



Freeworld's Ancient & Strange Facts Emporium





Early Days

Growin' Up

Kirsty Anna MacColl was born at Mayday Hospital in Croydon (South London) on 10th October 1959. This did not make her Scottish. Or Irish. Or called Kristy.

Croydon also spawned the wonderful saint etienne and Robin Scott (who had a smash as “M” with Pop Muzik), while Malcolm McLaren, Svengali of the Sex Pistols, went to the local Goldsmith College art school - as did the band’s artwork designer Jamie Reid. while Ray Davies of The Kinks is another alumnus. While living in Croydon, Kirsty drove a huge white BMW with fuzzy dice but no power steering. She called it Bob Marley & the Wailers.

May the Circle be Unbroken

Kirsty’s father was the legendary communist folk singer Ewan MacColl, but she grew up seeing him only at weekends, being raised by her dancer/choreographer mother. Ewan of course had by then married Peggy Seeger, sister of Pete Seeger, who was the sidekick of legendary communist folk singer Woody Guthrie. Woody also married a dancer/choreographer (Marjorie), and due to his poor health their daughter Nora only saw him at weekends. Nora spent time working with Billy Bragg to recreate Woody’s unfinished songs, on the “Mermaid Avenue” sessions. Billy of course was a great friend of Kirsty’s and wrote songs for her.

Schooldays O'er

Kirsty attended Monks Hill High comprehensive school (in Selsdon) and John Newnham schools (at the latter she played lead in a school production of Oh what a lovely war!) She played violin and oboe in the orchestra and made quite a reasonable fuzz box! She also took metalwork as an option at school - she was the only girl in a class of boys and when she showed up on the first day, she was met with a sneering, “you can’t come into this class, you’re a girl.” When asked a month later how she was getting on with metal work, Kirsty replied breezily, “Oh, they come and ask me for help now.” Kirsty worked briefly as a tele-sales girl on Exchange and Mart, and also cleaned flats.

Source: Essential Collection liner notes.



Home Life

Wedding Bells



Kirsty married top producer Steve Lillywhite in August 1984 and had two children: Jamie was born on the 20 Feb 1985 and Louis was born on the 3rd Sept 1987. She split up with Steve in 1994 but they remained friends. In her latter days Kirsty was happily in a relationship with another musician, James Knight, who met her while teaching Louis to play saxophone.

Kirsty's mother was Jean Newlove, sought after in Hollywood and has assisted with animated choreography for major films. She runs the Jean Newlove Centre for Laban Studies, and for the better part of a decade devoted much of her time on the Justice For Kirsty Campaign, trying to make some sense of the tragic events in Mexico in 2000.

A Well Stocked Fridge

Kirsty famously hosted huge boozy parties in her house, with wine flowing like water in the kitchen and everyone dancing round her splendid jukebox. Alison Moyet once commented "I'm very impressed by Kate Bush. She is pure uncompromising talent and I can only feel envy at the apparent flawless way she has managed her career. Both commercially and creatively successful and still an enigma. Clever mare!... saw her once at a party Kirsty had some years back...she looked as shy as I felt and we never spoke." Source: noodle :o) Pic: Kirsty with Chrissie Hynde

Her jukebox contains many pop gems including Stereotypes by the Specials, Ebenezer Goode by the Shamen, I'm too sexy by Right Said Fred, Bohemian Rhapsody by Queen, New Year's Day by U2, The one I love by R.E.M., Heaven knows I'm miserable now by the Smiths, Sexuality by Billy Bragg and her very own They don't know. Expect there's quite a few Beach Boys singles on there too!



That Sex Change Gag

As Kirsty set up to play her new material in Dublin in 1999, TOTP2 showed archive footage of Chip Shop as performed on Top of the Pops away back in 1981. She thought she looked as if she was a man in drag!



Kirsty the Fan

Kirsty shared her birthday with David Lee Roth, Harold Pinter and Thelonius Monk, though her all time favourite piano player was Mose Allison - she even queued to get his autograph when he was playing in London.

Meet Jamie (courtesy of Smash Hits!)

WHO'S AN OOOCHIE-COOCHIE ROLY-POLY LITTLE DIDDUMS THEN?

(Sorry about this. Don't know what came over us.)



● Oooh! And who might *this* little fellow be, you're probably wondering. Well, actually, you're probably not. Because the tiny chap trying to get a bit of kip in his favourite blue blanket is cradled in the arms of rather a famous pop person. And said rather famous pop person is in bed. Given these two vital clues, eagle-eyed *Bitz* readers will have already concluded that this is a sensationally exclusive snap of none other than **Kirsty MacColl's** new baby. Yes! Let's hear a nice warm *Bitz*-styled welcome for James Patrick – Jamie for short – who just clocked into the world at 7lbs 6 ounces. Congratulations to all concerned.

Astonishing fact!! Pat Benatar's new baby girl is called Haley!!



The Business

I'm Mandy, Fly Me

1978 saw Kirsty's earliest venture into the world of live performance, the Drug Addix playing support to Graham Parker and the Rumour. They forwarded a tape to Stiff Records. A year later, when she sent her own demo tape of original songs to Stiff, Akronite Liam Sternberg remembered her and took an immediate interest.

A session was arranged with The Edge (Glyn Havard, Lu Edmunds, Gavin Povey & Jon Moss), who also masqueraded as Jane Aire's Belvederes. Sternberg chose the only slow song on the demo tape as the A side (They don't know) and backed it with the powerful Turn My Motor On - a song possibly written for the Addix. Incidentally, the Addix may not have been Kirsty's very first outfit, in an early interview there was talk of her involvement with Rat Alley, who have long been lost in the mists of local band history.



