

A heady mixture of music, politics and motherhood make this singer what she is... and she's special

**Sue Robinson** reports

**Sarah Jane Morris**  
Plough Arts Centre, Torrington  
Saturday September 16

**L**EAVING London was an easy decision for top musician Sarah Jane Morris.

The singer who had a Number One hit with The Communards was caught in the crossfire between two rival crack cocaine gangs. It was five o'clock in the afternoon and she was outside her Brixton home carrying her baby son. She knows she is lucky to be alive.

"The gangs were shooting each other in some kind of revenge attack and it all happened within a couple of feet of me. I was carrying my son Otis in a papoose and it was all too close. I believed it was some kind of warning and decided then to move out of London."

Sarah Jane, baby Otis and husband David Coulter, the former accordian player with The Pogues, decamped "temporarily" to a cottage in the countryside near Stratford-upon-Avon. That was over four years ago and they have no plans to move back to the capital.

"I really do miss London enormously, that's where everything happens in the music business and that's where all my friends still are," said Sarah Jane. "But at the moment I need to be somewhere where it's safe for Otis to grow up."

She laughs when she discusses returning to the city.

"The only areas I'd consider now are places like Primrose Hill, nice



■ Sarah Jane Morris: her son Otis is the real Number One in her life.

areas like that. The kind of places I'd have pooh-poohed as a right-on Socialist."

Sarah, who has strong family links with Devon, is referring to her well documented political beliefs. An ardent Labour Party supporter

in the 70s and 80s she freely admits to being a hard-liner.

"Tony Benn would absolutely have got my vote for Prime Minister, if it ever could have happened. He's amazing. I'm not a huge supporter of Tony Blair he's too

# Voice of her own

wishy-washy for me."

She admits to being rather disillusioned with today's Labour Party but is still a fan of Ken Livingstone — who actually once played tambourine live on stage during a particularly uplifting rendition of The Communards' Number One hit *Don't Leave Me This Way*.

This was all part of a political music tour in the Eighties when The Communards were on the bill with the likes of Paul Weller, Billy Bragg and Madness. Along with Jimmy Sommerville she also wrote the song *Coal Not Dole*, which was adopted as the miners' anthem during the strike of 1984-5.

Her musical relationship with Sommerville began by chance just at the time he was leaving Bronski Beat. The two played an unrehearsed gig in London and brought the house down with a version of Billie Holliday's *Love A Man*.

"I thought it would be very funny — both of us singing about the same man. It was terribly camp," she said. "The audience went crazy and so did the press."

Record label bosses in the audience were so impressed they whisked Sarah off to America to make an album with the newly formed Communards.

"I was 25 and in New York, recording an album. Yoko Ono was in the next studio. It was amazing."

In her 20 year career Sarah has played and sung with many of the world's top musicians. Her voice,

with its three and a half octave range, is genuinely respected in an industry not known for its high regard of pure musical ability. But she has carried on making her own type of music, based in rhythm and blues.

Politics have now been put firmly on the back burner and it is motherhood and music that occupy Sarah's time. Son Otis, named after legendary singer Otis Reading, is now five and is the real Number One in her life. She has just written a new song, *Mother and Child*, dedicated to him. She says it is probably the best thing she's ever done and it will take pride of place on her forthcoming album.

So what now for the woman who is the voice of the Galaxy chocolate TV ads, sang for Richard Branson on *This Is Your Life* and had a song written just for her by Paul Weller?

It's simple — she is busy working on a five-year musical project and making the new CD, but only manages to get to London one day a week. "I record one track each trip. I won't go up to the studio more than that because it means I'm away from my son too much."

"I intend to be like Sarah Vaughan and carry on singing when I'm 70. I'm definitely what you call a long-stayer."

□ To book tickets for the Plough Arts Centre concert call the box office on 01805 624 624.

For more information try the web site [www.sarahjanemorris.com](http://www.sarahjanemorris.com)