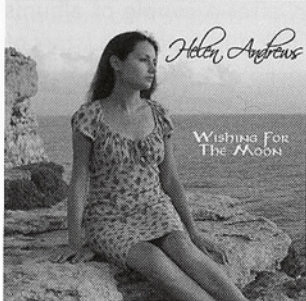


## "WISHING FOR THE MOON"

by HELEN ANDREWS (2008) [49:12]



What the diggery, I hear you mutter, has Helen Andrews got to do with Jethro Tull?? Ah well, sez I, there is a link, albeit tenuous...

In 2003 Ian Anderson played his only non-American "Rubbing Elbows" show, Fareham as part of the Gosport & Fareham Festival (review in *AND* #80). The less said about the non-musical onstage guests the better (the editor and photographer of *AND*, actually), but one of the highlights of the show was the musical guest appearance of, ta-ra, singer-songwriter Helen Andrews. Her song *You And The Summer* made a huge and

moving impression on me at the time, upheld by the wobbly footage posted just recently by Helen on youtube.

At the time, Ian was moved to say, "Helen Andrews is one of those rare music biz commodities - the voice of an angel, the looks of Miss India, and not yet signed to a major record company. Which is just as well, as Helen is a maturing young career artist - not another instant love 'em and leave 'em one hit wonder which the world can do without. She weaves an autobiographical spell of sensitive, sensual mystery - is this the stuff of personal experience or creative, wishful fantasy? - who knows but who cares. In hearing, lies the taking. Her gift to you. Grab it while you can. I don't suppose you have her phone number...?"

Five years later, after a couple of albums with not-really-folk duo Amalthea (stars of last year's Weyfest acoustic stage), Helen has finally released her first solo album (herself - still no major record company). Helen's songs are all about being hopelessly in love, lyrically quite simple but, despite scattered references to oceans and moonlight, a bargepole-length away from clichéd, and thus achingly evocative, all delivered in a beautifully sweet, occasionally whispered-almost-confessional voice which caresses the heart and tickles the tear-ducts of even the most jaded of world-weary cynics (er, me). Half the songs feature just Helen on piano or acoustic guitar, and half are augmented by a band which more glides than rocks, entirely appropriately for songs for which the word 'tender' was invented - although, ironically, the album's only slight disappointment for me is that the song she performed onstage with Ian, *You And The Summer*, has been given a slightly jazz-lite feel, whereas I

think it's one of the tracks which would have benefited from the stripped-down approach. But that's a minor grizzle, probably born from my being so familiar with the acoustic version thanks to a dodgy bootleg recording of the Fareham performance, because the other ten tracks are all completely gorgeous.

When Ian Anderson introduced Helen onto the stage he said, "I was very struck when I first heard this song because, apart from Helen's lovely voice, she has a very interesting harmonic. People who write songs, especially early in their career, usually imitate other people, but this is not only a really nice song, it doesn't sound like anybody else - well, it sounds a bit like...Helen Andrews." And he's right, comparisons with other artists are difficult to draw, as Helen's songwriting and singing styles in terms of construction, phrasing, tempo and lots of other musical terms of which I have zero understanding, are indeed distinctive - plenty of gasps and sighs in store on first, and indeed repeated, listening.

This is an album of rare and magical beauty. As a music fan, occasionally you discover a gem which touches you so personally that you want to keep the secret all to yourself. But hey, I'm a caring, sharing kind of guy, so I do urge you to check out the lengthy samples at [www.myspace.com/helenandrewsuk](http://www.myspace.com/helenandrewsuk)

You will not hear a more intimate, romantic album in the whole of your life, or this year at least.

Completely and utterly wonderful. **MW**