

PRESS RELEASE FROM GLASS CEILING PR
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ARTIST:
ASTRID WILLIAMSON

ALBUM TITLE :
SHETLAND SUITE

LABEL :
INCARNATION RECORDS

Vinyl & digital ALBUM RELEASE :
20TH September 2024

Announcing new solo album 'Shetland Suite'

"In the spring of 2023, in the wake of my mother's death, and perhaps due to the preoccupations of grief, I decided to record Da Selkie Wife's Sang, a Shetland dialect song I will forever associate with my mother's singing. Thus, rather unintentionally, began Shetland Suite."

Shetland Suite is Brighton-based and Shetland-born singer-songwriter Astrid Williamson's tenth studio album and comprises an evocative fusion of folk, electronics and field recordings on which Williamson plays everything. It is a mixture of songs sung in Shetland dialect; tunes Williamson had learned on the fiddle whilst growing up and two songs sung in Old Norse or Norn, the language common to the Islands prior to Scots linguistic primacy which began in the mid 16th century ('Unst Boat Song' and 'King Orfeo'). Two non-traditional pieces also appear on *Shetland Suite*, 'Da Selkie Wife's Sang' itself, and 'Shetlan', which were written respectively by Mary Ellen Odie of Yell, and J. Peterson, the latter work being a popular poem to which Williamson wrote a new melody.

Often unassuming in their melodic simplicity, the pieces lend themselves to evolving harmonic development, unfolding in low strings and organ drones ('Da Narrowa Wheel', 'Bonnie Tammie Scolla', 'Baloo Balilli'). This is then augmented with choirs of layered harmonies, Williamson's rhythmic voice creating textures such as whispering ('Da Selkie Wife's Sang', 'Shetlan'), breath recordings transformed into rhythmic loops (King Orfeo, Bonnie Tammie Scolla) and chants ('Da Narrowa Wheel'). In places we can hear her de-tuned voice creating darker and deeper qualities ('Da Selkie Wife's Sang'). Rhythmically, there is also hand-clapping, knee slapping, table knocking and the occasional taiko sample to create the beats in songs such as 'Boannie Tammie Scolla' and 'King Orfeo'. Field recordings of sea and wind enhance the naturalistic atmosphere, while subtle use of ambient electronic atmospherics imparts an ethereal quality to the album.

Shetland Suite is Williamson's heartfelt tribute her mother, but also a love letter to these beautiful pieces of music. Williamson lived in Shetland until she was fourteen years old and it was there that her mother introduced her to these songs. A piano teacher by profession, her mother took on a goddess-like status to the young Williamson as she listened to her mezzo-soprano 'Selkie Wife' drifting through her bedroom wall on a Saturday night. In stark contrast, the last time she heard her mother sing was during Covid shortly before she died. Although ravaged by dementia, and no longer able to speak, she could still remember the words to these songs – a poignant reminder of the power of music and how it becomes part of our lives.

Astrid will embark on a short UK-wide tour in the Autumn

SHETLAND SUITE - Tour Dates

21st September - The Commercial Inn, Glossop
24th September - The Musician, Leicester
25th September - Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham
27th September - Wrecking Ball, Hull
2nd Oct - St John's Church, Leytonstone, London
3rd Oct - The Folklore Rooms, Brighton
7th Oct - The Cluny, Newcastle

About Astrid Williamson

Astrid Williamson rose to prominence in the early 1990s with her band Goya Dress, whose first album 'Rooms' was produced by John Cale (Velvet Underground). She studied classical piano and composition with Judith Weir (current Master Of The King's Music) at Scotland's Royal Conservatoire, and over a career spanning almost three decades, as a vocalist, musician and co-writer, she has collaborated with various artists including Johnny Marr & Bernard Sumner (as part of Electronic), Arthur Baker, Stereophonics, Leo Abrahams, This Mortal Coil / Hope Blister originator Ivo Watts-Russell, and Lisa Gerrard (Dead Can Dance/Hans Zimmer). She also appeared in Rob Newman's BBC comedy series *The History of The World Backwards* as musical director, song arranger and performer. Her songs have appeared in films such as Bill Forsyth's *Gregory's Two Girls*.

<https://linktr.ee/astridwilliamson>

Official website:

<https://astridwilliamson.com/>

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/helloastridwilliamson/>

Twitter/X:

<https://x.com/HelloAstrid>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/astridwilliamsonmusic/>

Incarnation Records:

<https://incarnationrecords2020.bandcamp.com/>

For all media enquiries, including interviews, photos and review tickets, please contact:

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