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For the attention of:

1 November 2009

Friday 20 November 2009
The Ravenswood, Sharpthorne

DAR WILLIAMS

Support: Max Gilkes

One of the most acclaimed and evocative artists of her generation, Dar Williams has become one of the premier singer/songwriters in America with a fanatical following on the US college circuit.



Raised in New York, Dar spent 10 years living in an artistic community in Massachusetts, where she made the rounds on the coffee-house circuit. She started touring in 1994 and has toured prolifically both nationally and internationally ever since. An early fan of her music was **Joan Baez**, who took Dar out on the road and has recorded several of her songs. Another collaborator is **Sara McLachlan**, when Dar joined her Lilith Fair touring project .

Dar has released seven studio albums, plus *Cry, Cry, Cry*, a collaboration with Richard Shindell and Lucy Kaplansky, as well as a live album. Selling around a million albums to date, she has been named one the few most influential singer-songwriters of her time by Rolling Stone magazine.

Those who have seen Dar live know she is a terrific performer: funny, communicative and powerful. And she's an accomplished singer; her three-octave voice is supple, fluid and gorgeous. More than that, she's a great writer.



In the past, Dar Williams' song-writing has centred-on the personal in such universal topics as politics, religion, sexuality, and family. On her latest album, **Promised Land**, rather than tie the songs together around any particular theme, Dar presents a collection of disparate stories and characters.

Dar's passion for the big picture has led to a long-held connection to social and environmental issues, which she nurtures by getting involved with various projects, including community gardening and lobbying for renewable energy in the upstate New York town where she lives. *"I'm as green as you get for what I do for a living, which require, you know, things like flying. I think about the environment all the time. In a way, that's what the album title is about. I found myself making a distinction between the Promised Land we claim and the actual promise of the land that we try to live up to."*

Read more about Promised Land overleaf...

Tickets are £12 advance (£15 door) and can be bought online at the Acoustic Sussex website; by telephoning 01342 714810/716975; or email info@acousticsussex.org.uk

Quotes - what others say:

"She pushes at [folk-genre's] boundaries, both lyrically and musically" **Time Out**

"Dar Williams rocks out on her latest, in tuneful songs that offer incisive portraits of emotional entanglements and our perilous world. It's a great record." **Wall Street Journal**

"A leader in the folk-pop movement....intimate and profound writing style." **Performing Songwriter**

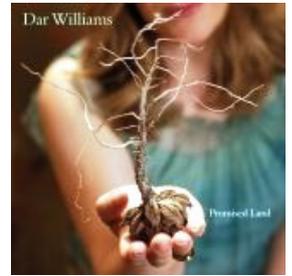
"Seasons change, but Williams remains both ambitious and pleasingly plain-spoken... And importantly, she seems more at ease than ever." **Rolling Stone**

What is Acoustic Sussex?

Acoustic Sussex is a non-profit making organisation that promotes quality singer/ songwriters and other acoustic musicians in the mid-Sussex area, using different venues. We encourage new and local talent by providing support slots for the main act and other opportunities such as 'open mic' evenings. Any profit we make from events is used for charitable purposes.

Dar Williams – ‘Promised Land’ (from her website)

"With every album, I'm trying to figure out what I don't have to say, while still giving each song its due," Dar Williams says. Of her new album, Promised Land, Williams commented, *"On this one, I was paring the stories down to their core. I wanted the songs to sound simple and down to what they were meant to be, which is hard to do. It takes a lot of knowledge to get to the point where you can say what you need to say — no more, no less."*



To peel her insightful, melodic story-songs down to their essence, as well as inject them with the energy and momentum they clearly called for, Williams enlisted Brad Wood, a Grammy-nominated producer and musician known for his work with rock singer-songwriters Liz Phair, Pete Dinklage, and Ben Lee. *"Dar was looking to try something different and get out of her comfort zone,"* Wood says. *"She had made a number of records and it seemed like a good time, career-wise, for her to make a change. I was flattered that she thought to ask me to help. Her voice is so great that you can do just about anything behind her and it's going to sound cool!"*

Personally inspired by the spindly live feel of late '70s/early '80s albums by the Police, Elvis Costello, and the Pretenders, Wood manages to make Williams' elegant, worldly songs sound visceral and urgent, while preserving the integrity and emotion that have been hallmarks of her sound (along with a beautifully intimate, bell-clear voice) since Williams began playing out on the Northeast singer-songwriter circuit in the early '90s.

