

Sia - Biography

YouTube phenomenon, internationally renowned, Grammy nominated singer, introvert, extravert and all-round psychotherapist's dream, Sia Furler is many things, but first and foremost she's a remarkable and unique artist.

With her emotive vocal performances and captivating song writing, the Australian born former Londoner, who after a brief stint in LA now calls New York home, has spent the last few years steadily making bigger and bigger waves in the US. Earning a word of mouth reputation as a 'must see' live act, her deeply seductive brand of dysfunction has seen her quietly collect a legion of dedicated fans including an enviable number of A-list luminaries.

Add the fact that her shudderingly beautiful 'Breathe Me' was chosen to soundtrack the climax of hit TV series 'Six Feet Under' and that obsessive fans are now flooding the internet with their own versions of her face mangling 'Buttons' video after celebrity blogger Perez Hilton helped make it the second most watched music video in YouTube history, and it's clear that Sia's star is most definitely on the rise. Yet, as she herself points out, three albums into her career, the success universally predicted for her, has been a long time coming.

"It's ridiculous," she laughs with the kind of enthusiasm usually reserved for when someone falls over in the street. "After all these years of trying, the second I stopped worrying about being a success, I got successful. It's like how I stopped worrying about being a cool and credible artist. I realised that I'm a credible person and that I don't care what demographic I appeal to anymore. And of course as soon as I stopped trying I suddenly became cool and credible and started attracting all these really cool people like Kirsten [Dunst], Ryan [Gosling] and Beck, who are just the most amazingly talented and cool people. It's fucking insane."

Sia's disarming and at times shockingly honest humour, along with her ability to laugh like a drain at just about anything, belies an altogether more painful part of her personal history, one which has informed so much of her tender and fragile music.

Though still best known outside of the US as the jazz-slurring voice of Zero 7's three albums, including 2001's Mercury shortlisted 'Simple Things' and 2006's Grammy Nominated 'The Garden', her long journey to cool credibility began with her 'bohemian' (and that's putting it politely) childhood. Growing up on what she describes as "the hippest street in Australia", she first sang in her parents' rockabilly band, The Soda Jerks, before joining jazz-funk band Crisp at 17. "We thought we were really cutting edge," she sniggers with a roll of her eyes. "But we were trying way too hard."

After three years fronting Crisp, Sia packed her bags, bought an open-ended, round the world plane ticket and went in search of her fame and fortune. Eventually she would settle in London, have a Top 10 hit with her first single, the Prokofiev sampling 'Taken For Granted', and in 2001 release her critically acclaimed, R&B inflected debut album, 'Healing Is Difficult'. However, a week before first arriving in London tragedy struck when the man she describes as her 'first true love' was run over and killed by a black cab on Kensington High Street.

"Nearly everything on the first album was about that," she says with uncharacteristic care. "I was pretty fucked up when Dan died. I couldn't really feel anything and as a result 'Healing Is Difficult' was a very deflective album. It was me not dealing with stuff. The second album, 'Colour The Small One' was the opposite. I'd bottled all this stuff up and there was nowhere else for it to go, I had to get it out and deal with it. Honestly, I was totally suicidal. It was awful."

The three years since the release of 'Colour The Small One' have thankfully seen a massive sea change in Sia's fortunes. As well as spending a small fortune on therapy, she's seen Zero 7's success in America and her own extensive touring there finally start to pay off. With the US progressively demanding more of her time, she moved from London to LA in 2005, where she shared a house with The Strokes' drummer Fabrizio Moretti, before moving to a newly renovated, 5000 sq ft apartment in New York's trendier-than-thou SoHo.

With her head, life and career all in a far healthier state, her new album, the knowingly titled, 'some people have REAL problems' is by far her most assured and complete. Produced again by Jimmy Hogarth - who since cutting his teeth on 'Colour The Small One' has gone on to produce Corinne Bailey Rae, James Morrison and Amy Winehouse - the album marks the first time that her skills as a songwriter have really been given a chance to shine through the emotional turmoil.

From the bitter sweet resolve of 'Little Black Sandals', to the separation of 'You Have Been Loved' and the overwhelming joy of 'Day Too Soon', it's a staggering, coming-to-your-senses album. A collection of songs about loss and moving on, that's as hopeful as it is tragic, finding the sweet spot between love and longing. Beck, who co-wrote 'The Bully' on 'Colour The Small One', returns to add his unique sensibility to the cute mathematical love of 'Academia' and with the strident 'The Girl You Lost To Cocaine' confirming that she's leaving her troubles firmly behind her, it's surely the sound of Sia finally dispatching what by anyone's standards was a dark period.

"Not really," she offers, momentarily perplexed. "This album isn't really autobiographical. Well I don't think it is. They're just stories. It's not really about me. Or maybe it is. Maybe in years to come I'll look back and go, 'Oh, it really was all about me', I don't know. I mean 'The Girl You Lost To Cocaine' is just a story that came to me. I didn't know anyone with a cocaine problem at the time, although I am fascinated by addiction. I get addicted to people, especially people who aren't

good or healthy for me and I'm always worried that I'm going to turn into an alcoholic, so maybe it's something to do with that."

"But I don't think you have to be in a dark place to tap into those emotions. You can tell stories, really sad stories that either you relate to or are from your history, or you can empathise with friends and their situations. I've realised that you don't have to have a crazy life to be able to write these stories. I mean I'm so much better now. There's not a lot of conflict or drama in my life anymore. But then that's what having a good therapist does for you."

Indeed, so good is life that Sia now fears she may lose her grasp of reality for entirely different reasons, hence the album title. "It was a joke when we were recording. We were having really bourgeois problems, like traffic and bad coffee. We had to keep reminding ourselves that some people have REAL problems, like not having a mum or legs." She bursts out laughing again before leaning in conspiratorially. "Seriously, life's so good right now. My apartment's bigger than Madonna's house, I'm getting pretty rich and pretty famous and I'm scared of becoming a fucking asshole. So the title's a reminder to me, not to get too carried away."

Written by
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