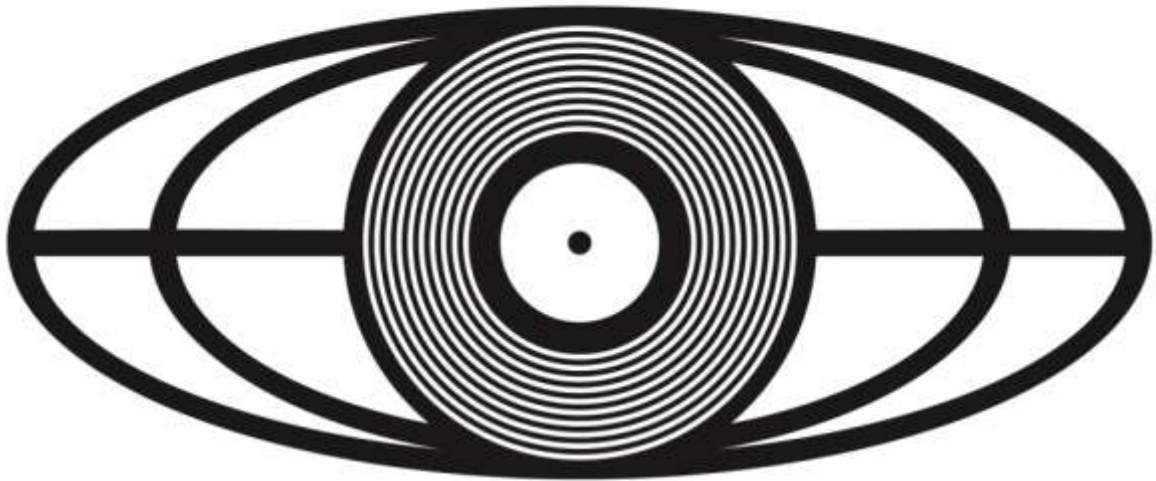


*“The Law of Large  
Numbers”*

*by*

*Emma Pollock*



**CHEMIKAL UNDERGROUND RECORDS**

**GLASGOW, SCOTLAND**

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## *The Law of Large Numbers*

Emma Pollock returns to Chemikal Underground with *The Law of Large Numbers*, her second solo outing, and if her 'repatriation' to the label she helped to create represents a return to more familiar territory, then the same could also be said for the album itself. The follow-up to 2007's 4AD-released *Watch the Fireworks*, Emma's second solo effort eschews the traditional, accessibly melodic approach of her debut for a more angular musical terrain: *The Law of Large Numbers* is crammed with unconventional arrangements and by Emma's own admission, was an almost entirely self-serving project. So if returning to Chemikal Underground and the creative alliances that fuelled The Delgados has restored Emma's conviction to pursue her own instincts, then we should all be extremely grateful as her new album is a complex, intelligent and hugely compelling piece of work.

Recorded throughout 2009 in Chem19 with husband and ex-Delgado Paul Savage producing, *The Law of Large Numbers* was always going to be a very different prospect. Armed with an open remit and a preparedness to let this album dictate its own course, *The Law of Large Numbers* arrives with taut, sparse production, hints of Dixieland jazz, abrasive pop songs; programmed drums and improvised vocal loops – in short, and in the words of Emma herself, "*The truest representation of me as an individual - whatever that means.*"

*"I feel like I'm beginning to understand the difference between being a solo artist and being in a band, making music for my own gratification first and foremost. I was determined this album would have a drier, less emotive feel than Fireworks and that it should be about not tying up loose ends, not controlling everything and leaving room for a more immediate response, improvising around a good idea in the studio. If the idea's good then it should hopefully produce a great result."*

With a mathematical theorem as its title and sparse, weathered artwork recalling vintage hi-fi manuals, it would be tempting to make the assumption that Emma's leaning towards a more clinical, almost *sterile* approach to her work and while there may be some truth in that, inevitably, it's not the whole story. "*It's most certainly not a cold record, it might contain some contradictions but most of the records I like do. I don't want things to sound too 'easy' and prefer to make something more oblique and hopefully more interesting, not too saccharine or sweet.*"

So what's with the numbers then? The Law of Large Numbers is a theorem concerned with the outcome of a repeated simple experiment with equal probability outcomes, such as rolling a dice, and its comparison with the theoretically predicted result. It's responsible for many a disillusioned gambler. Emma elaborates: "*It's all about risk and expectation, and the human race's unwillingness to accept the random nature of events. There's a lot of beauty in mathematics and the natural world; it's all tied in with the wonder of things that are beyond our control.*"

The album certainly recalls the unpredictable gear changes commonly employed by her previous band: *Hug The Harbour's* propulsive rhythm section balanced by the acoustic simplicity of *The Child In Me*; the torpid languor of *Chemistry Will Find Me* with its Tom Waites percussion and guest vocals by Adem alongside the imaginatively revolving vocals of *The Loop*; *Red Orange Green* with its regimented urgency and jagged guitars contrasts brilliantly with the beautiful, undulating piano and close harmonies with Kim Edgar on *House on the Hill*. For an album to contain such an eclectic array of musical styles and *still* hang together successfully is a testament to the skill of Emma's songwriting and undoubted flair with melody.

By appealing to her own musical tastes and indulging her appetite for darker, literate pop music, she's created an album that is both uniquely personal and intensely rewarding for the listener, cementing her reputation as one of our most gifted singers and intelligent songwriters.