

Eddi Reader chats to The Edinburgh Reporter ahead of Usher Hall concert



Scots singer/songwriter Eddi Reader will be back in the capital on Saturday night performing to a packed Usher Hall, and as an added bonus , fans can buy an advanced copy of her latest album 'Vagabond' which will be released next February.

Recorded in Eddi's hometown Glasgow along with Mark Freegard, the album features familiar friends and collaborators and a few new faces including, Alan Kelly, Ian Carr, Ewen Vernal, Roy Dodds, John McCusker as well as Gustaf Ljunggren and pianist Steve Hamilton.

Amongst the tracks, there are several new songs written with Eddi's husband John Douglas and regular co-writer Boo Hewerdine, but also two songs from the tradition, which celebrate Eddi's Scottish roots.

The 54 year old who topped the charts 25 years ago singing 'Perfect' with Fairground Attraction took time from her busy schedule to chat to the Edinburgh Reporter about Vagabond, her honour at being chosen to sing at the opening of the Scottish Parliament and her thoughts about next year's referendum. "The album explains what it feels like to be me and how music has transported me. I remember as a five year old listening to my grandparents singing songs that their grandparents sang in the 1920s. You could say that I was trained during Hogmanay parties from the sixties when it was 'who's singing next?'

"I began writing and playing with ideas for the album a couple of years ago. I recorded around 27 songs and had to choose 12 as 27 won't fit on a CD, but I couldn't bear to leave some off

so we eventually compromised on 14.

“There’s a song about me going to Paris and singing in the street and how people were kind to me and gave me food. My favourite is ‘Back the Dogs’ which I wrote after finding a tape with my granny on it. She was my best friend and used to give me anything I wanted and would tell me amazing stories and give me advice.”

Edinburgh of course was the scene of arguably Eddi’s finest achievement when she was chosen to sing at the opening of the Scottish Parliament, although she almost backed out during rehearsals as she explained: “I was honoured to sing at the opening of the parliament although I almost didn’t get to. I wanted to sing ‘Auld Lang Syne’ as I thought that would have been perfect for the politicians with everyone shaking hands but they wanted me to sing it in ‘F’ key and that wasn’t the key for me so I told them I wasn’t doing it. It was only at the last minute that I eventually agreed.”

That led to Eddi recording a number of iconic Burns songs such as ‘My love is like a red red rose,’ ‘Ae Fond Kiss,’ ‘Wild Mountainside,’ ‘John Anderson my Joe’ and ‘Ye Banks and Braes of Bonnie Doon,’ which wowed critics and fans, old and new, across the globe, but in particular across the Irish sea. Three years ago, the album was re-released with seven extra tracks to coincide with the 250th anniversary of the birth of the great man himself, and now the de luxe album is being re-released in digipack version.

“Actually since doing the Burns songs, Ireland has become my second home as I seem to go there every year. The people there love the songs, both in the north and south. Burns speaks beyond gender, he just loved people.”

The referendum on Scotland’s future is held next year and although Eddi’s views are well publicised, she won’t be campaigning but urges everyone to make up their own minds

based on the facts.

She continued: "For me it's about sifting sands and finding gold. As an ordinary mother and middle aged woman from a family who worked in the shipyards and has traditionally voted Labour, I decided to investigate and discovered that our vote makes not a heap of difference to who we get in Government in Westminster. We are not donating, what we pay in, we get back and they tell us how to spend it. Who Scotland votes for seldom gets in and we pander to the Daily Mail readers.

"I won't be campaigning as a member of any party though. I love the English, in fact I stayed there for 27 years, but they don't have to rule us to be good neighbours. I'm sure we could have a military agreement in place and if I buy a shirt in Perth, I want the tax to go to the children in Scotland, not to some rich banker and too achieve this, all we have to do is tick a box. Imagine what John McLean and Jimmy Reid would have thought about that. 'What do you mean? We can control our own finances without having to fight anyone for the privilege? Well done Scotland'

"I have no problem with people voting 'No' so long as they know what they are voting for and use their guid Scots heids to investigate first.

Eddi will be back in Edinburgh next month, appearing with Phil Cunningham on his Christmas Songbook at the Queens Hall, a show that she is very much looking forward to.

"The show will be a mixture of romance and the traditions of Christmas with the jokey atmosphere that we all recognise from Scottish Hogmanay parties from the sixties when the question is who will sing next; in fact it will be just like the last page in the Broon's Book.

"Phil will be playing traditional Scottish reels and I will sing songs from the American songbook whilst Kate (Mathieson) will sing Christmas carols in Gaelic and the brass band will

help to make it a magical night for those of us who still believe in Santa.”