

# Let's Talk Dusty!

The Ultimate Forum for Dusty Springfield Fans  
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## Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

<http://www.dustyspringfield.org.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=243>

### Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

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by **Hampson**

Posted: **Sat Jan 09, 2010 12:06 pm**

Not sure if we've seen this interview before by Chris Bourke or not, so I've put it on just in case anyone missed it, scroll down the page about half way.

[posting.php?mode=edit&f=7&p=1223](#)

No can't put it on for some reason. Sorry

Wend

### Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by **Corinna**

Posted: **Sat Jan 09, 2010 12:10 pm**

There's something wrong with the link, Wendy, can you try again please?

### Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by **Hampson**

Posted: **Sat Jan 09, 2010 12:14 pm**

Yes it is not happening Cor, what I will do later on, is copy and paste it. OK I think it is a New Zealand interview.

Wend

### Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by **Hampson**

Posted: **Sat Jan 09, 2010 12:32 pm**

Ok try this

[http://images.google.co.uk/imgres?imgur ... 4Aan59XzAg](http://images.google.co.uk/imgres?imgur...4Aan59XzAg)

### Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by **Cas19**

Posted: **Sat Jan 09, 2010 1:45 pm**

That works Wend,  
I don't think I have seen this one before, thank you for posting it.

Casx

### Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by **Kathy**

Posted: **Sat Jan 09, 2010 1:58 pm**

Thanks for posting this Wendy, I hadn't seen it before and really enjoyed reading it. 😊

## Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by **Cardiff Bluesgirl**

Posted: **Sat Jan 09, 2010 3:29 pm**

thanks for this Wend, it was interesting, and all her insecurities etc to the fore. she just never knew how good she was did she? 🙄  
so refreshing though when you see some interviews and the confidence some have when they are so mediocre.  
shes amazing to read about as you can just hear everything she says. 😊

## Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by **karen**

Posted: **Sun Jan 10, 2010 10:51 am**

Yes when she gave interviews she always was so honest about how she felt about herself and her voice, she never appeared to be OTT like some today, far too much hype goes on now, and the help re. orchestration makes a lot of them so false, more what they look like than how they sound, especially the girls.

Karen.

all I see is you.

## Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by **Hampson**

Posted: **Sun Jan 10, 2010 11:49 am**

Yes you can almost hear her saying all those things can't you. And she was so honest about it all. No BS from our Dust.

Wend

## Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by **Cas19**

Posted: **Sun Jan 10, 2010 12:17 pm**

Plus she really knew her stuff didn't she?

Casxs

## Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by **karen**

Posted: **Sun Jan 10, 2010 1:10 pm**

Yes she did know her stuff, and would have made someone a good manager, not that we wouldn't have wanted to hear that voice. 😊

Karen.

## Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by **Clive**

Posted: **Sun Jan 10, 2010 1:52 pm**

Really interesting interview. Thanks very much for finding it Wendy, I'd never seen it before.

## Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by Cardiff Bluesgirl

Posted: Sun Jan 10, 2010 2:00 pm

it was always a real treat to hear her speaking and she had the most wonderful voice etc, remained quite "posh" and didnt develop an American accent in two minutes like some of them do. she was probably too honest I suppose,must have been her Catholic guilt,she couldnt B----s----t like these "stars" today. 🤔

## Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by memphisinlondon

Posted: Mon Jan 25, 2010 12:49 am

I really enjoyed reading this. Thanks, Wend 😊

## Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by daydreamer

Posted: Mon Jan 25, 2010 10:10 am

Thanks for posting this Wendy. I do think I have read it before, if only because of one particular statement. I'd had conversations with people about the fact that we'd never heard Randy Newman say anything about Dusty and here was an interviewer telling Dusty that he'd interviewed Newman and that he had praised her versions of his songs. I remember, and it was probably only last year, saying how thrilled she sounded to have actually got some feedback from him.

## Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by ErgoFergo

Posted: Mon Jan 25, 2010 11:07 pm

Only just spotted this - thanks for posting, Wendy. 😊

At last, evidence of recognition from Randy Newman...

## Re: Interview with Dusty by Chris Bourke

by Corinna

Posted: Wed Jan 27, 2010 3:02 pm

Thanks for finding this one, Wendy. 🌟

Posting the text of the interview here.....

