

POPSICULTURE

Jennifer Sawdon - Living the Fairytale

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Following on from our review of Jennifer Sawdon's debut album *Fighting the Fairytale*, we caught up with Jennie to find out what it's like being a recording artist - and what it's like to be living the fairytale, rather than fighting it.

Jennie tells us the ideas behind some of her songs, the new inspirations in her life and why you should 'fight the fairytale' and do things your own way, instead of trying to live somebody else's dream.

Your debut album is called *Fighting the Fairytale*. What was the thinking behind that title?

Well! There was probably too much thinking and worrying, and years of analysing myself...!



Most of my songwriting for this album was done before I met Chris, my lovely hubby, and before I knew I was going to be able to finally finish and produce my album. When I was writing a lot of these songs - and particularly 'Fairytale', the title track - I was so tired of feeling as though I had to conform and be pushed into certain boxes by society.

There is so much expectation thrust upon us these days: "You ought to be married by now," "You ought to have 'x' amount of children by the time you're 30," "You can't be a successful singer unless you've been given a record deal or unless you're on the telly," etc etc.

I wanted people to see that, as wonderful as those things can be, it is also OK to not achieve that 'fairytale' - that they could still have a very successful life without having to be or do all those things.

My album is about finding joy in the simple things in life, as well as in the 'fairytale'.

Tell us a little about your own fairytale - opera singer, pianist, wedding singer and now recording artist. What brought you to where you are now?

The truth is I have always sung and played and recorded all kinds of music over the years.

In my teens I was in a classical girls' choir called Cantamus, and I rode the natural progression to studying opera at the RNCM [Royal Northern College of Music] in Manchester. But soon I realised that I needed to be more creative and also earn some more money, so I started playing the piano and singing in bars, playing my own tunes but mainly covers – jazz and pop.

I have always had this dream to record a full album of my own songs, but it has taken me until now to actually achieve that goal in between earning a living at weddings and living my life.



One of my own favourite tracks from the album is Echoes. Tell us about the story behind that one...

Ah, that is one of my parents' favourites as well! It tracks the changes between childhood and adulthood. It's a retrospective look at mine and my sister's relationship as we were growing up, and how far we've come and changed since we were little.

I mention in my lyrics that Katie, my little sister, was obsessed with wearing her "Mickey Mouse T-shirt and blue shorts", and "from the dressing-up box to your drawing board" refers to Katie's job as a senior fashion designer in London. "From nursery rhymes into my vocal cords" obviously refers to the fact that I am now a singer.

The idea that Katie is like an echo of me, that we are echoes of each other and that, perhaps, we are looking back on an echo of our life as children all inspired this song.

The comments on our review of Fighting the Fairytale are universally very, very positive. Have you been surprised by how well it's been received?



I have been very chuffed! It's been so lovely to hear people's positive and helpful comments after such a long time in the making - although I still don't really know how well I've done in terms of actually selling the album, as I haven't had my iTunes report back yet!!

Adele is dominating the singles and album charts at the moment - is it time for the proper return of emotional music like hers (and yours), rather than disposable pop songs?

I just don't think that people will ever tire of a great voice and a great song. This is what Adele does so well.

There is certainly a place for disposable pop; more than anything else it is a money-making business as much as it's about the making of music. I don't think there's anything wrong with that if people accept it and so do the record companies who churn it out on the conveyor belt every day.

In my mind you just can't beat the simplicity of beautiful lyrics, melody and voice.

What can people expect if they catch you singing live? Are you performing tracks from the album at your shows at the moment?

I like to mix it up a bit, to be honest! I play everything from Ella Fitzgerald to Take That! Like I said before, a good song is a good song.

Sometimes I play with the band and sometimes it's just myself and the piano. But I am doing a gig at the Sanctuary in Didsbury [Wilmslow Road, Manchester] on the 27th March and I will be playing mainly my own material there.

What's next for you? How does your own dream fairytale unfold?

Well, it's a tough battle now to try and promote my album. Because I have no record company or real finance behind me, this is a slow process! But I have achieved my goal: I have finished my debut album and I am happily married to a wonderful man.

I hope that in the future I am able to play more and more gigs of my original music, as well as singing at all my weddings, and that perhaps adding to our little family may be on the cards! Yes, without realising it, I think I am finally living my fairytale...

Jennifer Sawdon's debut album, Fighting the Fairytale, is out now on Little Me Records

by Bob Bardsley