

Bella Hardy to appear at Queen's Hall next month



Acclaimed folk singer and song writer Bella Hardy is appearing at the Queen's Hall on 1st May to promote her seventh solo album 'With The Dawn' .

The album is her first since being named BBC Radio 2 Folk Singer Of The Year in 2014, but isn't just the latest collection of songs from this prolific and ingenious artist, it is an account of one year of her life. Where previously Bella has adapted and explored traditional ballads and fables to tell her contemporary folk tales, the stories that inspired these songs are her own experiences: good and bad, happy or sad.

'With The Dawn' is a more intimate and reflective album than before. Working with producer Ben Seal, the arrangements are more instinctive, more reactive, as befits the mind-set that informed the lyrics. Vivid brass gives way to lonesome piano; choral voices peal; banjos emerge out of beats and blips. Elements of the initial demos, sometimes recorded into a phone as the thoughts occurred, have been kept. Whatever instrument was nearest to hand was grabbed and deployed whenever and wherever (even on one occasion in the bath) giving 'With The Dawn' its striking immediacy.

These are songs written on the road, full of that sense of displacement, longing and contemplation that all itinerant musicians know. This was a time for a turning-30 Bella where nothing was stable. Documenting that flux as an album was a way to make sense of it all. On 'With The Dawn', Bella's soaring kite-like voice is married to lyrics that poetically question everything she's seen and done up till now; letting

go of expectations, both other people's and her own. But with closing lullaby *And We Begin* there's a light at the end... or rather the beginning.

Only one song didn't spring directly from Bella's year of touring and tumult. 'Jolly Good Luck To The Girl That Loves A Soldier' was commissioned by Songs For The Voiceless, a project which gathered the country's best folk artists to sing some of the lesser known stories of World War I. The resulting album was one of many bold paths Bella Hardy's career has taken in recent years. From collaborating with Martin Simpson, John Smith and others on the hugely acclaimed Elizabethan Sessions, to a joint tour with Edinburgh miserabilist Blue Rose Code, and an international songwriter exchange with Canada's Cara Luft who also guests on this album.

Bella grew up in Edale in the Peak District but now lives in Edinburgh. Although the Hardy family sang in the local choir, it was a combination of her childhood love for ballad books and visits to local folk festivals that decided her future. At 13 she began performing at Cambridge and Sidmouth festivals and in 2004 reached the final of the BBC Young Folk Award, having taught herself to fiddle sing. Following a BA in English Literature and a Masters degree in Music, Bella released her debut album *Night Visiting* in 2007. One of its songs, *Three Black Feathers* was nominated for a BBC Folk Award. It was her first original composition.

Since then Bella has continued to record and perform at a tremendous rate; appearing on numerous BBC radio and TV programmes, singing solo in a sold-out Albert Hall at the Proms, composing the music for a Radio 4 documentary on the Post Office, writing with former Beautiful South founder David Rotheray, forming an all-female fiddle group with folk royalty Eliza Carthy, and winning yet another Radio 2 Folk Award for her original song *The Herring Girl*. Her 2013 album *battleplan*, a collection of reimagined traditional songs, received the best reviews of her career, with multiple stars showered on it

from the broadsheets and folk press alike.

With The Dawn Tour – Spring 2015

April

21 **Keswick** Theatre by the Lake

23 **Newbury** New Greenham Arts Centre

24 **Birmingham** The Mac

26 **Buxton** Buxton Opera House

30 **Bury** The Met

May

1 **Edinburgh** Queens Hall

2 **County Durham** Witham Hall

3 **Sheffield** Greystones

5 **Hull** Fruit

6 **Exeter** Exeter Phoenix

7 **Swansea** The Welfare

8 **Worcester** Huntingdon Hall

9 **Bristol** Colston Hall

12 **London** The Borderline

13 **Peterborough** Key Theatre

14 **Guildford** The Boilerroom

16 **Southport** The Atkinson

19 **Cornwall** Tolmen Centre

20 **Tewkesbury** Roses Theatre

21 **Totnes** South Devon Arts Centre

22 **Exmouth** Exmouth Festival

23 **Annan** Corner House Hotel