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Dusty in private: a 1990 interview

Dusty Springfield was always cool in our extended family, but in the 1960s I didn't realise how cool. My older girl cousins didn't quite emulate her wigs but certainly mascara and false eyelashes were in heavy use. I have vague memories of watching her television series, mainly for the variety it offered, as did the Johnny Cash show at that time.

By the mid-1970s Dusty in Memphis was spoken about with reverence by rock critics, but you couldn't find a copy in New Zealand. In 1980 I asked my sister to send one out from London, and therein started a love affair. It is the perfect mix of performer, songs, musicians and producer.

When I requested it, I wasn't to know that so many of the key people who have been

central to my musical journey were present: Randy Newman as songwriter, Jerry Wexler as producer, Chips Moman's American studios in Memphis, and his band of great players that combined soul, country and pop into one irresistible stew\* (recaptured a few weeks later by Elvis for his 'In the Ghetto' and 'Suspicious Mind' sessions). Dusty in Memphis deservedly became a perennial entry in "great album" lists; even the liner notes (by Stanley Booth) were excellent. (\*For a great sampler, go to the Memphis Boys site and click on "launch the jukebox".)

In 1987 Neil Tennant of the Pet Shop Boys plucked Dusty from her exile in the US to duet on 'What Have I Done To Deserve This', one of the great singles of the 1980s: it updated her sound while staying true to her early Philips singles of the 1960s.

I jumped at the chance when Rip It Up editor Murray Cammick offered me the opportunity to interview her in October 1990. The album she was promoting was Reputation, produced by PSB's Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe and others. It was a disappointment after the single, and its excellent follow-ups, 'Nothing Has Been Proved' and 'In Private'.

Dusty in conversation sounded just like her records. The husky voice still had an English accent, though the occasional Californian inflection revealed the 20 years she had spent in Los Angeles. But she exuded the same character as her songs: warmth and vulnerability, wit and sensitivity. And girlish high spirits. Less than 10 years later she was dead, aged 59. Here is the complete transcript of my interview with Dusty.

Did you know that you got your first No 1 hit in New Zealand, with the Springfields' 'Silver Threads'?

No I didn't! That was the one record we made I truly liked. That's amazing! That's great! I still like that record.

Do you remember coming out to New Zealand in the 60s?

Yeah! It was part of an Australian and New Zealand tour with, oh, Gene Pitney [left] and the Searchers, Brian Poole and the Tremeloes and all that gang. I remember in Christchurch how pretty the trees were - would they be laburnums? They were lilac coloured, gorgeous. We played Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton, Christchurch and Dunedin, which is indeed a very Scottish town.

Are you happy with Reputation?

[She pauses, hearing a double entendre] The album? [pause] Most of it. Yeah, I think it's good. Sometimes I bemoan the fact that I'd like a bit more musical freedom, but certainly I think it's a good album. I'm pleased with it. There are things obviously ... I'm never completely satisfied, there are things I'd like to go back and do again, but that will always be the case, it's the case of everyone I know.

Have you ever wanted to produce yourself completely?

I sort of did [in the mid-1960s], but I never put my name on it. All of them in the 60s, apart from the American ones. But I have no great ... I like to work with somebody else, producing is really hard work. But I certainly ... there are two types of producer. There is the technician and then there are the emotional ones who need the technicians to work

with. I think that's fairly much the case with the Pet Shop Boys and Julian Mendelsohn. With Neil and Chris they do the writing and know the sounds they want but Julian is the one who gets the sounds. It would be intriguing to work under those circumstances, to have the fellow there, but then I always produced that way, I always needed a technician to get the things that were in my head.

Why didn't you ever credit yourself on those 60s records?

It wasn't done. It just wasn't done. It would have made me look too competent. It was very important at that time - the sort of dolly bird image was not ... it shouldn't have looked too slick. The British have an innate suspicion of things that are too slick. I don't know whether its that way in New Zealand, but it certainly - perhaps a little less so now - but still to this day the things that are the most successful with the average British public, you've got to keep that slightly amateurish quality, that sort of enthusiastic, having-a-go attitude, it shouldn't be too slick, or if it is slick, you mustn't let them know that. Getting too many credits on one label, in the middle of a record, was not a good idea.

It was frustrating, but I was allowed my head, I was allowed ... what mattered to me wasn't the credit, what mattered was getting the job done, and being allowed to do that was quite something, because I was pretty new at it, and I had an A&R man who was quite nice about that. He was having a nervous breakdown in the control room, but the fact is, he let me do it.

