

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU

PLAYING TO THE CROWD

01

MILES ON THE CLOCK

Minibuses travel around the globe for the World Ski Championships, such as L'Aquila in Italy (but don't mention the breakdown on the motorway).

02

BUMS ON SEATS

Even the smallest minibus can carry eight people – that's enough for a four-part harmony if everyone knows the words to the latest chart-topper.

03

CAREFUL!

Driving the minibus down narrow Swiss country roads has become an ongoing ‘fun challenge’ for the Aiglon staff who drive the bus regularly.

04

FIND THAT BUS!

Park the bus near Champéry. Summit the Dents du Midi. First back to the bus wins!

05

EVERYONE LOVES A LUGGAGE RACK

Skis, mountain bikes, gazebos... You name it – at some point, it will have been loaded on to a minibus luggage rack.

Musician Michele Adamson credits her years at Aiglon for providing the foundations for a stellar career.

Words Helena Pozniak



BY HER OWN ADMISSION, **Michele Adamson** (Chanteclear, 1995), musician and performer, is a good talker. “I do have the gift of the gab,” she says. But it wasn’t enough to get her off the hook at school. And 15 years on, she still remembers some lessons learned the hard way.

“I was de-prefectised. I was caught in a car coming back from the village – I’d got a lift because it was raining. I think I broke my Houseparents’ hearts. I tried to talk my way out of it, but I learned there are boundaries and consequences. It was a great lesson.”

Michele remembers blossoming at Aiglon. “You couldn’t wake up, throw open the curtains and be in a bad mood – not with that glittering mountain view. It felt like fairytale.” She learned jazz and performed “silly” skits and cabarets. “I really miss the group activities. I have such fond memories of us making fools of ourselves, making people laugh. Being in a band gives me some of that group feeling.”

Today she’s a psytrance (psychedelic trance) singer with the band Shpong, and a solo

performer – a self-styled “electro-witch”. She’s played London and New York venues, toured Japan and Australia, and performed in Israel’s desert, Chicago’s amphitheatre and Brazil’s carnival. “I joined a band in 2001 and it just exploded from there.

“It’s funny, if I could tailor-make the education I’d need for this life I’ve chosen, I would pick those two years at Aiglon. Teachers nurtured my musical talent, they made me feel seen. The music and drama there were like a springboard, and the mountain helped launch me; it felt incredibly safe.”

And while she moaned, as teens do, about expedition, she is forever grateful for the chance to lug heavy tents on hikes with friends. Even now, the smell of wild garlic sends her back to a time sleeping in fields. “We thought we stank at the time, but I walk past it now and think it’s just heaven. It’s hard to be self-aware at that age, but there we were, with close friends, in an incredible environment. I learned to problem solve on the fly. These are the perspectives that shape your life. Looking back now, I’d make myself go out even more, rather than laze around eating Swiss chocolate.”

While the pandemic kept her in Hampshire in the UK, Michele is itching to get back on the road. “The whole music scene is changing, and we’ll have to rely more on our resourcefulness.” But she’s at her most relaxed in front of a live crowd. “Last year in São Paulo, people sang my lyrics and I felt at home. We pulled up in our float outside a sofa shop and an assistant jumped up on a display bed and started bouncing and singing along. That joy is priceless.” **A**

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