"Brad understood the songs and gave them the space they needed," Williams says. *"I love that clean, straightforward sound he gets."* And so Promised Land includes several immediately engaging toe-tappers, such as "It's Alright," "The Easy Way," "Buzzer," and "Go to the Woods," as well as Williams' trademark thoughtful balladry, including the keenly felt "Book of Love," "The Tide Falls Away," and "You Are Everyone."

There are also two covers, Fountains of Wayne's "Troubled Times" (*"I'm a sucker for a tragic protagonist conveyed through what seems like a really pleasant pop song,"* Williams says) and "Midnight Radio" from the stage musical and film Hedwig and the Angry Inch, whose soundtrack Wood produced, though Williams says he had nothing to do with her choosing to record the song. "Midnight Radio" was written by composer Stephen Trask, an old friend of Williams' from her college years. *"Stephen and I go way back. He wrote a song for a student film I was in where I played a dancing potato,"* she recalls with a laugh. *"But we also go way back in that spiritual sense, so I always wanted to do that song."*

Throughout, Promised Land brims with the renewed vigor that Williams clearly felt working with a new producer and group of musicians, including Better Than Ezra drummer Travis McNabb, who adds a welcome bounce and spring to the proceedings, and noted multi-instrumentalist Greg Leisz, who has played with Robert Plant and Alison Krauss, Wilco, and Sheryl Crow. Other guest musicians include Williams' pals Marshall Crenshaw (guitars on "It's Alright"), Suzanne Vega (backing vocals on "Go to the Woods") and Gary Louris from The Jayhawks ("The Tide Falls Away").



In the past, Williams' song-writing has located the personal in such universal topics as politics, religion, sexuality, and family. This time, rather than tie the songs together around any particular theme, Williams presents a collection of disparate stories and characters. She writes about trying to be open to major life change on "It's Alright," trying to take the high road in past relationships on "The Easy Way," the perspective that comes with age on "The Tide Falls Away," and the Milgram obedience experiment that took place at Yale University in the '60s on "Buzzer" (*"a subject I have been obsessed with since reading about it when I was 18"*). However, Williams, a wife and mother of a four-year-old son, did find what she calls "the high seas of parenthood" influencing several of the songs, which she began writing after she finished her second children's book Lights, Camera,

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Amalee (published by Scholastic in July 2006).

"I'll go through a day where the only people I'll talk to are my husband, my son, and the person behind the counter at CVS," she says, "but being a parent has pushed me out into my town too. It connects me to all the stuff that I care about, but on a local level, like politics, the environment, one's town, and all the interesting personalities in it. I'm interested in those stories. I see them connecting to the big picture of how people approach life. I think that's in the songs."

Williams' passion for the big picture has led to a long-held connection to social and environmental issues, which she nurtures by getting involved with various projects, including community gardening and lobbying for renewable energy in the upstate New York town where she lives. *"I'm as green as you get for what I do for a living, which require, you know, things like flying," she says. "I think about the environment all the time. The biggest deal to me right now is trying to get my town's elementary and middle schools to look at geothermal as an option," she says.* Williams' other passions include local-food movements and arts outreach with kids. She will often perform at benefits in small towns that are struggling to save a local theater, bookstore, or farmer's market. *"I love to get into these places and learn about their battles," she says. "In my mind, this country is like a patchwork of towns filled with people hanging out, growing gardens, listening to music, and talking about important stuff. In a way, that's what the album title is about. I found myself making a distinction between the Promised Land we claim and the actual promise of the land that we try to live up to. "*

Williams' growth as a person over her 15-year career has gone hand-in-hand with her evolution as an artist. Raised in Chappaqua, NY, and educated at Wesleyan University, Williams spent 10 years living in the thriving artistic community of Northampton, MA, where she began to make the rounds on the coffeehouse circuit. An early fan of her music was Joan Baez, who took Williams out on the road and recorded several of her songs. Williams self-released her debut album, *The Honesty Room* in 1993, then signed with Razor & Tie Entertainment in 1995, which has been her label home ever since. She has released one live album — *Out There Live* (2001); six studio albums — *The Honesty Room* (1993), *Mortal City* (1996), *End of the Summer* (1997), *The Green World* (2000), *The Beauty of the Rain* (2003), and *My Better Self* (2005); and one live DVD — *Live at Bearsville Theatre* (2007).

Through it all, Williams' motivation as an artist is to *"experience meaning without fooling myself,"* she says. *"There are these moments where everything feels connected, and I think my art is about trying to find the stories that make us feel connected. That's the verve of my life. It's what keeps things interesting."*



More at www.darwilliams.com

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