It must be frustrating though, now that female performers like Madonna control their own careers and don't hold back.

No, it's nice to see it though. I can be pretty dispassionate about that and say, good on you. [Laughs] I really can say, finally, it started in the 70s with the singer/songwriters started to get a hold. But its nice to see that people are having a major say in their own careers.

Did you have trouble getting Reputation finished? When you spoke to Rip It Up last year, talked about the Fine Young Cannibals and Miami Sound Machine, people like that being involved.

The Miami Sound Machine was my own dream. Certainly the record company wanted to keep it as much in this country as possible. They finally relented on Dan Hartman, but basically they wanted it to be as British as possible. The Fine Young Cannibals ... it's hard to explain this. When you want to work with specific people, you are open to other people's schedules. You have to reach compromises and if it's not possible, it's not possible.

So that didn't work out and neither did the thing with Phil Collins, because up until the last minute he was going to produce two. And he was struggling to finish his own album on time, and of course everything runs over; with the best will in the world things run over time, so that didn't work. But we have a commitment that he'll do two on the next album, but maybe that won't work either. That's the down side of wanting to work with people who have very active careers outside of production. So sometimes you just have to let some things go.

Of course, there's the problem with consistency when working with so many people -

getting a flow through the record.

Well that depends on the sequencing. I wasn't that keen on the sequencing, but I didn't have much say in it. But I don't believe that it's necessary to work with one producer. A lot of performers have six producers. The early albums I did were all over the place in styles: musical eclecticism. I don't subscribe to the thinking that it has to be all one sound, because I go nuts with that. I need the freedom to explore other situations. Whether it works or not, I need that freedom. In fact I'd like more freedom, because when I look back at some old archive material, which I've been doing recently, I was far more eclectic then. I strain under the restrictions sometimes.

Looking back over your career makes me think of that quote by Ahmet Ertegun about black music: that it's always running away from the status quo, always changing the style, moving on. You seem that way too.

Yeah well it's stupid to stand still. This struggle I'm having at the moment ... it's nice having a past, but sometimes it's a real cross to bear. Because if you mention that you'd like to do a really good ballad, the tendency is to ignore the fact that contemporary ballads are often very, very successful, that even heavy metal bands, it's their ballads that stay in the charts for week after week worldwide. The tendency if I say I want to do a ballad is they immediately click back into the 60s, and go, Oh she wants to do a 60s ballad. And I say, No I don't. Their mindset tells them that, so they get afraid of it.

And you know, I'm not a dance artist. If people want to dance to something I've done that's fine, but I cannot ... it's a mistake to channel me in that direction. It's just not right. It's a sort of unspoken battle to try and establish credibility with your own musical ideas. It takes a while to break down people's image of you. If they have one. To say, no I don't want to do a 60s ballad, it's not going to sound that way ...

And you have to point it out to them, over and over again, the success of contemporary ballads. Enormous things: Maria McKee, Mariah Carey - all sorts of huge ballads, that they seem to ignore, but the public don't. When I say they, I mean A&R people in record companies.

Do you get the feeling that there aren't many composers today who write the kind of songs that meet real singers' needs ...

It's very hard to find a good ballad, I must say. That's my dream really, because I think it's what I do best. I'd just like to find a strong, slightly R&B influenced ballad for the next album. That's where I sit most comfortably I think. It's not easy though to find.

I interviewed Randy Newman last year, and he mentioned two songs you've done as being among his favourite covers of his songs: 'I've Been Wrong Before' and 'I Don't Want to Hear It'.

Really? I didn't know he'd ever heard them. I find that enormously flattering, because I worship his musical style, I really do.

I thought one of his recent songs 'Falling in Love' would be right for you.

Really. He's an amazing writer.

On Reputation you picked a Goffin and King number: you went back to Goffin and King

who you covered on the Memphis record.

I didn't actually. It's a bone of contention in a light way, between the record company, the Pet Shop Boys and myself. I didn't want to do that. But I trust Neil so much that I did it. I really did it for Neil. It's really the only song on the album I don't like! I love Goffin and King, I just don't think it belongs where they put it. It doesn't work for me there. But excuse me, I've been wrong before! [Laughs]

But it genuinely doesn't sit well with me. For me to be able to accept that somebody is right, and do it anyway, is an amazing step forward for me. Because a long time ago I would have fought and fought and fought and not done it. But I have an innate trust of Neil and Chris, so I did it. I still tell them to their faces that I don't like it.

