



NEWS & INFO

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VOCALIST, COMPOSER & ARRANGER CHRIS McNULTY
HAS JUST RELEASED HER FIRST ALBUM IN 10 YEARS.
'SOUL JOURNEY' INCLUDES 13 TRACKS, SEVEN OF WHICH FEATURE
McNULTY'S ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS, WITH A STELLAR BAND OF
AUSTRALIAN, AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN JAZZ MUSICIANS

Chris McNulty left Australia in 1988 on an international study grant awarded to her by the Australian government to study in the USA. She was based in New York for the next 27 years, performing and touring internationally. She regularly received 4 and 5 star reviews in leading international jazz magazines. In 2015 her album *Eternal* earned her 11th place in the 80th *DownBeat* Readers Poll for Album of the Year.

In Australia she received the 2013 Australian Jazz Bell Award for Best Australian Jazz Vocal Album for *The Song That Sings You Here*, and in 2019 enjoyed a year-long prestigious Bundanon Trust composer-in-residence scholarship.

Soul Journey is a five star album. It was awarded five stars in July, 2026, on *The Australian* newspaper's Music Reviews page, where five stars is a rare occurrence. The accompanying musicians are an important part of the album's success. Well chosen by McNulty, they are a mixture of Australian, American and expatriate European jazz musicians: Brett Williams (piano); John Di Martino (piano); Ben Robertson (bass); Lewis Pierre (drums); Carl Mackey (saxophones); Tony Hicks (flute & clarinets); and Gianni Marinucci (flugelhorn, trumpet).

The album shows how comprehensive is McNulty's jazz artistry. It's well-known that many jazz singers confine themselves to singing lyrics only, and keep improvisation to a minimum. This is not surprising considering that scat singing is widely regarded as the most difficult art form in jazz. The real acid test for jazz singers is whether they've mastered the art of the wordless vocal. Scat singing is not for the fainthearted. On *Soul Journey* McNulty throws down the gauntlet explosively in the first three tracks, all compositions by her: *Secrets That We Keep*, where there's a mixture of lyrics and wordless vocals; then two tracks where the vocals are wordless: *Elegy for Olga*, with minimal accompaniment by two musicians only, Robertson & Williams, with Olga's name mentioned at the end of the track; then *Gratitude*, another wordless vocal. These three tracks explore to the utmost the potential possibilities of the wordless vocal, testifying to McNulty's mastery of this aspect of jazz singing.

It's not for nothing that one of Australia's most prolific jazz writers Ian Muldoon, now based in Melbourne, described McNulty in November, 2023 not only as "the finest Australian jazz voice, of any gender, presently performing in Australia", but also as "the finest Australian jazz singer ever". That's a big call, but Muldoon spoke with authority. Perhaps he was enamoured primarily with the sound quality of McNulty's voice. She is indeed blessed with a gorgeous voice, a subtle vibrato to die for, and a very strong sound in all registers, throughout her whole vocal range. Many other singers would give their eyeteeth for a voice of this quality.

Many who have heard *Soul Journey* agree that the tracks where McNulty is accompanied by the New York-based American composer, arranger & jazz pianist John Di Martino are a highlight. His playing is featured on four standards: Bruno Martino's *Estate* (1960); Rodgers & Hart's *It Never Entered My Mind* (1940); Jimmy van Heusen's *All My Tomorrows* (1959), and Anthony Newley's *There's No Such Thing As Love* (1963). Di Martino assists McNulty to reveal her ability to bring to life standards from the Great American Songbook. McNulty is as conversant with those standards, as she is with modern jazz, and her versions of those four standards illustrate what most people consider to be the essential language of jazz. The album's final track is another standard, her beautiful take on the great Burt Bacharach/Hal David composition *Alfie*. This composition was successful at the 1968 Grammy awards, and Bacharach himself has cited *Alfie* as his personal favourite of his compositions.

McNulty's skills as exemplified on *Soul Journey* are unusually wide-ranging. She is a unique composer in that, like Cole Porter and Irving Berlin, she writes the perceptive lyrics which grace all her songs, as well as their melodies. She has done the core arrangements for nine of the 13 songs on the album, as well as two of the tunes she co-arranged with Di Martino. McNulty speaks highly of Di Martino, saying he "was integral to bringing my originals to life and adding that extra glister to the proceedings". Also McNulty is responsible for three of the background vocal arrangements. Her involvement in so many elements of her music is such that many observers can justifiably argue that *Soul Journey* provides more than adequate evidence of the "comprehensivist" sensibility, very much in the tradition of the late Australian musician Roger Frampton, who introduced the term "comprehensivist" to jazz vocabulary.

McNulty will be following up this album's release by performing the music of *Soul Journey* at Melbourne's prestigious jazz venue, the JazzLab, on March 12, 2027. Also, she has plans to tour with some members of her ensemble in early 2027, following the JazzLab date. She will also perform the more standard material with her Magic Trio (including pianist Matt Steele & double bassist Ben Robertson) at Tempo Rubato in Melbourne, this coming October 30, 2026.