

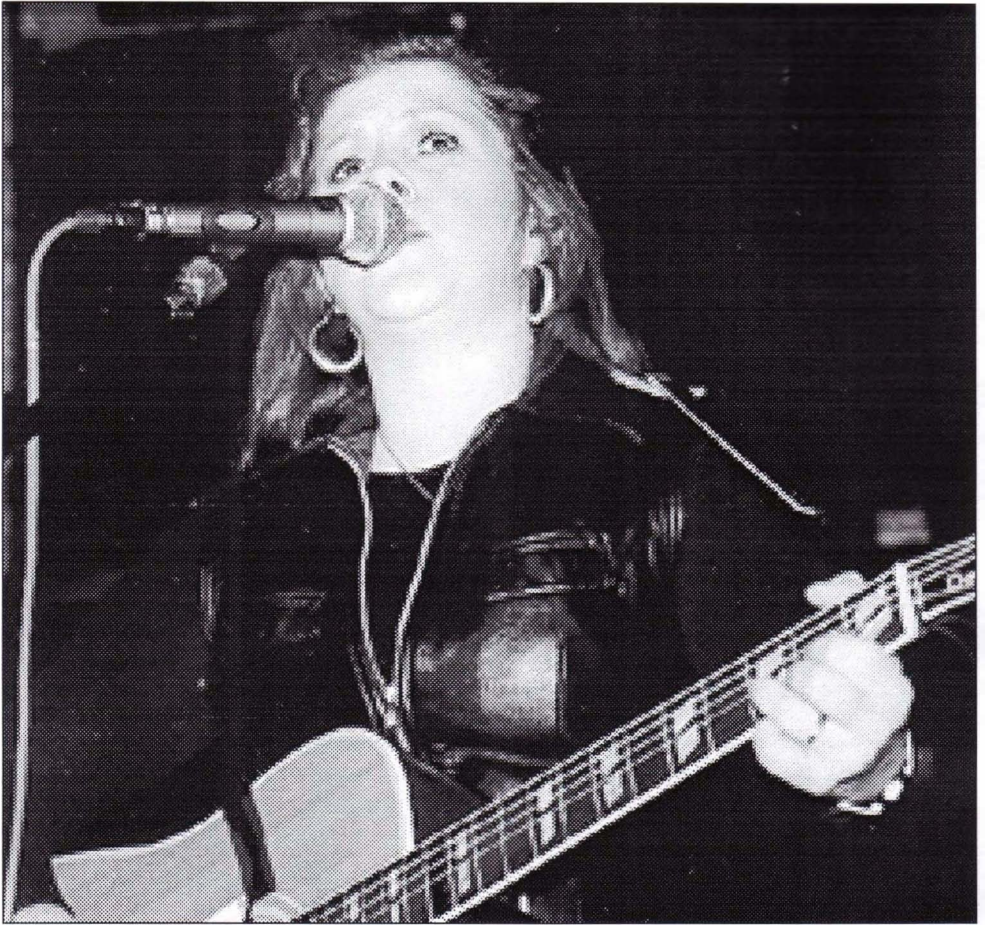
# **ELECTRIC RENTBOOK**

**Kirsty MacColl Homage**  
**Issue 1 - Tropical Brainstorm - March 2000**



**FREE - FIRST ISSUE**





**W**elcome to the first issue of a new Kirsty MacColl fanzine. After five years we have had a burst of Kirsty activity and it seemed the right time to launch this homage to the country's, if not the world's, greatest singer/songwriter.

Last November saw the release of a new single - "Mambo De La Luna" - which failed to dent the charts, but it didn't fit the current criteria to get into the "Top Ten" - in as much that it wasn't drive!

February saw Kirsty touring the UK for the first time since 1995, playing dates in Leeds, Glasgow, Manchester, Bristol and London. I managed to get along to the gig at Manchester University (*reviewed in this issue*) and thought the new material was superb and the band Kirsty had around her were excellent.

And so, now we're looking forward to the release of *Tropical Brainstorm* and this fanzine is in your hands!

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# Tropical Brainstorm - Press Release from V2

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**A** sharp-witted, firey-haired rent-a-tongue whose collaborations with The Pogues, The Smiths, The Wonderstuff, Johnny Marr and Talking Heads have passed into legend, Kirsty MacColl is British pop's answer to Zelig, turning 'popping-up' into an artform. Bono has described her as "the Noelle Coward of her generation", Morrissey has waxed lyrically over her bust, Caitlin Moran of The Times has called her the ultimate party animal and Billy Bragg has described her as "writing like a playwright and singing like an angel", but even these endorsements from on high don't quite do MacColl justice. While her reputation might have been made on the collaboration and the fly-by-night duet, her repertoire stretches well beyond it.

