

CLAIRE MARTIN, OBE

Biography

Claire Martin has established herself as a tour de force on the UK jazz scene gaining many awards, including winning the [British Jazz Awards](#) as best vocalist eight times during her career, which spans almost 4 decades.

Claire became a professional singer aged 19 and two years later realised her dream of singing at [Ronnie Scott's](#) legendary jazz club in London Soho. Signed to the prestigious Glasgow-based [Linn Records](#) in 1990, she released 18 CDs with the label, collaborating with musical luminaries including [Martin Taylor](#), [John Martyn](#), [Stephane Grappelli](#), [Kenny Barron](#), [Richard Rodney Bennett](#) and [Jim Mullen](#) on many of these recordings.

Claire has performed worldwide with her trio and, until his death in 2012, worked extensively with the celebrated composer and pianist Sir Richard Rodney Bennett in a cabaret duo setting both in England and the US, where they played to sell-out houses at venues, including the prestigious [Algonquin Hotel](#) in New York City.

Claire also appears as a featured soloist with the [Halle Orchestra](#), the [Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra](#), the [RTE Concert Orchestra](#), the [Royal Northern Sinfonia](#), the [BBC Big Band](#) and the [BBC Concert Orchestra](#). Claire co-presented [BBC Radio 3's](#) flagship jazz program 'Jazz Line Up' from 2000 to 2017 and interviewed many of her musical heroes, such as [Pat Metheny](#) and the late [Michael Brecker](#). Her 2009 CD *A Modern Art* prompted Jazz Times USA to claim: *"She ranks among the four or five finest female jazz vocalists on the planet"*.

At the Queen's Birthday Honours in June 2011, Claire was delighted to be awarded an OBE for her Services to Jazz by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, now King Charles III.

2011 proved to be an extraordinary year for Claire who made her debut at [Lincoln Center](#) in New York with Grammy award-winning pianist [Bill Charlap](#) and went on to perform for the third time at the famous Algonquin Hotel for a three-week residency with Sir Richard Rodney Bennett. Their CD *Witchcraft* gained much critical acclaim and was *"unequivocally recommended"* by [Jazzwise magazine](#).

In August 2011 Claire recorded with legendary jazz pianist Kenny Barron and an all-star American line up for her fifteenth album for Linn Records. *Too Much in Love to Care* received 5-star reviews and prompted the US magazine Jazz Journal to state that she is “one of the finest jazz singers in the world today”. This album went on to win the ‘Best New Recording’ award at the 2012 British Jazz Awards. 2013 was spent touring the new material in the UK and Europe and embarking on a new show *The Two of Us* with conductor [John Wilson](#), [Joe Stilgoe](#), [Mark McGann](#) and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, celebrating the music of Paul McCartney and John Lennon.

In 2014 Claire embarked on a new and unique musical adventure with the Brighton based [Montpellier Cello Quartet](#). With new arrangements especially written for her by Sir Richard Rodney Bennett, [Mark Anthony Turnage](#) and [Django Bates](#), this new chamber jazz ensemble toured the UK promote a new album on Linn Records called *Time and Place*. The album was warmly received, and Clive Davis of The Times cited Claire as “our finest jazz singer”.

2017/8 was spent touring and promoting her project with the ever-popular entertainer, saxophonist [Ray Gelato](#) as well as appearing with the singer/songwriter [Joe Stilgoe](#) and continuing her long-standing celebrated duo performances with singer/pianist [Ian Shaw](#).

In 2018 Claire was the proud recipient of the [BASCA Gold Badge Award](#) for her Services to Songwriting.

2019 was a bumper year for new releases and ‘*Bumpin’*’ (Stunt Records), which celebrated the music of Wes Montgomery and featured the brilliant guitarist Jim Mullen, and ‘*Believin’ It*’ a trio album with Claire’s all-star Swedish band. Both releases were met with critical acclaim and Jazz Views wrote that Claire Martin was ‘the real deal’. ‘*Believin’ It*’ won the Jazzwise award for ‘Album of the Year’.

In the same year, Claire joined forces with young up-and-coming arranger [Callum Au](#) to record with a full 82-piece orchestra and big band on an album called ‘*Songs and Stories*’ (Stunt Records). The record won the 2020 Parliamentary Jazz Award for ‘Best Album’ and gained many 5-star reviews culminating in a ground-breaking sold-out concert at London’s Cadogan Hall.

Her 2023 album ‘*I Watch You Sleep*’ was a collaboration with the American conductor and pianist [Scott Dunn](#) and the [Royal Philharmonic Orchestra](#). The pair paid homage to their dear friend Sir Richard Rodney Bennett by

recording his songs alongside songs that Richard loved to perform. The album was met with much critical acclaim and was one of Jazz Views 'albums of the year'. The album was described as "a masterpiece" and "an album of exceptional beauty" by The Arts Desk.

Claire's recent 2024 release, 'Almost in Your Arms' (Stunt Records), saw a return to her collaboration with her Swedish trio led by the formidable Martin Sjöstedt on piano and produced by the 5-time Grammy nominated producer James McMillan. It was placed amongst the Albums of the Year critics poll at Jazzwise Magazine and also in their Editor's Choice section, and 'Be-bop Spoken Here' made it number 3 in their top 10 vocal albums of the year. Critic Andrew Cartmel effused, "Almost in Your Arms is a ravishing album – adroit, surefooted and masterful. Jazz vocals – and songs – don't come much better than this" (UK Jazz). The album toured the UK throughout the Autumn and was launched with a sell-out club date at Ronnie Scott's.

'If there's jazz royalty in Britain, Claire Martin is definitely ermine clad'

– Andrew Cartmel, UK Jazz News.