Kirsty with Steve Lillywhite at the 1990 Q Awards, about to jump on the future Fatboy Slim.

Somebody Think of a Name!

The title for Electric Landlady was concocted between Kirsty and Johnny Marr, who was living in Kirsty's old flat in Shepherds Bush, so she was his "electric landlady". Incidentally, Brian Connolly used the title for a retrospective of his songs for the Sweet in 1997 just before his death.

Kite was inspired by David Gilmour - asked what present he wanted for playing on the album, he replied "Just send a kite to Armenia" which she duly did.

We're not sure about the origins of Desperate Character, and Tropical Brainstorm was a title that just came to her one day, though she clearly wanted something sunny & joyful.

Which makes *Titanic Days* the only Kirsty album named after one of its constituent songs. “*Titanic Days*” itself is also the name of a painting by Rene Magritte. It shows a woman behind hounded by men in suits, and obviously Kirsty could identify with this given her experiences with record companies.

She spoke about this on a Radio One interview she did at that time. (thanks to BP). The album was called *Titanic Days* for the way it reflects the experience of massive change and turmoil on both personal and Global levels; “...that dual fear and excitement of a huge tide where everything is constantly changing”



American Pie

In the US, Kirsty never charted on the Hot 100 or The Billboard 200, but the 1991 song *Walking Down Madison* went to No. 4 on Billboard's Modern Rock Tracks chart, No. 18 on the Hot Dance Music/Club Play list, and No. 36 on Hot Dance Music/Maxi-Singles Sales chart. In 1993, *Can't Stop Killing You* went to No. 20 on the Modern Rock Tracks list, and the following year *Angel* reached No. 26 on that same chart.

I Should Be So Lucky

In October 1999 The Poetry Library hosted a photo exhibition: 'Pop Stars on Poetry' at the Royal Festival Hall, London featuring songwriters and their favourite poems, among them Patti Smith, Asian Dub Foundation, Marc Almond, saint etienne, Billy Bragg, Nick Cave, Laurie Anderson, Tom Robinson, Kate Rusby, Julian Cope, Kirsty MacColl, Richard Thompson, Paul Brady and Jah Wobble. Sorry, we're not sure which poems were selected.



An Irish Connection

The audio cassette version of Patrick McCabe's novel *The butcher boy* features Kirsty's version of the “trad.” song.



In Print

Labour of Love

Electric Rentbook was the witty title of a fanzine which was issued free to fans during 2000, and was later compiled into a collectors' edition glossy book with a specially written foreword by family friend Holly Johnson. Graham Scaife put lots of work into producing a really classy publication. "Twelve pages of lovingly created Kirsty homage".

Published online for the first time to mark the tenth anniversary of its publication and the tenth anniversary year since Kirsty died, the complete collection is available at kirstymaccoll.com.



Hymns to Her



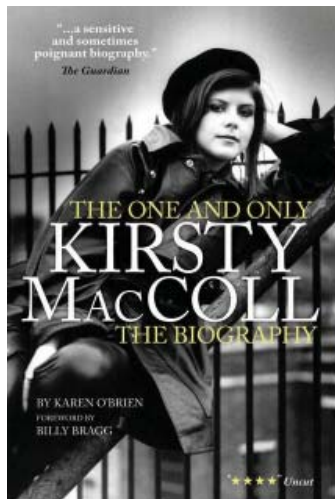
There is an excellent listing for Kirsty in Martin Strong's Great Rock Discography book (it was removed from the 1998 edition, marring an otherwise essential buy for anyone interested in who released what and when, but the 2002 edition restored her place). The 4th Edition of the Virgin Encyclopaedia of Rock updates Kirsty's entry to include Tropical Brainstorm. Of course, all the information you need is contained within the freeworld site!

Daniel Blythe's Encyclopaedia of Classic 80s Pop has a nice entry relating to Kirsty. It also recommends freeworld as a "great site". More anorak type references (this is a good thing!) in this book, which notes Denise Gyngell's 17 places cover. Of Tracey Ullman he writes "They Don't Know was a Kirsty MacColl song, and so you'd have to do something really defiantly stupid to cock it up". Worthy of a quick browse at the very least.

The 2006 book by Jeremy Simmonds, Number One in Heaven: The Heroes Who Died for Rock 'n' Roll, includes reference to Kirsty. An amazon reviewer considers it "a wonderful book stuffed to the gunnels with amusing and interesting info on the rock

gods and goddesses who are now, well, gods and goddesses.” Source: BR

Kirsty has a chapter in Karen O’Brien’s book *Hymn to her*, which is a collection of articles by women in music: Carla Bley, Rosanne Cash, Sheila Chandra, Neneh Cherry, Angelique Kidjo, Evelyn Glennie, Nanci Griffith, Janis Ian, Monie Love, Kirsty MacColl, Yoko Ono, Jane Siberry, Tanita Tikaram, Moe Tucker, Suzanne Vega. Publisher: Virago, 1995.



Karen has also published her biography of Kirsty, first edition in 2004, and updated in 2013 (as pictured).

Kirsty MacColl: The One and Only was touted as “the definitive biography. With a foreword by Billy Bragg, and based on interviews with Kirsty before her tragic death, plus interviews with Bono, Billy Bragg, Johnny Marr and a host of others, this is the first fully authorized biography of the unique singer songwriting talent that was Kirsty MacColl.”

Overall however, initial reviews were mixed. We think it is worth reading though as it does lay out the essential facts of Kirsty’s life on a timeline. It does spend rather too much time on Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, and tangentially dips in some detail into the Cuban Revolution and the Palestinian Crisis. The 2013 edition was well rated by the Guardian, “a sensitive and sometimes poignant biography“.

