 54, so that's why I invented my death. I thought as a woman it would be easier to speak to audiences as a recording star, a fashion designer, an interior designer."

Colette invented the "victorian punk." She often sported an ethereal, feminine look, dripping with lace, tulle, and beads. "Victorian punks' was the perfect combination," she says. "I actually wore Victorian corsets and bloomers and then I would add a punk element to it. Usually if you saw a punk in those days, they would be wearing black; I would mix it with something very soft." In retrospect, it's easy to see echoes of Colette's signature aesthetic in the goth movement that picked up steam in the '80s, and in Madonna's early look during the time of "Like a Virgin."

*Peter Gordon and the Love of Life Orchestra* captures a time in New York culture when borders were blurrier, genres less distinct, and life was maybe a little more interesting.