

Folk star Emily Smith chats to The Edinburgh Reporter




Emily Smith's eagerly awaited new album 'Echoes' will be released on 24 February 2014 and her many fans from the capital will have the opportunity to see her live show at the Queen's Hall next month.

Having celebrated a decade as one of Scottish music's most distinctively sublime voices, Emily begins a fresh chapter in her illustrious, award-winning TV career.

Echoes is her fifth solo album, and Emily returns to her first love of traditional song. Her gift for finding a personal connection in these passed-down, anon-penned words is still at the heart of her craft. But this is a bold new phase in Emily's music and with it comes what she describes as "a new Scottish sound".

Recorded over the space of a year (interrupted by the arrival of a small person) Echoes expands the core group of musicians with whom she's previously played by adding a guest list of true greats.

 Yesterday, Emily kindly took time out from her incredibly busy schedule to speak to The Edinburgh Reporter about Echoes. "The new album (Echoes) is unshakably Scots and contains mainly traditional material with some covers as well, which I like to present and interpret in new ways. Some of the songs are stripped back and delicate and some are full on and heavy.

"There are guest artist from America including Jerry Douglas, Aoife O'Donovan and Natalie Haas who are all artists that I

have admired for a long time whilst Kris Drever sings on a couple of tracks and Tim Edey, Matheu Watson and Rory Butler also feature.

“My husband James (McLennan) produced Echoes which took a year to make as I was pregnant but there were no deadlines so it was nice to have the time to let the songs evolve. James is originally from New Zealand but has lots of Scottish ancestors and we have worked together for a long time.

“Some of the early tracks were recorded live and I did as much as I could before taking a few months off when Cammy was born.

“It comes out on 24 February although we launched an EP featuring selected tracks as well as exclusive additional songs at the recent Celtic Connections”

Echoes is also ‘unshakeably Scottish’ but with farther, wider horizons. From remembered ballads like the murder Twa Sisters and the mythical King Orfeo to contemporary but no less timeless songs such as Bill Caddick’s gorgeous John O’Dreams and Darrell Scott’s The Open Door, Emily’s voice eases tired ears and lifts knackered souls with its simple beauty.

Emily continued: “I have to say it’s my favourite album so far and I’m pleased with the reaction to the album already.

“My favourite songs are ‘King Orpheo’ which is an old Shetland ballad which is a mythical tale about King Orpheo’s lady who is taken into the underground and he has to play the pipes to win her back, and The Open Door by American songwriter Darrell Scott.”

Time has passed ridiculously fast since Emily was named BBC Radio Scotland’s Young Traditional Musician of the Year back in 2002. The accolades continued as she won the USA Songwriting Competition in 2005, Scots Singer of the Year at the Scots Trad Music Awards in 2008, and she received two

nominations in the 2012 BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards.

In that time she's toured the world, thrilling audiences from Cambridge Folk Festival all the way down to the National Folk Festival in Australia, via Europe, Russia, Canada and New Zealand.

Her face has been all over the television thanks to BBC Four's Transatlantic Sessions, BBC One's Songs of Praise, Scotland's Hogmanay Live, BBC Ulster's Santer and an exclusive performance for Sky Arts Channel.

In 2013 Emily toured as part of the Transatlantic Sessions extended family, singing with the likes of Mary Chapin Carpenter, Eric Bibb and Teddy Thompson – adding to an impressive list of onstage collaborators which also includes Richard Thompson, Eddi Reader and Beth Neilson Chapman.

Her albums A Day Like Today, A Different Life, Too Long Away, Traiveller's Joy and 2009's sparkling take on lesser known Robert Burns compositions Adoon Winding Nith (released as a duo with husband Jamie McClelland) established Emily as both an adroit interpreter of old songs and a dazzlingly accomplished crafter of original material.

In 2013 Emily released her best-of collection Ten Years (coming up with titles is harder than it looks) marking a journey that's already seen her described by The Guardian as Scotland's "most impressive young songwriter".

