



No-one plays the blues like Darren Watson. Over the better part of three decades he has developed a style that, while touching on all of the greats who inspired him, is personal, powerful and identifiably his own.

Watson gained national fame in the 80s as the fresh-faced, young front-man and guitar-slinger for Smoke Shop. The band made two charting albums, had several radio hits, opened for international blues legends like *Koko Taylor*, *Robert Cray*, *George Thorogood*, & *The Fabulous Thunderbirds*. They toured tirelessly earning Watson a place alongside the likes of Midge Marsden, Hammond Gamble and Rick Bryant as one of this New Zealand's best blues interpreters.

Since leaving Smoke Shop in the early 90's he has cemented his reputation as the country's most original, contemporary blues voice, with three albums of world-class blues music: 2002's Tui-nominated *King Size*, 2005's *South Pacific Soul*, and 2010's internationally acclaimed *Saint Hilda's Faithless Boy*. During this time Darren also fulfilled a life-long ambition working alongside one of his childhood R&B heroes, touring extensively as sideman for *Midge Marsden* and, more recently performing as side-man to Chicago blues harmonica legend *Billy Boy Arnold*. He's also opened for New Orleans funkster *Dr. John*, *Doug McLeod*, *Joe Cocker*, *Keb Mo*, and nu-soul exponent *Eli 'Paperboy' Reed*, as well as appearing at *WOMAD*.

In 2009 Watson won first place in the 2008 *International Songwriting Competition* (Blues), judged by artists and industry-types like *Tom Waits*, *James Cotton*, & *John Mayall*.

This year Darren Watson & The Real Deal Blues Band are performing their first international dates at the *Australian Blues Festival* in February and *Blues On Broadbeach* (Gold Coast) in late May. With his superb album *Saint Hilda's Faithless Boy* garnering stellar reviews in American publications, including prestigious US magazine *Blues Revue*, it may not be long before many New Zealand blues fans will be saying "I knew him when . . ."

DARREN WATSON & THE REAL DEAL BLUES BAND

media kit

2012

"Darren Watson plays the blues with skill and conviction that's more than impressive. It's scary." (Rip It Up)

" Song-writing as sharp as a spear...so good it has almost overcome my lifelong aversion to the genre."

**Grant Smithies
(Sunday Star Times)**

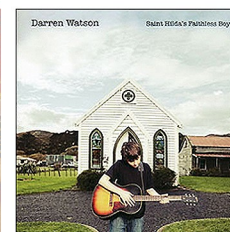
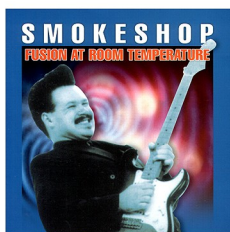
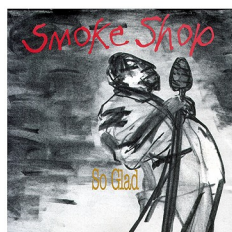
"One of the best support acts I've witnessed; Incendiary, more memorable than the main act."

Simon Sweetman (Dominion Post)

"New Zealand's Darren Watson has crafted a beautiful album in Saint Hilda's Faithless Boy (Red Rocks Records), a set of backward-looking (but by no means retro) blues recorded with a bracing, contemporary sonic treatment. Watson pops his guitar strings like Johnny 'Guitar' Watson on "She Got It All", mines soulful, Robert Cray territory on "Love Is An Ocean", and channels Howlin' Wolf in full, stomping intensity on "A Desperate Man". Dig the swampy roots-rocker "He Don't Love You", the serpentine "The Bitter Suite", and the acoustic slide reading of "My Love Will Never Die" - leagues from Otis Rush's original stylistically, right there emotionally. Watson's hearty vocal approach sounds utterly honest. The supporting cast is superb. " **Blues Revue Magazine (USA)**

"One of my favourite albums of 2010." (New Zealand Musician)

"Stunning emotion. Darren Watson is outstanding! " **Crossroads Magazine (France)**



Alan Norman : Piano, Organ, Accordion, Vocals

Al has been playing in various lineups with Darren for the past 20 years or so. He was member of Chicago Smoke Shop, and spinoff band The Hot Leftovers. Until recently Al was playing piano and accordion with legendary Kiwi country outfit The Warratahs. He also moonlights every now and again with The Windy City Strugglers . . . all in all he's a great musician who plays every night literally on the edge of his seat and always from the heart.

Elliotte Fuimaono : Bass, Vocals

Elliotte is probably one of the most in-demand session bassists in Wellington at the moment. He has a long and storied history including playing for hitmaking reggae/soul outfit Southside Of Bombay, and with hugely influential Wellington soul band 'The Brown Street Band', led by the famous and elusive Branigan Kaa. He moonlights with Wellington fingerpicking guru Dave Murphy.

Richard Te One Jnr. : Drums, Vocals

*Richard & Darren met at Hutt Valley High School in 1983. Since then they have been largely inseperable musically. Apart from Richard's stints with Midge Marsden Band, Ted Clarke's Backdoor Blues Band, and about a dozen other great artists who've coveted the unique feels Richard is capable of that is! He also regularly performs with legendary NZ songwriter Wayne Mason. Richard is without a doubt the best blues drummer Wellington has ever produced. And there's a chemistry between Te One & Watson that **MUST** be seen to be believed!*

Web: www.darrenwatson.com