

Hazel O'Connor

When the Society's Events Officer **Matt Parkinson** discovered that 'Breaking Glass' film star, singer, songwriter and well-known vegetarian, Hazel O'Connor, was performing at Manchester's Life Café, he seized the opportunity to join Hazel for a nice cup of tea...



Why did you become vegetarian?

I saw a programme called 'The Animals', narrated by Julie Christie, in 1982, and I can still remember a specific scene with two farmers talking about how to get their pigs up a ramp and into a lorry, which would transport them to the abattoir. I realised two things: firstly, I didn't want to be like those farmers. Secondly, these pigs were intelligent animals and knew what fate awaited them. I decided that I didn't want to eat them anymore. At first, I decided that I would just give up factory farmed meat, but even the free-range and so-called organic meat seemed to scream at me, and I soon realised that I didn't have a taste for any of it!

What's your favorite dish?

I love humus – living in Ireland, I used to travel 20 miles to buy it, but you can buy it everywhere now. I've started making my own, actually, as I love garlic – I

think the manufacturers should put more in! I love tofu but it has to be cooked right! My favourite dish is 'Peking vegetarian duck' from my local Chinese restaurant in Wicklow. I love Chinese food, unless they add too much MSG.

Why did you choose to call this tour 'Torch to Flame'?

I love torch singers and I wanted to do a tour that specialised in the ballad songs, but I've never been a ballad songwriter and I don't think torch singers are necessarily the same as ballad singers. To me, torch singers evoke real passion, so I thought if I call it 'Torch to Flame', the 'Flame' part can encompass songs such as 'Eighth Day' and 'Big Brother' – songs that have a 'flame' to them, but that can still come under the banner of a torch song.

Who would you say has influenced you musically?

Oh, everything from Nina Simone, Steve Marriot, Billie Holliday, Nico, Velvet Underground, Lou Reed, David Bowie in the early years, but nowadays I have a lot of respect for Macy Gray – I'd go anywhere to see her live! And Moby, because of the way he's used his music to put out the vegetarian and vegan message.

Who do you think you have influenced?

Apparently Kylie Minogue! A friend rang me up and said that there had just been a profile of Kylie Minogue on TV, and it stated that Kylie considered me to be one of her influences. I'd quite like Kylie to do a cover of 'Will You?' now!

How does your Hare Krishna religion influence your life?

I believe in karma: what goes around will eventually come around. To me, my religion is not about worshipping a cult of personality; it is about allowing myself some time on my own with my chanting beads and my little altar, which I set up every night, wherever I am. I think every person has a right to try to have a personal relationship with the divine, whatever the divine may be, or whatever concept they believe the divine to be.

Are you optimistic about the future?

The future I wish for is a future without weapons of mass destruction, because no man is to be trusted. I think that the Fair Trade movement's time has at last come, and that more and more people are realising that purchasing power, the power we possess as consumers in the choices that we make when we buy products, is an

extremely effective tool in shaping the world. I think that there will be a green revolution as well. A lot of people that I know are saying that they planning to vote for the Green Party next time the elections come round, and that is what I am going to do. I think we have to have a green revolution because, if not, we are going to irreversibly, ruin the world.

Do you see vegetarianism a part of that green revolution?

Yes, very much so. Society as a whole has become desensitised to some of the horrors of the world, be it animal cruelty or human rights violations. I see vegetarianism as one way of listening to your heart and doing what, deep down, you know is right.

And how do you see your own personal future?

I want to do a lot more travelling. This current tour has been the happiest time I've had for years. We just to jump in the car and get on with it, and that's how I'd like to continue really. Just quietly getting on with it, for the rest of my life, and doing anything I can to be of service to my fellow human beings. And, of course, to find a really sexy, hunky man!