

DARREN WATSON

Original Blues From New Zealand

Darren Watson gained New Zealand-wide fame in the late '80s as the guitar-slingin' frontman for rhythm and blues outfit Chicago Smoke Shop (later just Smoke Shop). The group of blues-mad Hutt Valley teenagers made two albums, had several bona-fide radio hits. With a few years hard touring the band won a secure place in the hearts of Kiwi music fans. Before they imploded, Smoke Shop also earned multiple NZ Music Award nominations and shared stages on NZ tours with international artists like Koko Taylor, The Robert Cray Band, George Thorogood, and The Fabulous Thunderbirds. Since leaving Smoke Shop in the early 90's Watson has cemented his reputation as the nation's most original, contemporary blues voice.

Watson has released six world-class albums including 2002's King Size which was a NZ Music Award finalist. 2005's South Pacific Soul included the song All Going Wrong which won 1st place in the blues section of the 2008 International Songwriting Competition. 2010's Saint Hilda's Faithless Boy was critically acclaimed both in NZ and overseas, and Introducing Darren Watson from 2014 did a very rare thing for a Kiwi blues artist in the 21st century – it spent some time in the mainstream album charts, peaking at a respectable #26, while hitting #6 on the NZ Artists Chart. That same year Watson had to fight and win High Court and Court of Appeal battles to have his satirical song Planet Key available for sale and broadcast after it was effectively banned by the Electoral Commission.

On the live front he has continued to be in demand as both a support and headline act with shows working alongside artists like Dr. John, Keb Mo, Eli Paperboy Reed, Doug McLeod, Emmylou Harris, Eric Burdon, Joe Cocker, Midge Marsden, and Billy Boy Arnold. He's played Australia's Blues On Broadbeach Festival and The Australian Blues Music Festival as well as impressing at dozens of New Zealand festivals.

Darren's latest album, Too Many Millionaires was released on May 1, 2018. It entered the NZ Top 20 Album Chart at #3 and stayed in the chart for five weeks.

Anyone who thinks only Americans can authentically sing the blues should listen to this album by the New Zealander Darren Watson.

Blues Matters Magazine (UK)

Darren - you're a MUTHA!

Rick Holmstrom . Mavis Staples Band

Soulful guitar playing and powerful vocals . .

Blues Blast Magazine (USA)