

“I write because I love it” - Joan Armatrading

JOAN ARMATRADING - BIOGRAPHY

JOAN ARMATRADING has come a long way since her birth in the West Indies and her upbringing in Birmingham.

With 18 stunning albums to her credit and a new blues-based CD scheduled for release in Spring 2007, Joan's subtle and sublime music has touched millions of people all over the world. Known as a true craftsman, her distinctive vocals and consummate musicianship – she has arranged as well as played every instrument, with the exception of drums on her forthcoming album – have led to unanimous, widespread and, perhaps most importantly, consistent critical acclaim. Effortlessly eclectic, her sound has ranged from true soul to sophisticated pop driven by her passionate guitar.

In musical terms Joan Armatrading has achieved far more than most performers even dream of - she has played, and still does, with some of the finest musicians around, she has received countless gold, platinum and silver discs, she has been nominated for both Brit and Grammy Awards, she has been the recipient of a highly coveted Ivor Novello Award, she figured large in VH1's Top 100 voted poll The Most Influential Woman In Rock..... But more than that Joan has been honoured by the Queen and is one of the few female artists ever to receive an MBE.

She is also currently President of the highly prestigious Women Of The Year Lunch. This sees women from all walks of life honored for their unique and often truly heroic contribution to modern day life, whether it be in the Arts, the Sciences, the political, the business or the humanitarian arenas. This is a role she takes extremely seriously and one she is justly proud of. In addition, she has performed for Nelson Mandela, been given the key to Sydney, is Patron of various charities, presented several BBC radio series and been awarded several degrees.

As well as the Honorary degree she was given by the John Moores University of Liverpool, Joan has also received a Doctorate in Music from the University of Birmingham (12th December 2002), been made an Honorary Fellow of Northampton University (14th November 2003) and received an Honorary degree from Aston University in 2006.

Moreover, after five years of committed studying, Joan achieved a goal she had held since childhood, she gained a BA Honours from the Open University – a feat very few other working artists would attempt, let alone while on tour (she took her final exam the day after the last gig of her 2000 dates).

Joan Armatrading's dedication to her studies while consistently producing wonderful uplifting music says much about the woman, her vision and her commitment to excellence.

Born in St Kitts in the West Indies on December 9th 1950 and moving to England when she was seven, she took her first musical steps on her mother's piano. Although her father had a guitar it was strictly out of bounds so when Joan saw one for £3 in a pawn shop window she pestered her mother to barter two old prams they no longer used. She taught herself to play and began writing songs at the age of 14.

Leaving school when she was 16 she undertook various jobs, all the while writing songs, until signing to Cube Records in 1971. Her debut album, "Whatever's For Us", produced by the late great Gus Dudgeon and written with her friend Pam Nestor, was released the following year on Cube in the UK and A&M in the States. In 1974 she signed to A&M world-wide and the career that has followed has witnessed a plethora of classic and memorable songs – "Love and Affection", "Down To Zero", "Drop the Pilot", "Me Myself I"

Joan has worked with members of Little Feat, Fairport Convention, XTC, The Police and Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band. Musicians such as Darryl Jones (Rolling Stones), Mark Brzezicki (Big Country) Tony Levin (King Crimson), Manu Katche (Sting), Benmont Tench (Tom Petty), Mark Knopfler and stalwart Greg Phillinganes have all joined her in the studio while her list of producers is impressive – Glyn Johns, Gus Dudgeon, Steve Lillywhite, David Tickle to name but a few. The first non-jazz artist to play at London's Ronnie Scott's in the main room, Joan has many distinctions to her credit. A long time supporter and performer for the Prince's Trust, she lends her support to various charities across the world. In December 1998 she released a CD, "Lullabies With A Difference" in aid of PACES, a charity for children with Cerebral Palsy. She is a Patron of the Peace University in Vienna and recently she became a Patron of Ukuza which helps raise the cultural profile of South Africa.

South Africa has always been close to Joan's heart. A huge admirer of Nelson Mandela, not only has she performed live for him at his 70th birthday at Wembley Stadium but, in 1999, she was invited to write a special tribute song. Titled "The Messenger", Joan performed it to the former President of South Africa when he made a private visit to the UK in 2000....he smiled and danced throughout. In 1996 Joan was awarded an Ivor Novello Award for Outstanding Contemporary Song Collection while a platinum CD was received for her part in the BBC's "Perfect Day" by Lou Reed.

March 2003 saw the release of the "Lovers Speak" album featuring 14 tracks in all arranged and produced by Joan. In addition, with the exception of drums and horns, she played every instrument herself. An exceptional CD that combined strong upbeat melodies, riffs that stuck in your head and passionate, stirring soulful ballads, it was the result of a long-held desire to make a truly solo album.

The feel was truly Joan, the thread that ran through all the diverse elements and meshed them together was the touch the artist herself brought. In 2005 this was exemplified in the DVD release "Joan Armatrading All The Way from America" which showed Joan at her best – live on stage , performing material that spanned her illustrious career.

2007 sees another massive tour for Joan with the UK leg kicking off in February. The live dates are accompanied by a brand new CD titled "IntoThe Blues" which Joan cites as her best work yet.

"I've wanted to make an album that truly reflected me and I think this does. I love the blues and while each song is very different there's a cohesive thread that runs throughout". There certainly is and, as you'd expect, it's great – this is one album well worth waiting for.