Daughter of folk singer Ewan MacColl, Kirsty avoided folk as a kid "because it was something I associated with my dad", but the protest song, the sharp, vitriolic turn-of-phrase, is in her blood. She formed her first band, The Drug Addix, during the punk era ("but I was the only member of the band who wrote punk songs"), and first charted (with "They Don't Know About Us", later devitalised somewhat by Tracy Ullman) in its immediate aftermath. "There's A Guy Works Down The Chip Shop", Kirsty's first major hit, was a novelty Nashville-style

strumalong, but throughout the eighties she became recognised for her classic Englishness, reflected in both her original work ("Free World") and choice of cover versions (The Kinks "Days" and The Smiths - "You Just Haven't Earned It Yet Baby").

Unless you've been asleep for the last decade and a half, you're aware of 1987's Pogues duet, "Fairytale Of New York" (still the greatest Christmas song ever, by several miles), and 1991's funk-ed-up Johnny Marr collaboration, "Walking Down Madison". But have you heard 1989's pure, powerful and tender "Kite" (1989) and "Titanic Days" (1993) albums?

*"I've never been terribly in vogue," MacColl insists. "I was never a New Romantic, I never had to live something like that down. I've got no desire to please the lowest common denominator, You can't keep everybody happy and I've got no desire to. It's not as though everybody makes me happy. Do I get on people's wick? I hope so."*

Moving away from the melancholy of "Titanic Days", "Tropical Brainstorm" is described by MacColl as "my most uplifting record yet. I made a decision after "Titanic Days" not to do another album until it was a happy one. I've done sad for years and years and years. I didn't want to make a miserable, cold English weather record; I want to make



*something that people can dance to."*

The end product of a "sorting my life out" period for MacColl, which included the conclusion of her marriage to producer Steve Lillywhite and a period where she considered giving up the music business altogether in order to do a degree in Latin-American Studies, "Tropical Brainstorm" is exactly what it says on the sleeve: a burst of inspiration from a land where the sun never stops shining. After her split from Lillywhite, MacColl learned Spanish and visited Cuba and Brazil, where most of Tropical Brainstorm was written.

*"I went alone because it forces you to interact with the locals," she explains. "I like the music, I like the literature, I like the culture and I like the people - I like being around people, generally. Everywhere you go, someone's got a story."*

The more MacColl interacted, the more potential songs formed in her head: the languid, provocative "In These Shoes", the tongue-in-cheek "England 2 Columbia 0", and the relentless "Us Amazonians" - MacColl's most righteous, in-your-face pop song since "Walking Down Madison".

Mixing Brazilian and Cuban Rhythms immediately sets it apart from all the other albums around at the moment. *"I hadn't been listening to anything English for about three or four years,"* explains MacColl. *"Two and a half years of that was spent listening to*

*Cuban records and then I moved on to Brazilian. It's the first time I've had a whole cohesive group working with a Latin influence, but it's not a purist Latin album, because it mixes up the influences so much; it's more a case of introducing these styles into my pop songs. I chose to work with Pete Glenister and David Ruffy, who I've worked with for years and weren't really au fait with Latin music before we went into the studio. I don't think it's going to alienate anyone who already likes my music. These are my sort of songs - it's just that you dance to them instead of sitting down to them. "It ain't Ricky Martin and it ain't Geri Halliwell. It was never a case of "Let's hurry up and do a Latin record"; this has been in the works for the last five years. I think once people get used to the Latin influence it's generally a pop-tastic record. Because Pete and Dave have no grounding in Latin music, it's a strange kind of hybrid - they weren't aware of any rules, so there weren't any. I think between us we've created a monster, but hopefully a great monster."*

Kirsty MacColl has fought for her right to party, and "Tropical Brainstorm" is where she reaps the rewards.

**Virgin Record Store, Bradford -  
November 1999 - Mambo De La Luna,  
CD Single @ £1.99.**

**HMV, Leeds - February 2000 - Mambo  
De La Luna, CD Single @ £4.99!**

**£4.99 for a single!! What's that about?  
Don't shop at HMV, that's my advice.**

## GIG REVIEW

### LEEDS TOWN & COUNTRY - 17/5/1995

*There follows a reprint of a review, which I originally wrote for the Midlands listing magazine "Gig Central", of Kirsty's gig in Leeds during the 'Galore' tour of 1995.*



**W**ednesday, mid-week, not renowned as a brilliant day and this particular Wednesday had been poor. Mid-May and temperatures more suited to November and today it had rained - how it had rained!

Kirsty MacColl descended on Leeds tonight, like a ray of sunshine and a packed Town and Country Club had come to bathe in the warm rays of her presence. Backed by a three-piece band, Ms.

MacColl took to the stage and launched into *Titanic Days*. Kirsty isn't a slim figure but her petite frame just seems to ooze sexuality and that voice, oh that voice! Caroline came and went and then the lady with the voice dons the guitar for *Free World*. No end to her talents, she later plays harmonica.