They did a wonderful job on 'What Have I Done to Deserve This'. Why did the album take so long?

Oh yes ...

That must have been enormously frustrating for you ...

Oh well. I was being tested. Nobody ever said it, but you were quite aware that the record industry was kind of putting its toe in the water, and debating whether they wanted to get involved on a contractual level for any length of time. And the trust built up through that, and then through 'Nothing Has Been Proved' - these were still on a single basis, there was no long-term contract. And then the success of 'In Private' was what sealed it I think.

They wanted to see whether it would develop. Things are not that great in the record industry. A&R departments have to have a real feeling that it's going to work, before they commit money for budget. And the turning point I think was 'In Private', in that it was so successful all over Europe. It went beyond just being a hit in England, and they thought, Hey, she can really sell records. And their eyebrows went up and they said, Okay! Let's take that risk and go for it. But that takes such a long time.

In the 80s the business has been taken over by accountants rather than musical people.

Oh without a doubt. To use a current expression, "at the end of the day, it's the balance sheet that counts", not the music. I understand them, and the word industry is well used - that's what it is. I feel that people who run companies are industrialists, and have to show a profit margin. I mean, this is the time of year when even well known people get dropped off labels, because the bottom line figures are not right for the accountants. So it's hairy to be in the recording industry, it really is. I have never been that fond of the whole premise of it, but it's something I do, and it's something for the most part I enjoy. But I don't enjoy any of the politics of it. I think they stink.

One legend I've heard is that you advised Jerry Wexler to sign Led Zeppelin. Is that true?

Nooooo. But a wonderful idea! I'm not sure I could have done it or not! No, I didn't hear that. [This may be modesty: the story keeps getting more reliable, and the timing is right: when Led Zeppelin was forming, John Paul Jones arranged her album Definitely Dusty. She then recorded the Memphis album for Atlantic.]

But you did an enormous amount for Motown in Britain, fronting a TV special on Ready Steady Go ...

Yeah, I did an idealistic sort of PR thing, yeah.

Was that your first introduction to black music?

No, no. Do you want to go all the way back? My first introduction to black music was as a kid listening to Jelly Roll Morton singles, old New Orleans stuff. But on a level of contemporary popular black music, no it was before that. I was getting imports while I was still with the Springfields. I was aware of early R&B before Motown was Motown, and early Stax - those labels that came out of the Memphis. Those were my earliest real influences. Around '61, '62.

It's ironic that Motown always emphasised longevity in artists' careers, and pushed them towards cabaret. Whereas you've always had to run away from being in that trap.

I didn't avoid it altogether. That happened to me when I got to the States, when I moved to the States. I fell into that trap. Because that most definitely is where managers who wanted good bread-and-butter artists steered their acts. Because it was at that time a very going concern, the nightclubs and that whole gray area which I hated so much. There was still a massive audience for the nightclub circuit and the hotel chains, which had in each major hotel a room that constituted a nightclub. And they had very major acts there, and you could earn very good money there. It was just an area that I truly hated performing in.

You seem to have had quite a different career in the States. In Britain, it was pop. In America, it was the soul of Memphis and Philadelphia.

Yeah, though Memphis actually happened while I was still living in England. But certainly that was the start of my thinking about going to the States. In hindsight, the Americans have never really understood what I do, they have a great need to categorise things. It makes radio stations very nervous if they can't pigeonhole somebody because of their formats. And in England I was identified, I could almost do anything and get away with it. But in the States you can't do that. So I had several very big hits in the States, but because I insisted on being more eclectic than the record companies would like me to be ...

Some of the English album material was all over the place, and it worked in England but it didn't work for the States. So success there was more intermittent. And the ones that were truly successful essentially categorised me, on what I think is a superficial musical level. I just never had a chance to establish a more substantial musical image in the States.

With the Memphis album, it is intriguing that so many of the great soul players are from a country background.

Yep. And it's ironic to know now that most of those people who were studio musicians in Memphis have all moved to Nashville. I don't know that Memphis is a major recording centre anymore.

No. Only Al Green stays there.

[Laughs] Yeah, right.



And yet you were in Nashville 30 years ago with the Springfields (left).

