

Helen Watson Biography

Helen Watson is a unique performer whose versatile voice and idiosyncratic songs are a welcome change in the world of singer-songwriters. Her music crosses the boundaries between blues, soul, jazz and folk.

Helen began performing on the folk circuit during the late sixties. She was one half of a soul duo; the renowned blues band Loose Lips; a member of the Manchester quartet Well Knit Frames; and was a backing singer with Carmel on an extensive world tour. Helen's unique style earned her an enviable reputation and much session work, which in the early 80's led to an interest in her songwriting and a subsequent recording contract with EMI.

Helen's first album *Blue Slipper* was produced in Los Angeles by the legendary Glyn Johns; musicians included Albert Lee, Little Feat and the Eagles' Bernie Leadon. Helen toured Europe with Joe Cocker. Her second EMI album - *The Weather Inside* was also produced by Glyn Johns and featured a powerful duet with Andy Fairweather-Low on *Hanging Out The Washing*.

In the early 1990's Helen was a member of the acclaimed vocal ensemble *Hell Bent Heaven Bound* with Christine Collister, Barb Jungr and Michael Parker. They toured Europe, America and Canada. Helen soon formed her own band and the female supergroup *Daphne's Flight* – with Christine Collister, Melanie Harrold, Julie Matthews and Chris While. This later ensemble released their powerful eponymous album in 1995. The same year also saw the release of *Notes On Desire* the magnificent debut from the Helen Watson Band. During the latter part of the nineties Helen co-produced Christine Collister's *Blue Aconite*, and began recording her own beautiful trilogy of albums for the *Fledg'ling* label - *Somersault* (1996), *Doffing* (1999) and *Lifesize* (2002). *Somersault* - a remarkable collection of Helen's original songs - was co-produced by fellow *Daphne's Flight* member Julie Matthews, with guest appearances from Chris While, Howard Lees, Christine Collister, Chris Leslie and Julie Matthews.

Doffing is a beautiful tip of the hat to some of Helen's favourite songs and songwriters. Among the extraordinary range of material are sublime readings of Bruce Springsteen's *Ain't Got You*, Robert Parker Jr.'s *Barefootin*, Junior Parker's *Mystery Train* and Billy Strayhorn's *Lush Life*. Helen's solo album *Lifesize* is possibly the very best in acoustic folk-soul from Britain. The album is a stunning collection of Helen's magically understated songs - beguiling songs of hope, intriguing songs

of love lost and new love found, and exquisite pastoral vignettes. Guests on the album include longtime cohorts - Howard Lees, Julie Matthews, Chris While and Kellie While.

Helen continues to contribute to albums by Christine Collister, Julie Matthews and Chris While. Her vocals can also be heard on the latest duet album Western Wall from Emmylou Harris and Linda Ronstadt. 2002 saw Helen contribute to Ashley Hutchings' Street Cries and Shining Bright - the Lal and Mike Waterson tribute collection. On the latter Helen and Heather Greenbank perform a stunning reading of Lal's Shine accompanied by a string quintet conducted by the legendary Robert Kirby.

In 2006, Helen began working with Snake Davis to create Burden Of Paradise. This project sees sax player Snake teaming up with Helen. She and Snake first worked together in the 80s when Snake played on Helen's first album Blue Slipper. This new band crosses the boundaries between jazz, blues and soul and includes Dave Bowie (double bass) and Mark Creswell (guitar) from The Suspicions.

Teaming up with Mark in Leeds and Ilkley, Helen finished her first album for 6 years in 2008. Headrest has 6 new songs co-written by Mark and Helen. There's a new version of "The last thing I need" which was first heard on "Notes on Desire" and songs by Steve Earle and Ron Sexsmith among others. Headrest is a hard album to classify by genre as there's blues, ballads, dance, rock, country and more.

For the last 10 years Helen, Chris and Julie have been presenting vocal workshops for women around the UK under the name of "Rejoice the Voice".

Collaborations with Snake, Mark and Dave are ongoing and latterly Helen has been working with the Manchester based acapella group "The Love Notes".

Watch this space...