Emily is now looking forward to getting back on tour after her 'break' looking after 10 month old Cammy and her 21 date tour starts on 6th March at Inverness and end on 4th April at Langholm.

On Saturday 8 March, Emily will play the Queen's Hall in Clerk Street with an extended line up and anyone wishing to attend is advised to book early to avoid disappointment.

Emily said: "I've appeared at the Queens Hall before in different line ups but never under my own name. It will be a varied show with new songs along with some of the older favourites such as 'Day like today' from my previous album 'Traiveller's Joy.'

"The Edinburgh show will have an extended line up compared to the other shows on the tour and will include Signy Jakosbdottir and Ross Hamilton. Rory Hamilton who opens the show will be singing with us as well."

So where does Emily find the time to combine her busy career with being the mother to a toddler?

"I honestly don't know where I find the time, but becoming a mum is a life changing event and a shock to the system, but I am so happy and it has given me a renewed enthusiasm for music. After the tour, I will probably collapse in a heap for a while before we head to Denmark in April then we are booked to do the summer festival in Gigha. We have also arranged to go to New Zealand next year."

Echoes has already received much acclaim from the music critics.

"An absolute triumph...I love this album to bits. My favourite CD of the year "

The Living Tradition

"A perfect mainstream folk album that both respects and enriches the tradition."

AmericanaUK

"This really is beautiful stuff... Excellent Scottish Folk Music that's definitely worth a listen"

Festival Photo.

"Echoes is one of the finest and not only of its kin. Go, give it a serious listen and then another –you won't be disappointed"

Flyinshoes

"Simply jaw-dropping....a bewitching album from start to finish"

Rhythm & Booze

"The great canon of Scottish traditional song cries out for her voice to record it. In case I've not made myself clear, Echoes is a brilliant album"

Folking

"Echoes is without doubt a Celtic folk album, but can I say a quite brilliant one. I was absolutely spellbound with this album from start to finish"

Up Country

EMILY SMITH – ECHOES ALBUM LAUNCH – TOUR DATES 2014

6/3 Inverness, Eden Court 01463 239841
www.eden-court.co.uk

7/3 Dunfermline, Carnegie Hall 01383 602302
www.onfife.com

8/3 Edinburgh, Queens Hall 0131 668 2019
www.thequeenshall.net

9/3 Cockermonth, Kirkgate 01900 826448
www.thekirkgate.com

11/3 Cambridge, Junction 01223 511511 www.junction.co.uk

12/3 Aldershot, West End Centre 01252 330040
www.westendcentre.co.uk

13/3 London, Cecil Sharp House 0844 888 9991

www.cecilsharphouse.org.uk

14/3 Newbury, Arlington Arts Centre 01635 244246
www.arlingtonarts.co.uk

15/3 Pontypridd, Muni Arts Centre 08000 147111
www.rct-arts.co.uk

16/3 Budleigh Salterton, Public Hall 07891 663044
www.wegottickets.com

21/3 Banchory, Woodend Barn 01330 825431
www.woodendbarn.co.uk

26/3 Southport, The Atkinson 01704 533333
www.theatkinson.co.uk

27/3 Bury, The Met 0161 761 2216 www.themet.biz

28/3 Fareham, Ashcroft Arts Centre 01329 223100
www.ashcroft.org.uk

29/3 Didcot, Cornerstone 01235 515144
www.cornerstone-arts.org

30/3 Bromsgrove, Artrix 01527 577330 www.artrix.co.uk

31/3 Wivelscombe, Wivelscombe Church 01984 623308
www.silverstreetsessions.co.uk

2/4 Leek, The Foxlowe Arts Centre 01782-523277
www.foxloweartscentre.org.uk

3/4 Stirling, Tolbooth 01786 27 4000
www.tolbooth-stirling.gov.uk

4/4 Castle Douglas, The Fullarton 01556 504506
www.thefullarton.co.uk

5/4 Langholm, Buccleuch Centre 013873 81196
www.buccleuchcentre.com

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