Right. We made a really horrible album there. But I'm still grateful to that time because that allowed me ... the first time I ever heard Dionne Warwick's 'Don't Make Me Over' was in Nashville. I had to sit down very quickly on the bed in, I remember, the Capitol Motel, with its red carpets. It was really glamorous; I'd never seen a really flashy American motel before. With all the right buttons to push, room service, the works. A really upmarket motel ... but I associate that with hearing Dionne Warwick for the first time, doing that particular record, and thinking, My God this is different. And on the way back stopping off in New York, and hearing the sounds that needed to hear in order to kick my behind into being a solo singer.

Nashville must have still been quite segregated place then, before the civil rights era.

It probably was, I certainly wasn't aware of that, because when you are recording you lead such a sheltered sort of existence, a tunnel vision thing. All I could think of at that time was trying to sing in tune. It never occurred to me to ... I really went through that experience in blinkers, just going to the studio, going back to the motel, going to the studio, going back to the motel. It had no experience for me further than listening to the radio, and realising what [with incredulous expression] music there was there! To listen to, nationally, being played. And how excited I was by that.

Do you regard the Memphis record as the great thing that so many critics do?

No. I do realise, and again it's only in hindsight, like so many other conclusions I reach, that it has a real flow, a real sound, even though I think it lacks certain things in the background, in the musical side of it. It does have a sound. And it does have some quality that some of the other albums lacked. A cohesion. It's such a credit to Jerry Wexler and [engineer] Tom Dowd - their patience with me. Because I was very intimidated doing it, and very fearful. And people have said, well how could you be.

I mean there's nothing more deflating to one's confidence than to have somebody say, "Stand there, that's where Aretha stood." And the only person I know who understands that - and I was really surprised and we had a long talk about it - was George Michael. Because he went through the same thing. Only his was like, "That's where Percy Sledge stood," or "That's where Otis Redding stood." Or something.

And we laughed about it, when I was working with the Pet Shop Boys on the album, we happened to be working in the same studio, and we had a cup of coffee together and talked about it. And I thought, My God. Somebody understands. That I'm not being down on myself. That it was a very real feeling, and that it was something that I had to fight the entire time I was doing the Memphis thing, and it was something I had to conquer. And that it was a true restrictive feeling.

And Jerry and Tom did not understand that. I was so nervous that I lost my voice! With sheer nerves, over thinking, Oh God, I'm not good enough to be here. And they're going to see right through me - I'm just a white girl trying to sound black. And they actually do see through me ...

But that wasn't the way it was for them, that wasn't their experience, but it was mine.

And the patience they showed in getting it out of me was extraordinary. And that album is such a credit to their ability to work with an artist and look past all the insecurities, and to have the patience to know that it'll come eventually.

It's ironic that Aretha was offered 'Son of a Preacher' first but turned it down. She only recorded it after hearing your version.

Yeah. [laughs] And she did a great job. Whenever I did it after that, I always used her intonation.

With that, the tape clicked off, but the conversation continued. What next after Reputation, I asked. (I'd found it rather disappointing: too many producers were involved.) So I suggested Luther Vandross as a producer. This is when Dusty the music fan came out. I jotted down her responses immediately afterwards.

"Oh, that would be a dream!" she swooned. "Whether he'd be available, I don't know, but he's one of my absolute idols."

Or Elvis Costello? "Oh, I did one of his songs a few years ago" - 'Losing You' on the bizarre White Heat, 1982) - "He gave it to me before he did it himself. I couldn't believe I meant something to someone of such a different era."

Have you any plans to sing live again? "No. Maybe in the future. Friends in Los Angeles used to come into the studio and watch me record, overdubbing line after line. Then when I was going to do some live work, they said, 'But can you sing a whole song at once?' "

One last question: you were on Dame Edna's TV show recently. What do you think of her dress sense? "Oh, fabulous!" said the diva famous for her sequined gowns, large wigs and mascaraed eyes. "I had so much fun doing that show. I made a special effort to congratulate his designer for making those fabulous gowns."

Dusty in Memphis may be timeless, but in 1990 Dusty herself wasn't looking back. "I never listen to my old records, they sound corny. They make better records now, they sound better. You can do things now I always wanted to do then."

My conclusion to the original story was, "Dusty Springfield is back, and hopefully in charge of her own destiny." Sadly, that never happened.