

Acoustic  
Sussex



[www.acousticsussex.org.uk](http://www.acousticsussex.org.uk)

# News Release

In association with Chequer Mead



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For the attention of: .....

16 July 2009

**Thursday 3 September 2009**  
**Chequer Mead Arts Centre, East Grinstead**

**CLAIRE MARTIN**

Justly acclaimed as one of the world's greatest jazz singers, Sussex-based Claire Martin is one of the jewels of the UK jazz scene. A peerless singer, with a breathtaking ability to inhabit a lyric and bring songs to life, her Autumn tour coincides with the launch of a brand new album, *A Modern Art*, which Claire describes as "A brand new take on jazz singing in the 21st century!"

Five times winner of the Best British Jazz vocalist awards, Claire was born to sing. Growing up in a house full of music in Wimbledon, South London, she'd learned all of Judy Garland's songs by the time she was 12. But it was hearing Ella Fitzgerald's legendary Song Books that changed her life, inspiring her to go to Stage School and then to study singing in London and New York.



Her last CD, 2007's 'He Never Mentioned Love' was hailed as her finest album to date. Recalling the songs and spirit of the late and legendary Shirley Horn, it featured some of the hottest talent in UK jazz and captured the singer in intimate and mature mode.



Her new album features two brand new self-penned tracks together with stylishly re-worked and much loved standards by Cy Coleman and Rodgers and Hart, plus sassy originals and modern classics from Esbjorn Svenson, Michael Franks and Donald Fagan.

Claire will be performing with her trio of Gareth Williams on piano, Laurence Cottle on bass and Chris Dagly on drums.

The show is presented in association with the theatre's **Cuisine Studio**, which regularly hosts Jazz Café evenings at the venue. Telephone 01342 324860 to reserve a table for a pre-show meal.

Concert tickets are £13 (less concessions) from the Box Office 01342 302000 or email [info@chequermead.org.uk](mailto:info@chequermead.org.uk). More information at ([www.acousticsussex.org.uk](http://www.acousticsussex.org.uk)).

*Extended biography overleaf*

## Quotes - what others say:

*"The best British jazz singer for a generation."* **Mojo magazine**

*"Flying the flag for British female jazz singers is the incomparable Claire Martin, considered by many, this writer included, as the UK's premier jazz singer"* **Record Collector**

*"Talented and hip beyond her years... the most exciting jazz star to soar to my attention in a decade"*  
**New York Observer**

## What is Acoustic Sussex?

Acoustic Sussex is a non-profit making organisation that promotes quality singer/ songwriters and other acoustic musicians in the mid-Sussex area, using different venues. We encourage new and local talent by providing support slots for the main act and other opportunities such as 'open mic' evenings. Any profit we make from events is used for charitable purposes.

# Claire Martin – biography

Described by the New York Observer as "*talented and hip beyond her years*" and acclaimed as "*the best ever British jazz singer*" in a recent issue of America's leading jazz publication Jazz Times, Claire Martin was born to sing.

Growing up in a house full of music in Wimbledon, South London, she'd learned all of Judy Garland's songs by the time she was 12. But it was hearing Ella Fitzgerald's legendary "Song Books" that changed her life inspiring her to go to Stage School and then to study singing in London and New York. A further seminal moment came at 18 when she saw the great improvising singer Betty Carter at Ronnie Scott's jazz club. It confirmed what she already felt - she had to be a jazz singer. Like many singers Martin paid her dues and learnt her craft by embarking on the QE2, singing onboard in the Theatre Bar for two years.

Back on dry land and just 21, Martin formed her first quartet (featuring guitar-great Jim Mullen). Her break came when renowned Scottish jazz label Linn Records signed her in 1991, the start of a creative relationship that is still going strong today. Martin's 1992 debut "The Waiting Game" (Linn AKD 018) scored rave reviews and was chosen as a Times Album of the Year. Martin achieved one of her ambitions later that year, opening for Tony Bennett at the Glasgow International Jazz Festival.

By the mid-nineties Martin had received the Rising Star and Best Vocalist awards at the British Jazz Awards while receiving rave reviews on her American debut with four sell-out shows in Washington DC. Another ambition was fulfilled with the recording of a live album at Ronnie Scott's in 1995, an album that moved the New York Times to comment "In an era when young jazz singers tend to sound far too much like their idols, there is no mistaking the voice of Claire Martin who combines a cool, burnished tone with the ear of a born musician".

Increasingly popular across the pond, Martin recorded her fifth album "Make This City Ours" (Linn AKD 066) in New York reaching number 1 in the prestigious Gavin Charts and staying there for two weeks - the only European singer to achieve this. Future albums saw Martin collaborate with guitarist/producer Paul Stacey and she even had Noel Gallagher join her on a rendition of the Beatles classic "Help". Later that year she met Paul McCartney and delivered the re-working by hand. Her second album with Stacey featured a duet with cult singer/songwriter John Martyn, who has become a close friend.

Martin has continued to gather awards, winning the Best Vocalist category for the fourth time at the 2002 British Jazz Awards and going on to win Best Vocalist at the BBC Jazz Awards in 2003 (when she performed a duet with a certain Mr Cullum, who won the Rising Star Award that year). She has been nominated once again for this year's awards in the Best Vocalist category.

Busy as always, Martin and her band regularly tour the Far East, Europe and Australia and was the first jazz group to perform in Vietnam. She also performs regularly with Girl Talk (alongside Mari Wilson and Barb Jungr). She can also be found performing with the Halle Orchestra and the Laurence Cottle Big Band (a smash hit at this year's Cheltenham jazz festival).

Claire's last CD, 'He Never Mentioned Love' was hailed as her finest album to date. Recalling the songs and spirit of the late and legendary Shirley Horn, the album features some of the hottest talent in UK jazz and captures the normally 'sassy' singer in intimate and mature mode. Claire was deeply affected and influenced by the technique, spirit and approach of Horn, and she describes the album as "A really heartfelt hour of remembering someone who I really love." Claire explains: "I wanted to do my own little tribute, because she has given me so much. She has taught me so much musically. I wanted to doff my cap and say fantastic, great, ideal. Although I'm not trying to copy her in any way."

Somehow she also finds time to work as a broadcaster, working as co-presenter of Jazz Line-Up on BBC Radio 3 interviewing the likes of Michael Brecker, Andre Previn, and the occasional terrified young singer.

Claire lives in Brighton, UK.



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