September 13 1996: *Goldmine* magazine (Vol. 22, No 19, Issue 421) in the US included a detailed article and UK/US discography. The article was very similar indeed to the UK based *Record Collector* article, but added a few additional insights, particularly relating to the American market.

Chemistry Tonight

AbbaIn 2000, Kirsty agreed to contribute to a book being written about the lives and times of Abba, detailing her involvement with Frida. The book was put together as an “official” release with full cooperation from the various band members. ‘*ABBA On Speaking Terms*’ (Fredric Tonnon & Marisa Garau). This book “consists of interviews with people who worked closely to ABBA” - Kirsty “speaks frankly about her collabora-



tion with Frida, while producer of the sessions Steve Lillywhite also contributes.” Reviews of this book in Abba web sites don’t treat it favourably, and question its use of interview quotes and general balance. Their opinion is that the authors seem to view Agnetha as the (only) talent behind Abba, which seems somewhat unfair.

Also, The book “ABBA to Mamma Mia (the official story)” by Anders Hansen and Carl Magnus Palm there is a photo Kirsty and Steve, and brief mention of Frida’s “Shine” album, including the fact that Kirsty co-wrote “That’s tough” as a B side with Frida’s son Hans.

The Other Side of the Notebook

Kirsty interviewed Ruben Gomez in June 2000 for German media - the Puerto Rican singer celebrated, in North America and South America as well as Asia, numerous successes and sold, more than 30 million copies. In contrast to the more famous colleague of that time, Ricky Martin, Ruben Gomez after the end of Menudo put his music career on ice to finish high school.

A Man with an Ear for a Catchy Tune

Pete Waterman’s autobiography I wish it was me includes some brief comments about Kirsty: “One of the best singers and songwriters, not just on the label, but that Britain has ever produced, was Kirsty MacColl. She wrote a song called They Don’t Know About Us for Tracey, and Dave had me polishing it off at the studio in the middle of the night, with me getting Kirsty and Dave’s wife Rosemary to add Shangri La-type backing vocals. It was the best song Tracey ever recorded and Dave gave me something like £30 for doing it.

The day after I’d first played it to him, I went into Dave’s office and he said he’d decided not to release it because it didn’t ‘swing along’. I explained that everything didn’t have to ‘swing along’ and that housewives everywhere would be singing along to it when they were doing the ironing. I sent of the Dave an ironing board painted gold when it got to Number Two.”

Thank You for the Days

Kirsty rates a tiny mention in the book by Neville Marten & Jeff Hudson on “The Kinks” - just how she made it a hit twice and it became more poignant after her death. There is a book by Kingsley Abbott all about The Beach Boys Pet Sounds. In his chapter on cover versions of the album’s tracks he writes very warmly of Kirsty’s take on You still believe in me, citing it as his all time favourite cover, and there is a photo of the single sleeve.

Author Ali Smith told 'Metro' that among her 6 tracks "for her iPod" were Pizzicato Five, Dusty, Ivie Anderson, saint etienne, Serge Gainsbourg and Soho Square. She said "I'm torn between this and her version of Days but it's MacColl's own sardonic romantic lyrics, her harmonies with herself and the broken triumphant feel of this song that make it a classic for me. I love the line "I don't know the reason why, I'll love you 'til the day I die". Nobody else sounds like her. She could even take winter and make it warm."

Word magazine (Feb 05 issue) featured a Top Ten of 'Records You Can Read' and Galore is one of the albums mentioned as having "wonderful lyrics". It is only a brief mention but very complimentary. David Hepworth makes the pertinent point that Kirsty wrote lots of songs that '...would have attracted critical idolatry had she been either a bloke or self important'.

Kirsty Forces Lemmy to his Knees

Motorhead rock legend Lemmy writes briefly of Kirsty in his autobiography White line fever, "I flew over to Germany to perform on a TV show (Musikladen, #85 - 26 Jan 1984) with Kirsty MacColl (rest in peace: she was a really great bird). I was on guitar, dressed in shades and a teddyboy outfit, and I sank to my knees during a guitar solo - actually, I had no idea what I was playing." The song in question was Terry.

Later he recalls "(At a party) Kirsty MacColl came by with her new husband, producer Steve Lillywhite. Kirsty was a good friend of mine - I was in a video of hers once. So I gave her a big hug, and Wurzel turned to Steve and said 'Who's that old boiler that Lemmy's got a hold of?' Steve gave him this look and replied 'That's my wife actually.' 'Ah' says Wurzel, 'Could I have some more coffee please?'"

Then, about half an hour later he was standing by the bar next to Ronnie Wood. Jo Howard walked past and everything was moving, you know what I mean? And Wurzel leered 'Eh, I'd like to **** her, wouldn't you?' And Ron said, 'I do actually. She's my wife.' Talk about putting your foot in your mouth - Wurzel had both feet in up to the knees."

Feeling Elvish?

The 1994 book Soul Music by Terry Pratchett contains an ongoing joke about the main character (the first rock and roll musician of the Discworld) looking 'a bit elvish'.

"Want some fish?"

"I'm not really hungry thanks."

"It's really good. Not stale like it used to be."

“No, thanks.” Gloria gave her another nudge, “Want to go and get your own then?”, she said leering behind her beard. “Why should I do that?” “Oh, quite a few girls have gone down there today”, said the dwarf. She leaned closer. “It’s the new boy working there, she said, I’d SWEAR he’s Elvish.”