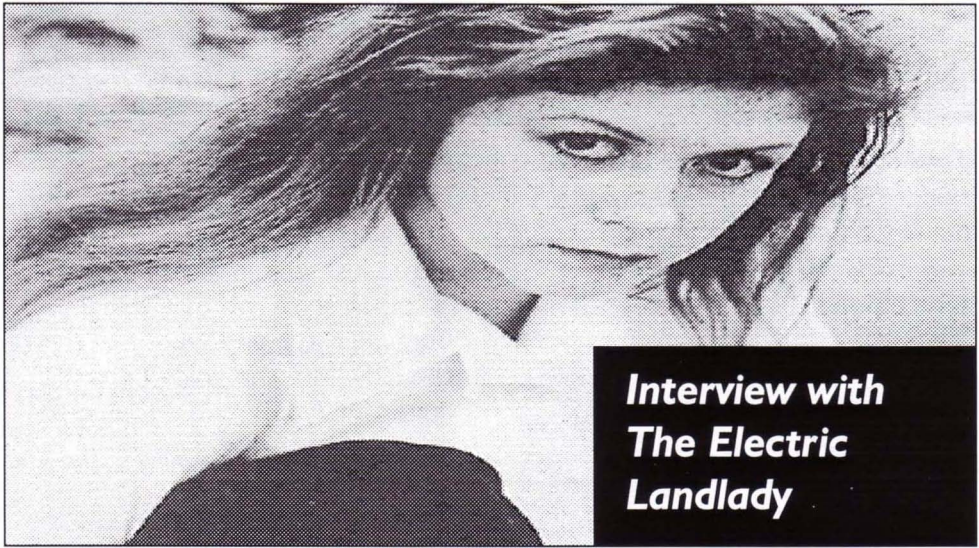
For a person much respected for her song writing talents Kirsty covers a fair amount of artists in her set tonight - Cole Porter, The Smiths, Little Feat, Billy Bragg and a belting rendition of the Ramones' *I Wanna be Sedated* get an airing in a 24-song, 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> hour set.

She's promoting her Greatest Hits - *Galore* album and nearly all her greats are played, but she wisely declines the challenge to perform *Fairytale of New York* in the absence of Shane MacGowan.

She's great on the slower songs like *Miss Otis regrets* and *Don't come the cowboy with me Sonny Jim* but to me she's at her best on the rockier tunes - *Walking Down Madison*, *You Just Haven't Earned It Yet Baby* and *Innocence*.

Two encores and she's gone, leaving us with her observation that "it's definitely not grim up north". She obviously hadn't seen the weather. Leeds loved Kirsty and, you know, I still do!





## **Interview with The Electric Landlady**

**With the kind help of Major Minor Management, it was possible to interview the great lady herself about the new album, past successes and whether life was generally good.**

***You are, arguably, one of Britain's finest pop composers. When writing your songs which comes first, the lyric or the tune?***  
Generally, if I am writing alone, the lyrics and tune come simultaneously. If I am co-writing, it varies.

***Going back to 1983, was it a bit gauling having Tracey Ullman reaching No. 2 in the singles chart with an inferior version of "They don't know"?***

I was very pleased that Tracey Ullman had a hit with *They Don't Know*. My version had suffered from the fact that there was no video made in spite of massive radio airplay. There was also a distribution strike which made it extremely hard to find it in the shops!

***Your first band, "The Drug Addix", were formed during the punk era.***

***Which bands were you listening to at this time? I've heard you cover The Ramones in your live set, and wondered which other punky bands you were into?***

My favourite punk bands were the Ramones, the Sex Pistols, the Buzzcocks and Wire.

***You recently celebrated your 40th birthday, did you see the TOTP 2 greeting? Does life really start at that age?***

I have made a number of TV appearances looking like a transvestite man. It's part of my plan to remain invisible as the real me. I'm glad to be 40. I never thought I would survive this long. I'm also much happier than I used to be.

***Talking Heads 'Naked' album, which track(s) do you sing on?***

On Talking Heads Naked, I sing on

*Nothing But Flowers.* I was also in the video. I think I may have sung on another track but I can't remember for sure.

**What do you think of today's British bands? What do your children listen to and do you ever tell them to "turn that rubbish down?"**

Of current British bands I like Supergrass and Blur. My kids generally nick the records I buy so I don't have to tell them to turn them down. We are all addicted to Eminem. I listen to Frank Black, Beck, Fountains of Wayne, Rufus Wainright and Elliot Smith and 70's funk like Curtis Mayfield. I spent four years listening to nothing in English from 1994 until 1998. I listened to mostly Cuban and Brazilian stuff.

**During your career, you've worked with alot of major artists. Who, either living or dead, would you most like to work with?**

I'd like to work with Brian Wilson.

