



I am Woman – Vale Helen Reddy

Helen Reddy passed this week after a long health battle in Los Angeles.

As a young single mother in the mid-60s, Helen won a Bandstand prize of a trip to America and the recording of a single. That introduction to the American Music Industry fizzled but Helen was not deterred. Helen went on to devise and conduct a remarkable career in the world Music Industry, proving adept at song writing, song production, performance, Television shows and movies. In the past female performers had their repertoire shaped by their managers & record labels. Helen was fiercely self-sufficient for these career decisions and she re-defined the previous sixties model of how to be a world-famous female vocalist. These achievements were only part of the reason for the recently produced biopic about Helen's eventful life – "Helen Reddy" – streaming on Stan.

With a contract with Capitol Record & a marriage Jeff Wald, her manager, she had moved to Los Angeles and was moving in counter-cultural circles with the woman's liberation movement. This was the inspiration for the worldwide hit – I am Woman – which she co-wrote with Australian, Ray Burton. This song started a run of Seven Top 10 hits on the American Charts which led to the sale of 10 million singles and 25 million albums. In 1973, Helen was the first Australian to be awarded a coveted Grammy Award for the song I am Woman. In her acceptance speech, she thanked God 'because she makes all things possible'.

Traditionally, female vocalists didn't make their own repertoire selections. Helen Reddy found and selected a series of quirky yet obscure songs – Delta Dawn, Ain't No Way to Treat a lady, and Angie Baby & You and Me Against the World. Helen moved in the highest levels in the Entertainment Glitterati but always took the opportunity to promote Australian artists. It was on her suggestion that Olivia Newton John moved from the UK to the USA to develop her career. Helen also chose Peter Allen to support her on her last Australian tour in the early 80s. By the 1975, Helen Reddy renegotiated her record contract with a lucrative advance. The tours continued but the hit records slowed. Her final two albums on a major label were produced by Kim Foley (manager of the Runaways). Her reputation, respect and adulation were complete, though the vagaries of continued hit singles slowed. She headlined a major Opera Concert in Sydney, in 1980 in which Johnny Farnham was beginning his career revival. Australia loved her but failed to understand the heights she had reached.

Helen claimed it was her destiny to move to Norfolk Island in 2002 to continue her practice as a qualified hypnotherapist. Helen shared a family connection with Ric Robinson and had a relative in common who was referenced in the book Morgan's Run by Colleen McCullough. Helen made many friends on Norfolk Island, including Annette Stoltz, and members of the Nobbs Clan – Joe, Alex, Tony and Deb.

Despite buying two properties, including one at Autumn Mill Down, as well as an odd collection of farm animals who were tended by John Moge, Helen's application to stay on island was rejected, despite an appeal under the immigration laws at the time.

Even after Helen left Norfolk Island, her home, along with her extensive music career memorabilia was on display for visitors who took the 'Behind the Hedges Tour' with Baunti Escapes. Returning to Australia, she continued her study of natural therapies. Finally, as part of the Australian Music Industry's Hall of Fame, she was re-embraced by the industry and honored. The McClymonts performed I am Woman at her investiture ceremony. Norfolk Island's very own Aaron Pye was the drummer.

At the birthday party for her sister, Toni Lamond, Helen realised her voice was still in fine form. She launched one final international tour in 2014, which was a sell-out.

Helen Reddy joins Ruth Park and Colleen McCullough as part of a trio of world-famous creative artists who recognized the tranquility and creative inspiration of Norfolk Island.

Tribute to Helen Maxine Lamond Reddy

25th October 1941 – 30th September 2020

Of all the national and international tributes given to Helen Reddy on her death yesterday NO mention has been made about Helen's life here on Norfolk Island.

Helen lived here for about twelve years when, as she said: "I have kicked off my public life and living here on Norfolk Island will be my "gap decade" ... this was 2002.

Helen purchased the property she aptly named: "Happy Valley"... and spent many happy years there. Living most of her life in the USA, Helen was a very proud 7th generation Australian. Helen discovered that she had a First Fleet ancestor: Richard Morgan. She found that he, Morgan, had farmed on the property she owned --- "Happy Valley"

While living here, apart from her "Helen Reddy Tours" to her home, Helen wrote her 'life' and it was published in 2006. "The Woman I am".

Many, many early mornings Helen and I would meet at Café Espresso and one 'corrected' her writings she had done the previous day. Helen enjoyed her morning coffees and her special 'foods' that Yvonne Robinson served to her.

Many of us will treasure our memories for. "How sweetly sounds the voice of a good woman! When it speaks it ravishes all senses." (Philip Massinger)

Rest in peace Helen. (Maureen King)