On Creativity

Kirsty was interviewed by Jenny Boyd (sister of George Harrison’s wife Patty) for a book called *Musicians in Tune*, published in 1992 by Simon & Schuster. The book is divided into the following categories: Nurturing Creativity, The Drive to Create, The Unconscious, The Collective Unconscious, The Peak Experience, Chemicals and Creativity, and The Creative Potential. A light read, then.

When a Tunisian teacher (Ali Catterall) decided to use pop to teach his class English, he realised how pretentious and incomprehensible a lot of it is. However, well produced and well enunciated material was well regarded, including Bob Marley’s *Redemption Song*, Morrissey and his “perfect diction” and the “peerless Kirsty MacColl”, whose *Days* introduced “a bit of credibility.” The article appeared in the *Guardian* in April 2005.

The Last Word

Justine Picardie’s book *If the spirit moves you* is in diary format covering the period April 2000 to April 2001. Primarily concerning the death of her sister, the book is of interest because Justine’s husband is Neill MacColl, Kirsty’s half brother. As you will know from the dates it was a devastating time for Neill too. Not an easy read.

Kirsty was announced as the final entry in the first new *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB) for a century. The huge work, extending to 60 volumes with 60 million words and compiled by Oxford University Press, was to provide “updated biographies of noteworthy (deceased) figures from the dawn of British history until the end of the year 2000”. It will also include a bigger proportion of women than past editions. The stories of these lives - told in substantial, authoritative, and readable articles - was published simultaneously online and in 60 print volumes in September 2004.





On Radio

COOBA!

Kirsty had just returned from Havana after working on an eight part series about the history of Cuban music at the time of her death. It was broadcast on BBC Radio 2 in early 2001 at the insistence of her family. Being a major project, it has its own page within freeworld. Learn more about Kirsty MacColl's Cuba as it unravels tales of revolution, story telling and dance in the musical melting pots of Havana and Santiago. Marvel at class acts such as Los Van Van, Celina Gonzalez, Chappottin, Perez Prado, Ruben Gonzalez, Omara Portuondo, Beny Moré and Celiz Cruz.



OUT! OUT! OUT!

In January 1996 Kirsty presented a four part series on the history of protest songs from the 50s to the present day. It ran on Sunday evenings on Radio 1 (UK). The show was put together by Pete Frame of 'Rock Family Trees' fame. It was just Kirsty talking and playing records, including Barry McGuire's 'Eve of Destruction', The Beatles' 'Stand Down Margaret' and The Lurkers' 'Maggie Maggie Maggie, Out Out Out'. (Say what you mean, lads!) Four years later she contributed to a show presented by Tom Robinson (yes, the Glad to be gay and 2-4-6-8-Motorway man) on the history of protest song.

Star of BBC Radio

Delayed until January 2001, Kirsty presented an eight part series on Cuban music and culture on BBC Radio 2, and was even flown out to Havana to do it. Who said work can't be fun?

Of course she was also featured in various BBC Radio sessions over the years, as compiled on the album *What do pretty girls do*. It is also rumoured that she did a Johnnie Walker session with Nick Lowe not long before her untimely death.

Fairytale of New York was playing in the background on Radio 4's *The Archers* on 12

December 1999. Of course, in 2014 her friend Morrissey is rumoured to be appearing in the show as himself! Golly. British actress Sue Johnson played Fairytale of New York as part of her Desert Island Discs in May 2002.

Years on, the way that Kirsty's snappy song title has lodged itself into common usage is once again illustrated by this Sunday Times feature for a Radio 4 magazine program called "There's a guy works down our local swears he's Elvis". Viva The King! Viva Kirsty!



Back at Desert Island Discs, one of Kirsty's records was featured on Sunday 13 May 2001. The castaway was Sir John Sulston, the scientist and head of the human genome project and also obviously a person of taste. He picked Don't Come the Cowboy with me Sunny Jim as his fifth record. Unfortunately I didn't hear the programme so I don't know in what context he selected it. Anyway, she was in the company of Beethoven and Edith Piaf, among others.

Star of Internet Radio

Kirsty clearly has a fan in Bob Brainen of WFMU radio - witness his playlisting of Wrong again, You still believe in me, Annie, Bad, Can't stop killing you, Happy, All the tears that I cried, Caroline, What do pretty girls do?, and so on - Bob Brainen's Program runs on Saturday evenings in NYC and is archived at www.wfmup.org.



On Television

Soap Opera Queen

Kirsty's music was featured in British soap Emmerdale, playing in the background at Chris & Zoe Tait's drinks party on 27 July 2000. Meantime, British soap Eastenders has featured Don't come the cowboy, In these shoes? and Treachery playing on the pub jukebox in its time so there's a Kirsty fan in there for sure. June Brown ("Dot Cotton") is a close friend of Jean, Kirsty's mother.

Medical soap/drama Holby City featured a character singing along to an extended play of They don't know on 26 November 2002. Actress Liza Tarbuck sang both Chip

Shop and A new England on the BBC comedy Linda Green on 5 November 2002 (Fae/Kendal). Coronation Street actress Wendi Peters impersonated Kirsty and sang Days on a celebrity edition of Stars in their Eyes in 2004!

In these shoes?

We've also had the Shoes intro used in the trailer for poor British sitcom Kiss me Kate (though not in the show itself), Não Esperando was used very effectively in the excellent drama series Fat Friends and we even had a pumped up appearance for Shoes in G String Divas, a "documentary" exploring the world of Philadelphia lap dancers, with appropriate stage show of course. Actually Shoes was in the illustrious company of Tito Puente, Africando, Poncho Sanchez, Mongo Santamaria, Natalie Forni and Los Fabulosos Cadillacs in a strange "Latin" stripfest. What's more, it was also used (and properly credited for once) in a program about an American brothel called Moonlite Bunny Ranch, director Patty Kaplan.

