

Eliza Carthy – Bio

Eliza Carthy was born on August 23rd 1975 in Yorkshire, England the daughter of *folk legends*, Martin Carthy and Norma Waterson [of The Watsonsons]. Raised in an environment where music was always being played in her *parent's kitchen* – whether a solo/band practice session, or an impromptu musical house party - it's hardly surprising that Eliza went on to become a performing musician. Eliza was fourteen years old when she made her official stage debut – in Canada. Carthy grew up on the family farm near Robin Hood's Bay in North Yorkshire, her first instrument being the piano, on which she was classically trained. Eliza's aunts and cousins – former members of The Watsonsons – lived nearby, and there was always a regular stream of musicians – *an extended family* - passing through the Carthy home.

With two performing musicians for parents, Eliza has been quoted as saying *"It didn't seem a strange upbringing. When I was growing up, music was just something you did. My parents would go away for the summer to do gigs and bring me back presents, that's just the way it was."* It appears that an early indication of a growing interest in folk music came at the age of ten when her parents found Eliza intently studying a book of child ballads. At the age of fourteen her mother asked her to join The Waterdaughters, who were booked to play that year's Vancouver Folk Festival in British Columbia. The line up consisted of Norma, Eliza, her late aunt Lal Waterson, and her cousin Maria Gilhooley.

Soon afterwards, Eliza took up the violin and tutored by fiddler Chris Wood she quickly became an adept player. In the early nineties Eliza worked with a loose aggregation of musicians that later recorded as The Chipolatas, and she appeared on their albums **"Skinless"** [1997] and **"The Reality Check"** [1998]. Aged seventeen she recorded **"Eliza Carthy & Nancy Kerr"** the first of a pair of albums made with Nancy Kerr. The latter recording included the Eliza Carthy penned original "The Wrong Favour." Their second album, **"Shape of Scrape,"** followed a couple of years later, and the *part compilation, part new* recording **"On Reflection"** appeared earlier this year. In 1993 Waterson:Carthy, consisting of Norma, Martin and Eliza, made their debut at the Champagne Valley Folk Festival in the States, and the first of, to date, a quartet of albums by the trio appeared on Topic Records the following year.

Eliza made her solo recording debut in 1996 with **"Heat, Light And Sound."** In 1997 Eliza teamed up with the quartet of - Andi Wells, Barnaby Stradling, Saul Rose and Maclaine Colston - to make the *band* album **"Eliza Carthy & The Kings of Calicutt."** Her sophomore solo release, also on Topic Records, was a double album, **"Red Rice,"** and the recording was subsequently nominated for the UK's prestigious Mercury Music Award. With her profile as an up and coming talent at an, to date, all time high following **"Red Rice,"** Carthy was offered a solo recording deal by Warner Bros. Where her previous solo, duo and group recordings had principally consisted of interpretations of traditional material, **"Angels And Cigarettes,"** apart from a cover of Paul Weller's "Wildwood," consisted of self-penned original songs. Those originals included "Breathing" which focussed upon asthma, a condition that had plagued Eliza as a youngster. The album sold poorly, even though Carthy toured the States supporting Beck, Elvis Costello and Joan Baez. Eliza and Warner Bros., subsequently parted company. **"Anglicana,"** Carthy's stunning return to *traditional* music, married to her individualistic and modern interpretative approach, was released by the Topic label in the early Fall of 2002.

"No One Stands Alone," the debut recording by the folk super-group Blue Murder, featured Eliza along with her father Martin, mother Norma, Mike Waterson her uncle, plus Jim Boyes, Barry Coope and Lester Simpson, surfaced in early 2002. Eliza has guested on her mother Norma's solo albums, and has appeared on recordings made by The Chipolatas, Mrs. Ackroyd's Band, Billy Bragg, Linda Thompson and Roger McGuinn.

In reference to Eliza, while writing this biography, in articles I used as research, I found the following words used with some regularity *"Young, photogenic, opinionated, slightly outrageous with rainbow-coloured hair, displays bottomless vitality, employs musical experimentation, and enjoys an interesting taste in footwear."*

Discography :

solo - **"Heat, Light And Sound"** [1996] ; **"Red Rice"** [1998] ; **"Angels And Cigarettes"** [2000] ; **"Anglicana"** [2002].

with Nancy Kerr – **"Eliza Carthy & Nancy Kerr"** [1993] ; **"Shape of Scrape"** [1995] ; **"On Reflection"** [2002].

with Norma Waterson & Martin Carthy – **"Waterson:Carthy"** [1994] ; **"Common Tongue"** [1996] ; **"Broken Ground"** [1999] ; **"A Dark Light"** [2002].

with The Kings of Calicutt – **"Eliza Carthy & The Kings of Calicutt"** [1997].

with Martin Green - **"Dinner"** [2001]

with Blue Murder – **“No One Stands Alone”** [2002].

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 11/02

[710 words]