**Shane MacGowan, has he ever bought you a drink?**

Shane MacGowan has bought me champagne.

**Which song do you wish you had written?**

Waterloo Sunset or Stardust.

**In a 1989 Q interview, you said you hated being photographed and being recognised in the street. Do you still dislike both these aspects of fame?**

I'm not especially fond of having people know more about me than I do about them. I suppose it is part of the job.

**What is the best album ever recorded?**

Too many great albums to pick one, but Pet Sounds by the Beach Boys and Strangeways Here We Come by the Smiths are both great.

**Can we expect you to work with either Johnny Marr or Mark Nevin, song writing wise, again?**

No idea.

**On your song "Happy", who provides the child's vocal?**

Jamie and Louis Lillywhite.

**What is the best Radio channel?**

GLR (Greater London Radio) has been great since it started but now they have plans to fuck it up.

**Is it true that you once recorded a single with The Boomtown Rats, why wasn't it ever released?**

I wrote a song with two of them. Tracey Ullman covered it I think.

**Who is your all-time hero?**

Don't have one.

**What is your most treasured possession?**

I don't treasure possessions. I treasure people.

**Do you see much of Billy Bragg these days?**

I see Billy now and again, usually when we are doing benefit gigs.

**Which of your records are you most proud of and which do you feel could be better?**

All my records mark different stages of my life so I don't discount any of them. I think I'm getting better as an artist generally. I like my new album best!

## GIG REVIEW

# MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY - 12/2/2000

It had been a rather strange day, weather wise - rain, sunshine and hail showers, but it was dry as I left my Yorkshire home and headed across the Pennines, full of excitement at the fact that I was going to see Kirsty MacColl playing a live concert again - a mere five years since I last saw her at the T&C in Leeds and at the Heineken Festival also in Leeds.

On arrival at Manchester University I immediately headed for the bar and, of course, totally missed the support act - if, indeed there was one! Having downed my beer it wasn't too long before Kirsty took the stage with her 7-piece backing band, and all that ran through my mind at that time was "How the hell did all those musicians fit on the tiny stage of The Duchess of York in Leeds?" - a gig they'd played two nights previously and one that normally I'd have attended but circumstances prevented me going.

The bulk of the set, understandably, consisted of new material from *Tropical Brainstorm*, hence unfamiliar but nonetheless very enjoyable, and it left the impression that this new album is going to be very, very good indeed. New songs that really stood out, in my mind, were the

next single; *In these shoes?* and the story of what sounds a torrid affair, during the 1998 World Cup finals, in the song *England 2 Columbia 0*. Eventually Kirsty observed that "seeing as you've been so good, we're going to play something you know". "Babylon's Burning" somebody yelled from the crowd, a comment which raised a smile, both on stage and in the audience. Needless to say it wasn't the Ruts classic but *Don't Come The Cowboy With Me Sonny Jim*.

*Walking Down Madison, Days, My Affair* and *A New England* followed. After such a long time since Kirsty last toured it really was great to see her enjoying being on stage, there were no signs of the stage fright that she famously used to suffer from and the musicians around her looked to be truly enjoying themselves - a bunch of outstanding performers, Kirsty always seems to find the best musicians who compliment her vocals wonderfully.

After 90 minutes and two encores they had gone and it was time for me to make my way out of the deepest depths of Lancashire back into God's county. My ears ringing with the new tunes, my mind looking forward to the release of *Tropical Brainstorm* - will these songs sound as good on vinyl?













Well there we have it - the first issue of Electric Rentbook.  
Twelve pages of lovingly prepared Kirsty MacColl homage.

***Could it have been better?***

***Where could I have improved on my efforts?***

***Do you want to see Issue 2?***

Please send me your views and any contributions you may wish to send for future issues.

*Send me your details if you wish to go on the Electric Rentbook mailing list.*

Name: .....

Address: .....

Please send all correspondence to:

*Electric Rentbook, 8 Ashville Terrace, Cross Hills, Keighley, BD20 7LQ.*



**T**he imminent release of the new album has resulted in a treat of Kirsty appearances on the radio and telly.

TOTP 2 screened archive footage of our Kirsty singing "Chipshop" at the end of October to celebrate her 40th birthday. She guested on Lynne Parson's evening show on Radio Two the week of the release of "Mambo De La Luna". Also on Radio Two she guested on Billy Bragg's Saturday show before Christmas.

On Christmas Eve she appeared on Channel 4's programme "Top Ten Christmas singles", talking about "Fairytale of New York" which made number 8 in the Christmas singles Top Ten. She remembered how she never got to meet Mat Dillon, who appeared in the promo video, recalling how the Pogues protected him from her! On December 30th she guested on a live concert on Radio Two performing the Isley Brothers "Harvest For The World".

