

Acoustic
Sussex



www.acousticsussex.org.uk

News Release

In association with Chequer Mead



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For the attention of:

24 May 2007

Friday 22 June 2007
Chequer Mead Arts Centre, East Grinstead

CLAIRE MARTIN

To support a new series of Jazz Café evenings beginning at Chequer Mead later this month (and running through until July), Acoustic Sussex is spreading its wings to embrace the jazz scene with its latest concert at the theatre, starring the internationally-renowned singer, **Claire Martin**.

Acclaimed as the best ever British jazz singer in a recent issue of America's leading jazz publication, Jazz Times, and five times winner of the Best British Jazz vocalist awards, Sussex-based Claire was born to sing. Growing up in a house full of music in Wimbledon, South London, she'd learned all of Judy Garland's songs by the time she was 12. But it was hearing Ella Fitzgerald's legendary Song Books that changed her life, inspiring her to go to Stage School and then to study singing in London and New York. She has been nominated once again for this year's BBC Jazz Awards in Best Vocalist category

Claire's latest CD, 'He Never Mentioned Love' is already being hailed as her finest album to date. Recalling the songs and spirit of the late and legendary Shirley Horn, the album features some of the hottest talent in UK jazz and captures the



normally 'sassy' singer in intimate and mature mode. Claire was deeply affected and influenced by the technique, spirit and approach of Horn, and she describes the album as "A really heartfelt hour of remembering someone who I really love." Claire explains: "I wanted to do my own little tribute, because she has given me so much. She has taught me so much musically. I wanted to doff my cap and say fantastic, great, ideal. Although I'm not trying to copy her in any way."



This special show at Chequer Mead is presented in association with the theatre's Cuisine Studio, which is hosting a new series of Jazz Café evenings beginning on 30 May. Concert tickets are £13 (less concessions) from the Box Office 01342 302000 or email info@chequermead.org.uk. More information at (www.acousticsussex.org.uk).

Extended biography overleaf

Quotes - what others say:

"The best British jazz singer for a generation." **Mojo magazine**

"Flying the flag for British female jazz singers is the incomparable Claire Martin, considered by many, this writer included, as the UK's premier jazz singer" **Record Collector**

"Talented and hip beyond her years... the most exciting jazz star to soar to my attention in a decade"
New York Observer

What is Acoustic Sussex?

Acoustic Sussex is a non-profit making organisation that promotes quality singer/ songwriters and other acoustic musicians in the mid-Sussex area, using different venues. We encourage new and local talent by providing support slots for the main act and other opportunities such as 'open mic' evenings. Any profit we make from events is used for charitable purposes.

Claire Martin – biography

Described by the New York Observer as "*talented and hip beyond her years*" and acclaimed as "*the best ever British jazz singer*" in a recent issue of America's leading jazz publication Jazz Times, Claire Martin was born to sing.

Growing up in a house full of music in Wimbledon, South London, she'd learned all of Judy Garland's songs by the time she was 12. But it was hearing Ella Fitzgerald's legendary "Song Books" that changed her life inspiring her to go to Stage School and then to study singing in London and New York. A further seminal moment came at 18 when she saw the great improvising singer Betty Carter at Ronnie Scott's jazz club. It confirmed what she already felt - she had to be a jazz singer. Like many singers Martin paid her dues and learnt her craft by embarking on the QE2, singing onboard in the Theatre Bar for two years.

Back on dry land and just 21, Martin formed her first quartet (featuring guitar-great Jim Mullen). Her break came when renowned Scottish jazz label Linn Records signed her in 1991, the start of a creative relationship that is still going strong today. Martin's 1992 debut "The Waiting Game" (Linn AKD 018) scored rave reviews and was chosen as a Times Album of the Year. Martin achieved one of her ambitions later that year, opening for Tony Bennett at the Glasgow International Jazz Festival.

By the mid-nineties Martin had received the Rising Star and Best Vocalist awards at the British Jazz Awards while receiving rave reviews on her American debut with four sell-out shows in Washington DC. Another ambition was fulfilled with the recording of a live album at Ronnie Scott's in 1995, an album that moved the New York Times to comment "In an era when young jazz singers tend to sound far too much like their idols, there is no mistaking the voice of Claire Martin who combines a cool, burnished tone with the ear of a born musician".

Increasingly popular across the pond, Martin recorded her fifth album "Make This City Ours" (Linn AKD 066) in New York reaching number 1 in the prestigious Gavin Charts and staying there for two weeks - the only European singer to achieve this. Future albums saw Martin collaborate with guitarist/producer Paul Stacey and she even had Noel Gallagher join her on a rendition of the Beatles classic "Help". Later that year she met Paul McCartney and delivered the re-working by hand. Her second album with Stacey featured a duet with cult singer/songwriter John Martyn, who has become a close friend.

Martin has continued to gather awards, winning the Best Vocalist category for the fourth time at the 2002 British Jazz Awards and going onto win Best Vocalist at the BBC Jazz Awards in 2003 (when she performed a duet with a certain Mr Cullum, who won the Rising Star Award that year). She has been nominated once again for this year's awards in the Best Vocalist category.

Busy as always, Martin and her band regularly tour the Far East, Europe and Australia and was the first jazz group to perform in Vietnam. She also performs regularly with Girl Talk (alongside Mari Wilson and Barb Jungr). She can also be found performing with the Halle Orchestra and the Laurence Cottle Big Band (a smash hit at this year's Cheltenham jazz festival).

Claire's latest album (her 11th for Linn Records) is a wonderful jazz literate cabaret duo recording with renowned composer, pianist and singer Sir Richard Rodney Bennett entitled "When Lights Are Low" (Linn AKD 260), launched in September 2005 with a month at London's Pizza On The Park. This year they celebrated Sir Richard's 70th birthday with a major UK tour in March and they performed at many music festivals including the City of London, Cheltenham, Henley, Warwick and Lichfield.

Somehow she also finds time to work as a broadcaster, working as co-presenter of Jazz Line-Up on BBC Radio 3 interviewing the likes of Michael Brecker, Andre Previn, and the occasional terrified young singer.

Claire Martin lives in Brighton with her daughter.



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