

Kirsty McGee - Biography (2017)

Somewhere between Jazz, Folk, Gospel and Americana there's an area of music that doesn't have a name. With a cartographer's attention to detail, Kirsty McGee has spent the past fifteen years and seven albums mapping this place, tracking the common origins of song.

A wandering maverick and spellbinding live performer with a voice that has been described as having the texture of smoke & velvet, McGee's output seeks to satisfy a ravenous musical curiosity which has taken her from the midnight watermelon sellers of Odessa, Ukraine to The Bluebird Cafe in Nashville and the coarse, hot sand of the Mojave Desert.

McGee's quiet revolution has gained her national airplay, well over a decade of touring, radio playlisting and sessions plus multiple awards and nominations. Fans include Emma Watson and Danny Boyle, for whose 2014 thriller *Trance* the song *Sandman* provided a cornerstone, both in its original version and covered by lead actress Rosario Dawson.

A one-time hitch hiker and activist, McGee defines hobopop – a noun she has used to describe her music since setting up her own label in 2007 – as “music of no fixed abode”. Her fluid and ever-changing band The Hobopop Collective came together in the same year, drawing together players from both sides of the Atlantic who share the singer's passion for musical vagrancy. Guests & regular players have included Marc Ribot (Tom Waits), Rob Turner and Nick Blacka (Go Go Penguin), and Clive Mellor (Richard Hawley Band).

After releasing a trio of folk tinged early albums and exploring New Orleans rhythms in *The Kansas Sessions* (2008) McGee's first band album *No.5* (2009) won Best Live Album in the Independent Music Awards' 2010 Vox Pop vote. *Contraband* (2012) showcased a collection of love songs so delicate you were afraid that not listening carefully enough might damage them. By contrast, *Those Old Demons* (2014) – clatters its way to your ears in a joyful and irreverent melée of devil-songs, the enjoyment in which it is impossible to miss. Dirty blues, cubist shuffle, neo jazz and wry noir.

McGee's latest collection *Diamond Days EP* (2016) takes a jeweller's magnifying lens to the Great American Songbook, parading a cornucopia of freshly written 'unstandards' as timeless and well-crafted as they are tongue in cheek.

2015 saw the formation of a new songwriter duo, Ocotillo, sparked by a chance encounter with US songwriter Robert Garson. With a debut release slated for 2017, the duo's live show – described by one critic as ‘a thieved midget’s orchestra of offbeat instrumentation’ – features musical saw, found instruments and vocal harmonies from either side of the Atlantic, evoking 30s jazz and desert winds.

Quotes:

‘Bewitching, exquisite and skeletal.’ - **** Q

‘A fascinating talent’ - **** CLASH

‘Confident and earthy.’ - **** UNCUT

‘Rich, versatile and immaculately controlled’ - Americana UK

‘A quiet triumph’ - **** fROOTS

Links:

<http://kirstymcgee.com>

<http://kirstymcgee.bandcamp.com>