Zeitgeist sitcom Sex & The City has also featured the beginning portion of In These Shoes, approximately through the end of the first verse, as the various characters got ready for dates (or maybe just going out). Shoes popped up as background music in the British coverage of World Cup 2002 in Japan & Korea, and was also used as the theme music for the BBC1 series Any time now about three friends in Dublin (CR). The series was first shown on Irish RTE.

Finally, the song was used as the main titles in a debut comedy series for Catherine Tait in early 2004, as the signature tune to Five's roundup of Britain's Favourite Comedians in 2004, and in the US version of VH1's weekly instant nostalgia comedy series Best Week Ever an instrumental snippet is played as the intro to the "Sizzler" segment each week.

Gathering Round the Old Joanna

BBC2's excellent Later series compered by Kirsty's long time friend Jools Holland featured Kirsty on four occasions:

- 19 November 1992 (Series 1 show 7) Soho Square and Angel
- Hootenanny 1994 Miss Otis regrets, Shane MacGowan sang Nancy Whiskey
- Hootenanny 1999 - songs unknown (anyone out there?)
- 15 April 2000 (Series 15 show 1) In these shoes? and England 2 Colombia 0

Just before she died, Kirsty appeared in a Channel 4 special on Otis Lee Crenshaw, the alter ego of American comedian Rich Hall. According to Rich, "they thought Otis was the next Graham Norton. They couldn't have been more wrong. To make matters worse, Kirsty MacColl was in it, and she had just died. That alone made it untransmittable."



Ecological Aftermath

The BBC documentary series Horizon ran an episode called “Don’t go near the water” which featured Kirsty’s garden and ecological views. The programme was part of the BBC series “Byline” and was broadcast on BBC1 on Tuesday 4 June 1991, time 22.20 - 23.00.



Here are some stills from the programme...

The series featured well-known people discussing a particular issue that they themselves cared about. Kirsty chose water pollution and the programme shows Kirsty in various locations in the UK investigating the causes & effects of pollution in Britain’s waterways.



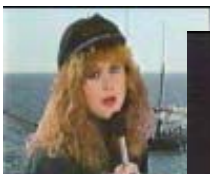
The programme also demonstrated how water can be recycled using reed beds and showed the installation of a reed bed recycling system in Kirsty’s back garden. At select moments during the programme Kirsty pops up to sing Don’t go near the water and Maybe it’s imaginary.



At the time of broadcast, Electric Landlady & Walking Down Madison were out so the programme was no doubt useful publicity for Kirsty as well as containing an important environmental message!

A Girl’s Best Friend

Kirsty has an entry in the Internet Movie Database which details her TV themes and appearances with French & Saunders... she appeared in six episodes, usually interrupted (unnecessarily) by Simon Brint & Rowland Rivron.





Her themes were used for British dramas Dream Stuffing, Moving Story and Picking up the Pieces, which was instrumental. According to Matthew Westwood, “Kirsty had remixed Please Go To Sleep for me for a play I did in 92, and we’d been mates ever since then. From 94 - 96 I was doing a show for Granada that only ever got to pilot stage that had it gone to a series, Kirsty would have done the music for. It was produced by the same guy who did Picking Up The Pieces which is how Kirsty got to do the music for that. She was chuffed - it paid for a new bathroom! “

Dream Stuffing ran on Channel 4 on Friday nights between 6 January and 9 March, 1984. Sitcom. Exploits of two young girls living in the East End of London, starring Rachael Weaver, Amanda Symonds, Ray Burdis, Frank Lee and Caroline Quentin.

The intro to Us Amazonians has appeared twice on Channel 4 show Supernanny. CH4 love Kirsty!

The Ghosts of Oxford Street

In 1991 Kirsty appeared alongside Shane MacGowan in a TV production of Ghosts of Oxford Street in the guise of Kitty Fisher - a victim to cosmetic poisoning in the 18th Century. Kitty was famous for her wit and beauty, and after a night in her arms she found the Duke of York had only 50 pounds, and was so outraged she ate the money before him - the camera pans down to Shane in the street as the music for Fairytale of New York starts.

Kirsty goes to the window and sings most of this song from that view point, until the line “I could have been someone”, where she is now outside the house standing next to Shane, the last scene is of both of them waltzing together outside the front door.

Miscellaneous Sightings

Bizarrely, “a guy working down the chip shop who swore he was - guess who?” featured as the “mystery guest” on A Question of Sport - a BBC sports quiz programme. They have to guess (while blindfolded) the identity of a mystery guest. Additionally, an Elvis impersonator serving in a chip shop was used in a trailer for the series of shows commemorating the 25th anniversary of Elvis’ death (we did promise STRANGE facts). Source: Phil, Feb 2002/Aug 2002

Of course, as detailed in the Gig Guide section of freeworld, Kirsty appeared on TV quite a lot in 2000 - Never Mind the Buzzcocks, BBC Music Live, Open House, ...



On Video

It was Christmas Eve, Babe



Matt Dillon appeared in the Fairytale video. He wasn't round the piano but if you notice the copper dragging Shane up the stairs into the 'Drunk tank', that's Matt Dillon. when the video was being filmed Kirsty never got to meet the actor and said she felt that The Pogues had protected him from her!



Notice how Matt loses his police hat somewhere between entering the house and reaching the top of the stairs.



Adrian Edmondson appeared in the video for Terry as the hapless boyfriend thrown over for the Marlon-esque Terry.

Accapella group the Mint Juleps appeared as the choir at the end of the video for A new England, miming to Kirsty's multi-tracked vocal.

