

Kiki Dee – Biography - 2014

2013 is a landmark year for Kiki Dee – which sees the English singer celebrating an astonishing **50 years** in music. Everybody remembers Kiki for the 1976 world-wide smash hit with Elton John, “Don’t Go Breaking My Heart” (which was Elton’s first UK No. 1) but quite separately Kiki has established herself as one of the great British singers of all time.

Born in Bradford, Yorkshire, in 1947, as Pauline Matthews, under her stage name of Kiki Dee, she began her incredible musical journey by singing with local dance bands, and after being spotted by a record company scout in 1963, Kiki was signed as a solo artist to Fontana Records.

In 1963 Kiki released her first single “Early Night”, and recorded her debut album “I’m Kiki Dee”, which included a series of Phil Spector style tracks and covers including “Can’t Take My Eyes Off You”, Nancy Wilson’s “How Glad I Am” and her 1965 release “Why Don’t I Run Away From You”, which became an airplay hit on both Radio London and Radio Caroline. Kiki’s 1968 single “On a Magic Carpet Ride” has remained a much sought-after classic on the Northern Soul circuit.

During these early years Kiki gained a respectable reputation as a backing session singer, working with many artists such as Dusty Springfield and performing on two of Dusty’s early hits, “Little By Little” and the Carole King song “Some Of Your Loving”.

Continuing her solo career, Kiki appeared on iconic TV shows like the Morecambe and Wise show, The Two Ronnies and The Benny Hill show, (of which Kiki appeared in an early episode performing the Blood, Sweat and Tears hit, “You’ve Made Me So Very Happy”).

In 1970 Kiki became the first British artist to be signed by Tamla Motown, releasing an album on the label in the same year. She worked with legendary producer Frank Wilson on tracks including “The Day Will Come Between Sunday and Monday” and “For Once In My Life”, recording in the original Motown studio in Detroit, which is now a museum.

After signing to Elton John’s Rocket Records label in the early 1970s, Kiki scored her first UK Top 20 hit in 1973 with her version of the Véronique Sanson song “Amoureuse”. An English lyric by Gary Osborne led to a lifelong friendship with the lyricist, who also penned the lyrics for “The War Of The Worlds” musical. In the same year, Kiki could be heard singing backing vocals on Elton John’s global smash album “Goodbye Yellow Brick Road”. During this period Kiki recorded two albums produced by Elton and started song writing for the first time.

1974 saw Kiki riding high on both the UK and US charts with “I’ve Got the Music in Me”, which was written by Bias Boshell, Kiki’s keyboardist.

Continuing her friendship with Elton, “Don’t Go Breaking My Heart” topped the UK chart for six weeks in mid 1976. It also enjoyed a 4-week run at No.1 on the US charts as well as reaching No.1 in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and Italy. The song was intended as an affectionate pastiche of the Tamla Motown style, notably the various duets recorded by Marvin Gaye and singers such as Tammi Terrell and Kim Weston.

In 1981 “Star” from the album Perfect Timing gave Kiki another Top 20 hit, and later became the theme music to the BBC TV programme Opportunity Knocks between 1987 and 1990.

1984 saw her first venture into musical theatre with an American show called Pumpboys and Dinettes which starred Paul Jones, Brian Protheroe, Carlene Carter (daughter of June), Gary Holton and Julian Littman.

1985 saw Kiki performing at the historic Live Aid concert to over 72,000 people at Wembley Stadium, reprising “Don’t Go Breaking My Heart” with Elton and performing backing vocals on the other songs in his set.

In 1987 she took the lead in Willy Russell’s musical Blood Brothers, in which she took on the role originally played by Barbara Dickson. She toured the UK for several months before Bill Kenwright brought the show into London’s West End in 1988. Appearing in the show for over two years, Kiki received an Olivier Award nomination in 1989 in the Best Actress in a Musical category for her performance.

In 1993 Kiki once again found herself in the charts with Elton John when their version of the Cole Porter song “True Love” reached No.2 on the UK chart.

