

**BANNED BY THE BBC BUT NOW SHE'S BACK**  
**Interview by Anne Tugwell**

When a woman turns a certain age she enters a new phase of life it seems. One where, with nothing to prove and no-one to impress, she is free to follow her own instincts. And in doing so comes face to face with herself.

Such is the case for singer songwriter Sarah Jane Morris who, after an already successful career in Italy, is about to launch her latest album, *Fallen Angel*, in Britain. Her last UK release was the infamous *Me And Mrs Jones* which was banned by the BBC for its risqué nature.

Before launching her promotional tour, Sarah Jane talked about the new album and its conception in the comfort of her cottage in Walton.

In her own words it is a "grown up" album. One where she is not afraid to exploit the full length and breadth of her talent, performed with the passion of a confused and angry world to an ultimate peace.

It is also a personal tribute to her own triumph over adversity, recorded during the final week of her father's life and dedicated to him.

"That was one of the hardest weeks of my life. We had booked the studio and faced losing thousands of pounds if we cancelled."

"At the end I was torn between staying with him and going back to the studio, but I knew that if he thought I risked being in thousands of pounds of debt by staying he would have wanted me to go."

He died as she travelled, and she wrote the final song on the CD *Only To Be With You* on the train on the way to his cremation.

Sarah Jane was born in Southampton, the only daughter amongst seven children, and grew up in a number of places in the country including Preston-on-Stour.

A former pupil at Kineton High School - it is there that she first sang, in a performance of *The Mikado* - she studied drama at Stratford College under Gordon Valence who was, she says, her inspiration.

Still an actress at heart, she discovered her singing talent almost by accident when she applied for her Equity card.

"I can do everything from acapella to seven piece band, and that really stretches you. Producers don't always understand that, and in the past I have taken their advice, but this album I have produced myself because I know what I am capable of."

Sarah Jane met her husband, ex-Pogues man and didgeridoo exponent David Coulter, at Norwich University and they moved to Walton from London three years ago. They have a four-year-old son, Otis.

"I love it here but I still miss London" she said. "But we lived in the artistic community of Brixton

which was becoming very dangerous. One day I got home with Otis in a papoose on my front and heard a car pull up behind me. I turned round and saw a machine-gun pointed out of a car and shot two people."

"I was terrified and realised I had put my child's life at risk by turning round. David was away and I phoned my mother who lives in Ilmington and she said I had to come back here."

"We've been here three years now and we've started to make some really good friends."

But how did the residents of this tiny hamlet feel about their new and rather unconventional neighbours, who paint their rooms bright pink, purple and orange and play over 20 instruments as well as singing?

"I think they were expecting troubles at first but they realise we are just ordinary people and don't put us on a pedestal."

"With this album I have knocked myself off the pedestal. I don't try to be a superstar. I am not better than anyone else."

"I have a very interesting career, and I am very fortunate to be able to continue it. But the price I have had to pay is that I don't earn lots of cash, and some people can't understand that."

"I want Otis to grow up being able to cope with every situation. I would really like to have a flat in London as well as our home here so that he understands another way of life."

"Otis has been all over the world with me, and he knows what I do. He is very secure. He has been in concerts in Italy which are mainly the amphitheatres, so that doesn't destroy his ears, and I usually take someone else with me to sit with him."

Sarah Jane's style is too broad to define, but among other things she is proud to be compared to Janis Joplin who she screen tested to play in a film of her life, and only lost out to Britney Spears when the film-makers decided to use a voice-over of the original artist's music.

Like Joplin she is "mad on stage", but without the aid of drugs and alcohol, and says "I can do all that on water."

*Fallen Angel* is released on the Bologna-based IRMA label, and the tour includes dates at the Swan Theatre, Stratford, and Warwick Arts Centre in the autumn (1999).