



Above left: Marianne and Mick Jagger arriving at court in 1969, and right, with Keith Richards

will follow in its glittery wake. 'I don't really care about anything, except music,' she says, reaching for the first of more-than-a-few Marlboro Lights. 'Music is what kept me alive, and music is what got me through everything. It's what I love.'

Marianne is staying in the white penthouse suite at London's May Fair Hotel, holding court in a slinky, form-fitting black Chanel trouser suit. She looks distinctly Seventies, and oh-so-chicly Parisienne – appropriate given that she now lives in the world's most romantic city. 'It's a wonderful place for an artist to live', she says, huskily.

Talking of Paris, the conversation soon turns to her friend and confidante, Madame La President – aka Carla Bruni-Sarkozy.

'Ah Carla! She is so nice,' she says. 'She is a very good friend of mine. She is quite different to the way the world sees her.'

Either way, given that they are both exes of one Sir Michael Jagger, I'd kill to be a fly on the wall when they hang out in the Hemingway Bar and discuss old times.

But throughout our conversation, she is doing her best – in that infamously jagged, yet disarmingly lush, cut-glass voice of hers – to rise above the tittle-tattle, and talk about herself for once, and her own, not inconsiderable musical abilities.

And the truth is, for all the infamous

stories that swirl around her, Faithfull is so much more than them. She is an intelligent, funny, warm, well-read, maverick blue stocking, who can discourse effortlessly on everything from Mahler to the Blues, and whose musical talent has often been wrong-footed by her life. And now, at last, she may well get her own moment in the sun.

Either way, in her seventh decade, perhaps Marianne has finally made peace with herself, for she has cut an album that is 'very, very real' and straight from the heart.

It won't, however, please her Left Bank

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intellectual supporters. 'It's not arty,' she declares. 'But then I have never tried to be arty. I think sometimes fancy French people would rather have artifice. But I don't make artifice. *Le Monde* and *Liberacion*, who have always liked me in the past, don't feel it is quite depressed or contrived enough. But who cares?'

And why should she care?

Faithfull is heading for a huge, popular hit, and will probably have people dancing in the streets in London, Rome, Madrid and even Leamington Spa (yes, she is

taking her band there, too). For Marianne's new album is nothing if not a delicious, life-affirming plea for acceptance, and if there's any justice in the world, *Horses and High Heels* will be the slow burn musical success story of the summer.

While I wouldn't go quite as far as the lady herself, and describe the album as 'happy' – it is too honest and revealing for that – it is full of hope and gallows humour. It features her old friend, Mac Rebennack, aka Dr John, on Boogie Woogie piano; Lou Reed – 'who does a blinding solo' – on *The Old House*, and the virtuoso guitar playing of George Porter Jr. It

also boasts a whole cast of New Orleans's finest, lending the album a soulful, dissolute air of carnival, chaos and celebration.

It is easily the best thing she has done since *Broken English* gatecrashed the bedrooms of every pubescent girl in Britain, circa 1979. That record scandalized a nation by featuring the C-word, and turned sweet young things into knowing, cynical little rebels. Oh Marianne, you have a lot to answer for.

Marianne was born in Hampstead, grew up in Chertsey and Wallingford, and