

# *Blues In The Night*

**From the Evening Press, first published Friday 17th Dec 2004.**

Just A Quickie with... Sheilah Cuffy, whip-cracking star of Blues In The Night at the West Yorkshire Playhouse.

*You were born in London, and you moved to Madrid 11 years ago. How come you are swapping Spanish sun for the winter blues in Yorkshire?*

"I was at home in Madrid one morning when Geraldine Connor rang me and said 'What are you doing at Christmas? Why not come to Leeds and do Blues In The Night with me?' Geraldine had given me singing instruction 20 years ago, but that was 20 years ago, and I was saying 'You do realise voices change with age and living?', but she said 'I want you for this role'."

*What are your recollections of your tuition days under Geraldine?*

"I was doing a fashion degree at what was then Middlesex Polytechnic and I decided I wanted to sing. Geraldine was my first teacher and she pushed me to sing in bands and to do auditions, and then she was the musical director for my first show, Oh Babylon at the Riverside Studios in London... about 10,000 years ago!"

*Why did you move to Madrid?*

"I was doing Carmen Jones at the Old Vic for two years and I wanted a change. Someone offered me a job as a singer with a Spanish artist on a big tour for three months, based in Madrid. Madrid! Of course I said 'Yes', and I've since seen all of Spain, touring every year and I've toured South America, Cuba, Europe and Japan, going all over the world with different bands.

"Having initially gone for just three months, I've ending up staying for 11 years, doing all kinds of music, flamenco, rock, blues, pop, jazz, a bit of everything, working in clubs and touring. I've done a couple of acting jobs and I do some teaching, and I'm also the director of an a cappella gospel choir, Inside Voices - and I do lots of commercial jingles in Spanish too."

*This year you have starred as the Killer Queen in the Spanish production of the Queen musical We Will Rock You. Did you rock them?*

"In April of last year I got this call saying, 'There's going to be this musical, Queen something or other in Madrid', and I thought 'Yeah right', and then a friend said I had to play the Killer Queen, and I thought to myself, 'A part for a big black singer in this show? Yeah, right! But then I opened the programme from the London show, and there was a picture of Sharon D Clarke as the Killer Queen... and I'd understudied her in my first job in 1986!

"When I went for the auditions I was told it was going to be sung in English, but then they changed their mind and decided to do it in Spanish. Then they heard me sing Another One Bites The Dust so badly in Spanish that they let me do it in English in the show."

*You used a leather whip in We Will Rock You. Is there any such excitement for your character, the Lady of the Road, in Blues In The Night?*

"I have a leather riding crop, riding hat and leather basque for Take Me For A Buggy Ride, and I go buggy-riding around the stage and into the audience. I think this show's going to be raunchier than last year... wait and see!"

Blues In The Night, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds, until January 29. Box office: 0113 213 7700.

**Charles Hutchinson**

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