Homage a Kirsty

The video for Free world includes a still from the video for the earlier He's on the beach. Kirsty appears as a news anchor reporting on the story of the other Kirsty's missing boyfriend.



Comedian Phill Jupitus has directed videos for Kirsty, as well as appearing with her in Billy Bragg's Sexuality video which he probably directed as well. The excellent video for Don't come the cowboy with me, Sonny Jim! was directed by Sarah Tuft. According to his autobiography, Motorhead rock god Lemmy featured in one of Kirsty's videos. She in turn has appeared in videos for Talking Heads (Nothing but flowers) and the Wonderstuff (Welcome to the cheap seats).

Some of the He's on the Beach video was shot in Cornwall, specifically the beach footage at the cove (not the genuine stock surfing footage). It's actually Porthtowan on the North Cornish coast near Redruth, (the clips where the main character is shown walking along the beach, talking to the girls, being accosted near the picket fence and going into the cafe).

There's Always One

Kirsty hated the video for Days - it was supposed to be like Brideshead revisited, all historic looking and hand tinted. She particularly hated the white wig she had to wear, which was supposed to be tinted Kirsty colour but wasn't... She thought she looked good in the video for Cowboy though. Hamish MacColl is named as the artist on the picture frame at the end of the Days video, labelled "English Country Scene, 1902".





The Silver Screen

Some noteworthy cinema references involving Kirsty.

Beautiful People

The film *Beautiful People* opened in the UK in September 1999, and includes Kirsty singing a Randy Newman song from 1972 called *Sail Away* which accompanies scenes of journalists flying out to cover the Bosnian war. The soundtrack album is now available, though I expect only bigger stores are likely to carry it. Kirsty was specially commissioned to record the track.



Picture Perfect

The 1997 "cute but forgettable" Jennifer Anniston flick *Picture perfect* carried *They don't know* on the soundtrack in the background. About 5 minutes into the movie just so you know.



Out of Sight

The soundtrack to the George Clooney/Jennifer Lopez film carries the original recording of *Spanish Grease* by Willie Bobo - sampled by Kirsty of course for *In these shoes?*



Lanzarote: Land of Parched Earth

In 1983, Kirsty and her brother Hamish composed an instrumental soundtrack (utilising synthesizers and banks of strings in a Beach Boys style!) for a short film called *Lanzarote: Land of Parched Earth*, which opened for Gorky Park in the cinemas.



World of Music

Cheeky Boy

The opening couplet from Billy Bragg's A new England is directly lifted from a Simon & Garfunkel song called Leaves that are green, which was on the 1966 album Sounds of Silence. Remember? "I was 21 years when I wrote this song, I'm 22 now but I won't be for long." Nice one Billy.

Pogued by the Pets

Do you remember what kept Fairytale of New York off the number 1 spot back in '87? It was the Pet Shop Boys, with Always on my mind. A fun number, but without the natural longevity of the Pogues & Kirsty! Still, could have been worse... Chris Lowe told Word magazine in 2006 "I just don't like it. Is it meant to be jolly? I find it depressing." and Neil Tennant concurred, "It's two drunks shouting at each other". They may have missed the point, bless them. we love Neil and Chris.

Incidentally, Tracey Ullman's version of They Don't Know was kept off the top spot by Culture Club's catchy Karma Chameleon.



Great Rock & Roll Moments



The party hooter kazoo sounds on the BBC Sessions album are reminiscent of those defining rock & roll moments, Bobby's Highway 61 Revisited and Heroes and Villains by the fabulous Beach Boys. Talking of whom



Kirsty's favourite albums as listed in 1994 were

1. THE BEACH BOYS ... Pet Sounds
2. IGGY POP ...Lust For Life
3. THE SMITHS ... Strangeways, Here We Come
4. XTC ... Black Sea
5. STEELY DAN ... Pretzel Logic
6. THE COCTEAU TWINS ... Heaven Or Las Vegas
7. KID CREOLE & THE COCONUTS ... Tropical Gangsters
8. BOB MARLEY ... Live
9. DAVID BOWIE ... Station To Station
- 10.FRANK BLACK ... Teenager Of The Year. Source - GB



Sadly Kirsty did not live to witness the resurgence of Brian Wilson in 2002, as she would surely have loved to see him playing Pet Sounds live after all these years. She was a big fan of Eminem's first album, then again who wouldn't be?

She attended classical concerts from time to time with Billy Bragg. The Fauré Requiem was Kirsty's favourite piece of music ever, and it was played at her funeral (at Mortlake Crematorium in London) alongside Good Vibrations, Good for Me and disco floor filler Remember Me by The Blue Boy, which embodied the party spirit of Kirsty in full flow.

Kirsty and Mark Nevin are credited as Baboon Farm on the credits for Titanic Days. At one point, they had considered forming a proper band of that name to record the album. They had chosen the name after seeing it in a Danish newspaper during a promotional visit, and finding it "hilariously funny" according to Nevin.

Giving Bono & Kim a Helping Hand

Kirsty programmed the running order on U2's classic Joshua Tree album. Brilliantly. She claimed that it was easy, all she did was put her favourite song at the beginning, then her next favourite song, and so on. Whatever, it worked.

Meanwhile Kim Wilde recalls, "One of the writers who inspired me was Kirsty MacColl. She was only a year older and I remember them playing They Don't Know on the radio. I thought if Kirsty can do it I can do it. I met her when we were both dating blokes in the same band. She was an angel. I thought she was a really gutsy girl to tackle such a male-dominated industry."

According to the Guinness book of Rock Stars, at the launch of Virgin Radio Kirsty sang Mott the Hoople's Roll away the stone with OMD's Andy McCluskey (the man who later brought us the mighty Atomic Kitten!). This took place at the Piccadilly Theatre in London.