In the early 1990’s Kiki had joined forces with songwriter, producer and guitarist Carmelo Luggeri, who had worked with Bill Wyman, Julian Lennon, Andy Williams, Paul Rodgers, Kenney Jones, Ray Cooper, Chris Rea and Ralph McTell. Carmelo produced some bonus tracks for “The Very Best of Kiki Dee” album, and, having hit it off musically, they took on a new musical direction together, playing acoustic concerts, starting with an appearance at The Royal Albert Hall for World AIDS Day in 1994.

Over the last 18 years, Kiki and Carmelo have successfully toured the UK and Europe with their unique acoustic-based show. Their first release in 1995 was the live album “Almost Naked”, which was recorded whilst on tour with violinist Vanessa-Mae. “It was a shock at first to perform just the two of us”, said Kiki. “I remember bursting into tears after our first tour date but it soon felt good to have the freedom of working with just a voice and guitar and writing songs while on the road”.

In 1998 they released their most adventurous album so far, “Where Rivers Meet”, which gave them total freedom to be creative and work with musicians from India and the UK, resulting in an ambient and unusual album. The follow up, “The Walk Of Faith”, released in 2005, was a result of their enthusiastic commitment to their musical muse, regardless of fashion or trends.

Kiki and Carmelo have supported The Born Free Foundation for many years, and earlier this year Kiki appeared with the SAS Band at The Concert At The Kings, a cancer charity event featuring Madeline Bell, Roger Taylor from Queen and Jeff Beck.

During her career, Kiki Dee has released 39 singles, three EPs and 12 albums. Kiki’s latest single ‘Sidestepin’ With A Soul Man’ will be her 40th single release.

Kiki’s 50th year as a recording artist finds her still pushing boundaries and moving forward. The title track of the new album “A Place Where I Can Go” is about the joy of music, and as the lyric says: “In the Middle of this sound is a place where I can go”.

All the new songs have been written by Kiki and Carmelo, with the exception of a duet with Eddi Reader entitled “Horses”, which was penned by a young Canadian duo called Dala.

Carmelo Luggeri – Biography - 2014

Carmelo Luggeri's abilities as a guitarist, composer and producer have taken him on a rich and interesting musical path over the last two decades. Born in England of Italian parents, Carmelo was mainly self-taught with some classical training. It was whilst sitting on a beach in Italy that he first heard Santana's "Samba Pa Ti". This was the defining moment when he fell in love with the guitar and decided a life in music was for him!

He was signed to Bill Wyman's Ripple Productions as a writer and artist collaborating with Bill on several projects. He worked with Julian Lennon and they co-wrote "OK For You" on the multi-million selling album "Valotte".

Working with comedian, television personality Billy Connolly he created the "Watzin' Matilda" re-work used for the hugely successful 1995 "World Tour Of Australia" TV series. In 1998 Carmelo produced the track "Stealin" for the film "Still Crazy" starring Jimmy Nail. The British comedy about a fictional 1970s rock band named "Strange Fruit" starred Billy Connolly, Bill Nighy and Timothy Spall was nominated for two Golden Globes in 1999.

During a spell living in San Francisco, Carmelo produced and wrote tracks for the west coast soul outfit 'SFO' featuring vocalists Martin Scott and Rudi Wilburn from 'Pride and Joy'.

Carmelo has also worked with US singer Andy Williams, Paul Rodgers, (Free, Bad Company), Kenney Jones, (The Faces, The Who), Ray Cooper, (Elton John), Chris Rea and singer songwriter Ralph McTell.

Carmelo and Kiki's paths first crossed when he produced a collection of bonus tracks for "The Very Best of Kiki Dee" album, and, having hit it off musically, they took on a new musical direction together, playing acoustic concerts, starting with an appearance at The Royal Albert Hall for World AIDS Day in 1994 and their musical collaboration which led to their debut acoustic album "Almost Naked" and UK tours.