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Martha Tilston ~ *Biography*

Martha Tilston is a captivating performer, an enchanting singer-songwriter blessed with a gloriously clear and seductively beautiful voice. Weaving her magic spell over listeners wherever she plays - from the concert hall to the campfire, from folk clubs to main festival stages - she is a rare gem who has the power to draw an audience into her world and create an intimate space where her words and music dance and delight, leaving all those present with a smile, a warm feeling inside, and a few issues to ponder, too. It is hardly surprising that Martha is such an original and accomplished performer. She grew up surrounded by music, art, poetry and drama, always encouraged to express herself through the creative arts. Her father is acclaimed singer-songwriter Steve Tilston; stepmum the glorious London-Irish folk singer Maggie Boyle; her mum Naomi is a talented artist, while stepdad Frank is a theatre director.

The various creative influences combined. Hearing folk luminaries such as Bert Jansch, Ralph McTell and John Renbourn playing in the kitchen with her dad, and learning traditional songs from Maggie Boyle formed the background to Martha's love of folk music. Having inherited her mum's artistic talents, Martha paints the artwork for her albums.

It was acting, though, that first drew the young Martha and she studied at drama school, and appeared at the Edinburgh Festival, before deciding that the call of music could not be denied...

She formed the duo Mouse with guitarist Nick Marshall, releasing two albums, "Helicopter Trees" (2000) and "Mouse Tales" (2001), and becoming a firm cult favourite on the underground festival circuit.

At the end of 2002 Martha went solo, her first outing supporting Damien Rice on a tour of Ireland. A lo-fi release, "Rolling", mostly sold through word-of-mouth and at gigs, followed in 2003. Steadily gigging, and adored by an ever-growing fanbase, in early 2005, Martha released her first full-scale album, "Bimbling", on her own label Squiggly - an enchanting and intimate selection of songs, the tracks interspersed with ambient soundscapes from summer music festivals. The whole project was funded by selling the original canvases she had painted to provide the artwork for the CD. In 2006, a free download album, "Ropeswing", followed, the first to feature her backing band The Woods.

Ever brave in her songwriting and never compromising her principles of independence when questioning and confronting social issues and drawing attention to causes close to her heart, this album featured "Corporations" which highlights the immorality of corporate culture and relentless materialism. She also lent her name to the Big Issue's "Peace Not War" compilation album, contributing "The Saddest Game", written about the plight of child soldiers in Africa, and in line with her environmental concerns has more recently played at Climate Camp in London.

It was in 2007, though, with the critically acclaimed "Of Milkmaids & Architects", that Martha began to come to the attention of a more mainstream audience, and in that year she was nominated for best new act at the BBC Folk Awards. The album included "Artificial", a song that struck a chord with so many of her audience, telling of the frustrations of working in an office and dreaming of an escape route...

It was this song that formed one of the central points of her imaginative, Arts Council funded "Into The Woods" tour, where her dramatic and musical backgrounds combined. With inventive stage settings, Martha managed to bring the woodland and campfire experience vividly to life in venues throughout the country.

Since then, Martha has released an EP, "Till I Reach The Sea" (2008), appeared on "Woman's Hour" and "Loose Ends", been guest vocalist on the track "Pop Art Blue" which she contributed to Zero 7s latest album "Yeah Ghost", toured Australia, and the UK, as well as headlining various prestigious Festivals, Martha also opened the Acoustic Stage at Glastonbury. Despite her main stage appearances, Martha continues to adore small, underground, alternative festivals where she will still no doubt be found playing unannounced sets around the campfire at three in the morning.

Having had a break from live performing last year to have a baby, Martha has now completed new album "Lucy and the Wolves", to be released in the UK in April. The album, which again features members of the Woods - including Lamb bass player Jon Thorne - is a stunningly beautiful selection of 11 songs. Throughout, Martha expresses herself in her trademark, endearingly direct, yet wonderfully poetic manner, putting forward her philosophy of life, and examining relationships in an accessible, universal way.

As always, she remains the free spirit questioning without confrontation, and finding a way directly to people's hearts with her exquisite words and music.

Martha Tilston Discography:

2010 "Real" - Squiggly Records. Only available from this website shop and at Martha's shows

2010 "Lucy and the Wolves" - Squiggly Records through Proper and available from this website shop

2008 "til I Reach the Sea" - Squiggly Records EP download only

2007 "Of Milkmaids and Architects" - Squiggly Records through Proper and available from this website shop

2006 "Ropeswing" - a free downloadable album gently circulating the planet
2004 "Bimbling" -Squiggly Records, distributed through Proper and available from this website shop
2003 "Rolling" -only available to download