Celebrity Fans

The "Tracks of my years" section of the Radio 2 website reveals that when Andy Bell (of Erasure) did his he chose Cowboy. (DM) Andy said "Without a doubt one of the most talented, prolific, underrated writers in British pop. A loose cannon, gutsy, anti establishment, the red-haired diva. Sorely missed and never forgotten. Had the honor of washing the lady's hair in the toilets at a Bjorn Again (ABBA tribute band) concert (she did backing vocals for Frida on There's Something Going On)... " "Andy was in the audience (and backstage after) at Kirsty's gig on December 15, 1991 at the Borderline, in London."

Brian Kennedy chose Angel as one of his, and Mike Oldfield and Robin Gibb have both chosen Fairytale of New York (DM) - Fatboy Slim also named it as his favourite Christmas single. Scottish author Iain (M) Banks included Walking down Madison on his commercially released eclectic compilation CD Personal effects. Politician Gordon Brown selected Days as part of his Desert Island Discs in 1997. Legendary British TV commentator John Motson included Galore as one of his favourite albums in an interview with S2 magazine in 2004.

Pre-owned Songs

Samples anyone? We are unaware of anyone sampling Kirsty's records (apart from here at Freeworld in idle moments) but we know of two interesting duplications - In these Shoes? samples the Willie Bobo recording of Spanish Grease, which is also used in the soundtrack of Out of Sight.

Also, Nelly Furtado includes the same sample of "It's a very popular song" in her hit Shit on the radio - Kirsty used it at the beginning of Não Esperando.

The only credited samples which Kirsty has used are the Bobo track, Sazonando by Chappottin (in Mambo de la Luna), Avance Juvenil by Israel Lopez (also Mambo), Yo Soy El Punto Cubano by Celina Gonzalez (Treachery) and Tendras du Castigo by Conjunto Casino (England 2 Colombia 0).



Singalongakirsty

In these shoes can be found nestling in the midst of a curiosity called Sing Latin!, which is a "Vocal Book with Backing CD - Sing Along With The Best!" including a specially recorded "Soundalike CD - with full lyrics and music".

Other songs honoured include Ain't It Funny (Jennifer Lopez), Lambada (Kaoma), Mi Chico Latino (Geri Halliwell) and Whenever Wherever (Shakira).

Somebody Got Fired

The 2000 release The Key from Texan soul singer Eloise Laws featured the song Last Days Of Summer - credited to Kirsty and Mark Nevin though it is clearly an entirely different song. The only thing it has in common with Kirsty's is the title phrase. So assuming Kirsty and Mark didn't write a wholly different song with the same name, my guess is that there was an error on a database (or something like that) that was perhaps utilized by Ms. Laws or her people. Source: JE. Wonder where the royalties went?

Sleeve Notes

The sleeve for the second Propaganda album (anyone remember the briefly great 80s group of Dr. Mabuse and Duel fame?) includes a list of thank yous - and top of that list is Kirsty MacColl! Kirsty is mentioned on the sleeve notes to World Party's album Bang!. "All thanks be to Kirsty MacColl." Why thank you, Mr. Wallinger. In her sleeve notes for Each little thing, Sharon Shannon thanked "an amazing singer ... a mighty admirable lady."

The Real MacColl

We can assemble much of the unreleased Real album based on information from a variety of sources: The track listing we can speculate about but definitely included Annie, Berlin & Roman gardens (surfaced on Kirsty MacColl), Camel crossing & Sticked and stoned (both to be released on the Box Set From Croydon to Cuba). Man with no name and Sleepless nights surfaced on a promo version of the Kirsty MacColl album. Sleepless nights is a version of Please, go to sleep with a more electronic backing track.



The 1982/3 session with Jools, Pino Palladino, Rico, Dick Cuthell and Lu Edmonds yielded five songs co-written with Alan Lee Shaw: Shutting the doors (rerecorded by Jools Holland in 2003 using Kirsty's demo vocal), Germany, Goodnight Paris, Don't ask me and A boy like that (with backing vocals by Gary Holton and Mick Rossi).

Then there was Lullaby for Ezra (never released, I have heard it though, a decent track), and three songs which are included in the online Union Square licensing catalog: Jamie, Man of steel and Trouble with people. The cover artwork was imagined by freeworld.

Do Si Do your Partners

Line dancing to Kirsty appears to be catching on, here's an example of how to dance to In these shoes?

Carol Clements says "I actually tried that dance before writing my own version. The step-sheet isn't very well written, and it turned out to be impossible to do because you find yourself standing on the foot you're supposed to move next. There have since been other dances written to it as well - this is how it goes in line dancing. I've also written one to Elvis - I called it Elvis 'n' Chips - just a bit of fun that one really with Elvis impersonations in the middle of it!

Raises a smile occasionally. I was also thinking of doing one to Us Amazonians, because the song just lifts me up. So there you go, not a yahoo or yeeha in sight, or a lasso, or a Cowboy hat. I don't dance in boots either, I wear jazz sneakers. Unfortunately, these are the images conjured up as soon as those 2 words are mentioned. And trying to make a change to this image is nigh on impossible. So we don't bother, we just dance and enjoy ourselves and let the rest of the world sit in front of the TV getting fat."



Political World

A Concerned Citizen

Over the years she did much to support the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, including an annual Valentines Day benefit concert in London. Despite not being "a commie like my dad", Kirsty first flew to the Island in 1992 because of a desire to "visit somewhere which was still Communist" in the wake of the Berlin Wall being torn down three years earlier.

