

TO HERE KNOWS WHEN - GREAT IRISH ALBUMS REVISITED

Staros by Nina Hynes

Staros celebrates its 21st anniversary this year and it is the youngest album I've featured on the podcast to date. It was the first full-length album from Hynes following her debut mini-album *Creation* in 1999.

Nina grew up around music, she is the youngest of ten and her parents ran the famous O'Donoghue's pub on Merrion Row. "I grew up working in O'Donoghues," she recalls. "I went in from a very young age and collected glasses, I was a floor girl. It was always jammed packed. It was pretty cool because it was constant traditional Irish music sessions with the best musicians. It was a very rich experience. I loved it."

Nina started writing songs at the age of eight, she took up the piano and late the guitar. By the 90s she was busking on Grafton St. In 1994 she saw Jeff Buckley in *Whelan's* and was so blown away by him that she travelled to Belfast the following day to see him in the *Limelight*. Glen Hansard, who Nina knew, was playing with Jeff. "I had never experienced anything like Jeff Buckley before that. Glen invited me on stage with them. It was a Van Morrison song in Belfast. I didn't know the song. I'm from another planet from these boys, they had this education that I didn't have. They had Bob Dylan and Van Morrison. I was harmonising with them. He was brilliant. I didn't really do much, I just stood there, it blew my mind."

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Like many of her singer-songwriter contemporaries she graduated from Grafton St. to gigs at the *International bar*, the *Da Club* and *Whelan's*. Nina was introduced to the French composer and producer **Hector Zazou** after one of these early gigs. "I was looking for the edges of my voice, I was very bored with singing simple songs," says Nina. "I think Zazou was very attracted to that kind of weirdness. We chatted afterwards and I got a phonecall a few weeks later asking would I come and record in France."

The recording led to a tour of Europe with Zazou and American composer Harold Budd. "I was so ignorant; I didn't even know who Harold Budd was. He was just this nice guy to me."

Nina recorded *Staros* with David Odlum at Black Box Studio in France. Upon its release *Billboard* magazine wrote, "Standing apart from the current trend of folk-based singer/songwriters, Hynes prefers a quirkier approach. Her kooky lyrics are delivered in a sensual, breathy voice underpinned by sophisticated pop sensibility reminiscent of Bjork, and she mixes samples and beats with a more orthodox guitar sound." It remains a singular artistic achievement.

After *Staros* Nina went on to release two albums as Nina Hynes & The Husbands: *Really Really Do* (2007) and *Baby Dance* (2008). She has released a number of mini-albums under her own name including: *Sanctuary* and *Raging Fire* (both 2017). Based in Berlin for nearly 15 years, Nina continues to write, produce and perform music. *ZAP!*, her most recent album, came out in 2021.



Nina Hynes revisits *Staros* on *To Here Knows When - Great Irish Albums Revisited*, available on all podcast platforms. Episode notes and further information: paulmcdermott.ie/podcast

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