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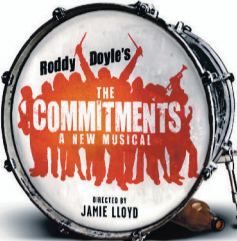
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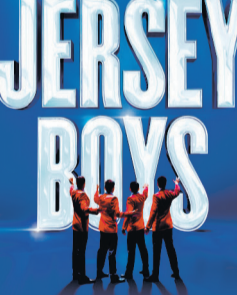
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Review: SCOTSCENE

MAGGIE REILLY was the vocalist on a string of hit singles in the early 1980s, including the catchy *Moonlight Shadow* – number one in 10 countries. Yet you'd be forgiven for not knowing. The record books list those hits under the name of her more celebrated collaborator Mike Oldfield and not only is Reilly backward about coming forward, some in the music industry never wanted her in the spotlight.

Unlike many female stars who have traded on their appearance and sexuality then disappeared, Glaswegian Reilly has enjoyed more than four decades of success based on genuine talent.

Thus, at 58, she can reminisce about dining with David Bowie, performing for the Pope, writing songs on ABBA's piano and turning down Gerry Rafferty.

"In the late 1970s, I wrote some songs and somebody said to me, 'You wouldn't front them because you don't have the right look, but if you did the vocals and we got these girls to front it...', and I went, 'I'm sorry, no, get lost! I'm not singing for somebody else'.

"What a ridiculous idea, having me sing from behind a curtain while others mime out front – a Milli Vanilli kind of thing. But generally I'm not into pushing myself forward. I think that's a bit obscene. It's a Scottish reticence."

As for the physicality of today's young female stars taking precedence over ability, Reilly says: "I worry that everybody is scantily dressed. If you sing, what's coming out of your heart is the thing, not writhing around naked. It's not very feminist; it's about following a pre-ordained idea of what women should do. They also use a lot of auto-tuning. I always insist on singing live when I do TV shows because I don't like miming. To just stand there and open and shut my mouth like a fish is stupid.

"When I started in bands, I used to be physically sick before I went on stage, but over the years that lessened thankfully," she adds.

"I never wanted to be a solo artist. As an only child, I enjoyed being in a band – they were like my family. I was the only female, but I felt more than equal to the guys and I never put up with any nonsense. Very rarely did I get my own dressing room, so I'd change

Peter Robertson chats with Maggie Reilly – the uncompromising Scots singer of numerous 80s hits who has refused to play the fame game during a career which has seen her perform for the Pope and dine with David Bowie

in the toilet... and I still do that in some places."

Reilly was born in St George's Cross, Glasgow, to Margaret and Dan, who died within six months of each other a decade ago.

"I had a happy childhood," she says. "I had great parents and grandparents. My dad was a singer with a fantastic voice, but was very shy and that stopped him and he ended up a taxi driver. Mum, who worked in the car industry for a while, also used to sing and play piano – she was very bubbly."

Reilly got her break when a songwriter friend named Johnny Dick asked her to sing some of his compositions, which led to her being signed by RCA. She first came to prominence with the 1970s Scottish soul-rock band Cado

Reilly. "When he introduced himself, he said, 'I hear you can sing', and I replied, 'I hear you can play guitar!' and that was it. Mike's a perfectionist. He was sometimes difficult, but then the responsibility of having a fantastic show every night was all on his shoulders and must have been so stressful."

Of their five hit singles between 1982 and 1984, they co-wrote *Family Man* which Hall & Oates had greater success with in the UK and US, and created a classic with *Moonlight Shadow*, even though only he was credited on the record. "Mike got a lot of flak from people because it obviously was not a man singing," Reilly says.

She was the first to point out to Oldfield similarities in those lyrics to the December 1980 assassination

of idol John Lennon. "It kind of became the John Lennon song after that. It gives me goose-bumps."

These days, she is probably better known in Germany, Denmark, Norway and Finland – the countries where she mostly tours – and her life is littered with missed opportunities due to her modesty.

"In Britain, when I was invited to parties, I'd either not go or leave quickly. I'm not

into high profile events where everyone's taking photos.

"I remember touring Germany at the same time as The Rolling Stones. We were invited to their show and they put us in an outdoor celebrity pen. As soon as we got there, I thought, 'I don't want to be here!' and I left.

"My agent once invited me to have dinner in a London hotel with him and David Bowie. Bowie was polite and looked fabulous, but I sat there uncomfortably thinking, 'He must wonder who I am and why I'm on this table', and I left as quickly as I could.

"I loved Gerry Rafferty, and when his producer phoned and asked me to work with him in the studio on what turned out to be his second-last album, I panicked. I



HAPPY DAYS: Maggie is still touring and singing hit *Moonlight Shadow*

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Picture: JAMES WILLIAMSON

couldn't do it on that day anyway and, when we tried to reschedule, it didn't work out. I regret that, but I would have been really nervous."

At least Reilly did embrace her most glamorous moment. "I played for Pope John Paul II at the Vatican. It was awesome. We chatted through an interpreter. When he asked us where we were from, I said, 'Scotland', Stuart said 'Scotland', then my English manager was so taken aback he said 'Scottish!' Stuart and I later told him, 'You've lied to the Pope.'"

Having taken part in the original recording of the Mike Batt musical *The Hunting of the Snark*, and declined an invitation to star in the Willy Russell production, *Blood Brothers*, Reilly is now working with MacKillop on their own musical, *The Winter King*, about the west coast of Scotland.

She's been married since 1983 to her sound engineer and now manager Chrys Lindop, 61, and they have a home near Glasgow and another in north London. Their 29-year old son Fionn lives in Galway, making handcrafted guitars, and will be joining his mother on tour later this year.

She says: "If I could re-start my career knowing what I do now, the only thing I'd do differently is not be shy about saying, 'I did that!'"

"Because probably I'd then be able to do more shows in Britain. Nowadays I really enjoy singing *Moonlight Shadow* because the audiences love it and it's fantastic when they sing along.

"I've had a pretty charmed life. I've mostly been able to follow the path I wanted, which a lot of people don't get the chance to do.

"I've been really well-off, I've been really poor, but I'm pleased I'm still able to do what I do best.

"Someone recently asked me about retiring and that's a horrific thought. I don't ever want to retire. What would I do then?"

Maggie is still a shining light in world of shadows

DRIVEN: The always-active Maggie has no intention of retiring just yet



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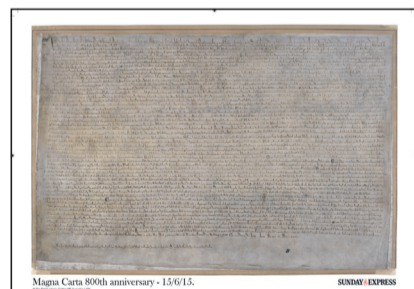
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