Also in 1992, Kirsty flew to the Gaza Strip with other artists including Julie Christie, Charlotte Cornwell and Richard Wilson in support of educational and social programmes for Palestinians, largely confined to refugee camps in the Occupied Territories. The group highlighted human rights abuses in the region.

She sang her father's song Schooldays O'er with Billy Bragg at benefit for Tower Colliery in 1993, at Bragg's suggestion, as the colliery struggled to stay alive in the aftermath of the Miners Strike. Note that Bragg's biography is subtitled Still Suitable for Miners.

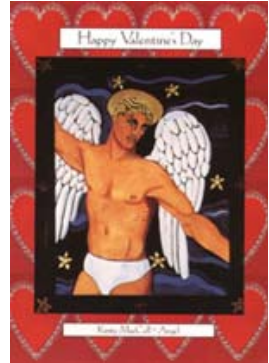
Kirsty regularly performed in assorted benefit gigs ranging from hospitals to victims of injustice including Robert Hillman, an Irish Catholic "kicked to death" in 1997. In 1998 she (along with actor Ross Kemp) rebelled to call for assurances from the government that the minimum wage would also apply to workers who were younger than 26.



Fun and Games

Weird Merchandise

A Valentines Day card was distributed to promote Titanic Days. The angel gracing this card is from a Christmas card allegedly given to Kirsty several years ago from her friend (and the artist) Holly Johnson. When Kirsty sought a cover for Angel, the second single from the album, she remembered the card. The inside of the card says “Be Sweet Be Safe” and came complete with a Lifestyles ribbed lubricated condom!



Electric Souvenirs

Graham Scaife, who spent all those hours in 2000 creating the much loved fanzine known as Electric Rentbook, created these fun souvenirs for the fans Soho Square reunion in 2001. With a variety of designs, some featured the details of the Soho Square event and others were about the fanzine itself. Every one was treasured in its own way!

Looking for a New Bunnet

In another piece of marketing nous, Stiff issued a very stylish tartan tammie with promo copies of A new England. Kirsty of course wore just such an item in the video for the single.





We've also seen fridge magnets with Kirsty designs as well as various button badges created in tribute to our gal. In fact, there was a big box of these at Soho Square in October 2004.

Quiz Nights

Online games site triv.net had some Kirsty quizzes on line, based on the style of Who wants to be a millionaire.

Smash Hits printed this brief list of "Things you couldn't live without", and the other list looks like the same publication to me.



Cover vs. Original

Which do you prefer? The Kinks original Days or Kirsty's version? Don't tell me, go to The Big Song Contest at Cover vs. Original. <http://www.cover-vs-original.com/song-26.html>

Get in your car and drive

Or stay put and make your own fairy-tale Kirsty license plate at LicenseMaker - it's free and totally wonderful. <http://www.acme.com/licensemaker/>

Best of all, it's still working after all these years!





Remembered

Seen on the back of the Shane MacGowan 2001 tour t-shirts:
“... I turned my face away, And dreamed about you”

Mark Nevin mentions Kirsty in the liner notes of this 2002 album. He thanks a lot of people and towards the end he says: “Lastly, to absent friends everywhere, none more than Kirsty MacColl, so glad we got to have that last dance.”

The Brian Kennedy album *Get on with your short life* has the following dedication: “This album is dedicated to dearest Kirsty MacColl who left us too soon xx”. Brian was a very good friend of Kirsty’s, as well as of one of the fireman who died in New York City during the 9/11 terrorist attack. According to Brian, “In a way that’s what made me come up with the title track of the album. When something so shocking happens, it makes you realise you never know what’s round the corner and how precious your time is. You shouldn’t spend it worrying about how tanned you are or whether you’re thin enough, you should just get on with it.”

The box set of solo recordings by Frida from ABBA includes the tracks she worked on with Kirsty in 1984. In the liner notes, Frida includes a series of ‘in memoriam’ dedications to people she worked with who have since passed on, and includes Kirsty, to whom she dedicates ‘One Little Lie’.

We don’t know a whole lot about the Green Pajamas, but they recorded a charming tribute to Kirsty back in 2001, called *Missing Miss MacColl*. It was included on their EP called *Essence of Carol*, and also a now deleted compilation CD called *More Tell Tale Signs of Earworm*.

“I’m sorry now, that’s all, and I miss you ... Miss MacColl”

Other Places

We gratefully acknowledge the others who put Kirsty on the web back in the day: “Voice of an Angel” was run from the US by Akoustic. This provided an alternative Kirsty site, including games, guitar tabs and assorted clever things. Much thought was put into its presentation. Unfortunately this site is no longer on the web, though Akoustic has donated his collection of tabs and guestbook entries to free-world for posterity.

From Australia Gus Kidman devoted a large part of his Gusworld site to K (it was brilliant there). “50,000 Lira for my thoughts” from Andrew Rogers in England featured some personal opinions (always good to see) and interview material. This site has also been retired, and its contents donated to Freeworld.

Jase still has his small page about Kirsty as part of his Cd Collection site, though he no longer maintains it.



Credits

The freeworld Strange Facts Emporium has been updated for 2014 but largely left unmolested by the passing years since it was first created. It used to be a self styled “web site within a web site”, and now it’s a booklet. Huzzah!

Credits for contributions included AG, AK, AS, AS2, BK, BP, Catherine B, CI, CR, Crease, CV, GAC, GS, JC, JL2, JMacC, JO, MC, MS, PM, Rachel, Rich, SJ, TH, TO, Viveka, for details see the freeworld credits page.

“In a time you saw a way to survive, and you were filled with joy.” T-shirt worn by Kirsty on a rainy night in Glasgow, 1995. The guy who worked in the chip shop looked nothing like Elvis.