

# Tsunami survival made Emma transform her life

## Rhythm section

by Kevin Bridges

**T**HIS time last year Edinburgh-born singer-songwriter Emma Gillespie was spending most of her time busking on the streets of Glasgow.

Twelve months on her life has completely changed.

Under the name Emma's Imagination she's set to release the single *This Day* tomorrow, with her debut album, *Stand Still*, due for release a week later.

It was on her way home from busking one day that she spotted a sign inviting people to audition for the Sky 1 talent show *Must Be The Music*. On the spur of the moment Emma went to audition and months later had won the show and landed a record deal.

## Chugger

She told me what spurred her to take a chance on the talent show.

"I'd been working on the streets as a charity fundraiser but that was standing around outside for eight hours, whereas with busking I only had to do it for two hours to make enough to pay my rent.

"I walked past the poster and I thought, 'Why not?' I wasn't signed into any dodgy contracts and it was letting me sing my own songs on the telly."

Emma soon realised it was a bigger deal than she'd expected — with well-known judges including Sharleen Spiteri and Jamie Cullum and a final playing live at Wembley Arena in front of 12,000 people.

"I had no idea of the scale of it. I was very nervous playing in front of that many people and it definitely affected my performance but it can't have been too bad because I won," she laughed.

Emma's been writing and



■ Emma's life was drifting till she escaped death in the 2004 tsunami.

singing for many years but she admits she had been drifting a little with it.

"Music was a way of expressing myself but I never dreamed I'd be doing it for a living. It'll be weird seeing my album in shops."

She's not sure where her musical talent comes from.

"None of my family is musical but it always seemed to come very naturally to me. One of my earliest memories is sitting in front of a dinky little keyboard listening to songs on the radio and copying the melodies.

"I'm very much self-taught, but it was never a chore to learn. I

play the guitar but have no memory of learning how to play it," she laughed.

Before her fateful decision Emma has travelled round the world taking on a dizzying array of part-time jobs — from teaching herself to be a plasterer, working on a New Zealand dairy farm to pearl fishing in Australia and even had a spell teaching circus skills!

"I guess I was drifting but I always had my guitar with me. My family were supportive but I think even they were starting to wonder whether I was ever going to settle down to anything, I was being a bit of a hippy, I suppose."

## Disaster

Everything changed for her when she was staying on the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean when the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami hit.

"Half an hour before I was on the beach and we left just before the wave came. I realised I wasn't indestructible. It was a turning point for me — thinking I nearly died. It made me realise you only get one chance with life and about what I really wanted."

Her plan became to carry on with her music and a trip to New York inspired her even more.

"It gave me the push I needed. I thought I'd play lots of little gigs and slowly build up a fanbase but getting into *Must Be The Music* escalated everything. I would have carried on chipping away otherwise."

Now she's hit the big time Emma admits to struggling a little with fame. "I'm awkward and shy when I get recognised. I'm not a loud, fame-hungry person and don't really want to have to leave Glasgow as that's where all my friends are."

Even before her music is released Emma found herself having a different Hogmanay. "I was on the BBC's Hogmanay show, but it was just a couple of songs so I could still go to the bar!"

This year should bring plenty more for Emma to celebrate.

## Album of the Week

Queen

**Greatest Hits (2011 Remaster)**

(Island)

THERE'S no doubt this will be a big year for Queen fans old and new as to celebrate 40 years since Freddie Mercury, Brian May, John Deacon and Roger Taylor formed the band, *Queen's Greatest Hits* has been digitally re-mastered.

With the accompanying release of *Greatest Hits II* it marks the start of a year which will see all the band's studio albums repackaged and reissued as well as special events.

However if you really want to know why Freddie and the gang have such a fantastic reputation you really have to go no further than this as it's a masterclass in pure pop genius. It also reveals what an amazingly varied band they could be. Naturally there's the



over-the-top vocals of *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *Somebody To Love*, but there's so much more too.

The hard-rocking element of songs such as *We Will Rock You* and *Seven Seas Of Rhye* sits perfectly easily with the light and breezy pop such as *Killer Queen*.

There's also the rockabilly *Crazy Little Thing Called Love* next to the foot-tapping funk of *Another One Bites The Dust* plus the musical theatre of *Good Old Fashioned Loverboy*.

For them to be adept in so many styles was quite remarkable. So it's no surprise the album ends with one their singalong stadium triumph *We Are The Champions*. They certainly were.

**Antony And The Johnsons**

**Album — *Swanlights***  
**Key track — *Swanlights***

ALWAYS intriguing, this collection from the band is less commercial than some of their previous work.

Intense, brooding and musically sparse, it's the otherworldly voice that dominates here.

This standout track with its treated guitars and drone-like quality is hypnotic.

**I Blame Coco**  
**Album — *The Constant***  
**Key track — *It's About To Get Worse***

THE debut album from Coco Sumner has sadly been rather overshadowed by the fact she's Sting's daughter.

Once you know that you can't help but see massive similarities in their vocal style.

This is a promising debut and if you liked The Police you'll probably enjoy this album too.

## Don't Miss Downloads

**My Chemical Romance**  
**Album — *Danger Days: The True Lives Of The Fabulous Killjoys***

**Key track — *S/C/A/R/E/C/R/O/W***

THE hugely successful US rock act have followed up their huge *The Black Parade* album with this no-nonsense one of full-on stadium-friendly rock.

Loud, bombastic and slightly patchy it may be but this standout track is a riveting slice of catchy guitar-driven rock.

This is the album's best tune by far and impossible not to like.

**Shayne Ward**  
**Album — *Obsession***  
**Key track — *Crash***

HIS *X Factor* win seems light

years away now, but Shayne's still managing to pull off consistently entertaining if slightly bland albums.

You can imagine most of these tracks being sung by the likes of Westlife or Boyzone and his voice fits the bill perfectly.

There's nothing too surprising or fresh about the music here but this strong cut has a good melody and is winningly sung.

**Rumer**  
**Album — *Seasons Of My Soul***  
**Key track — *Healer***

ONE of the new voices of last year, Rumer's come up with a classy collection that makes you sit up and take notice.

Cool, sophisticated and beautifully produced, there are lots of echoes of such greats as Karen Carpenter and Dusty here.

This is one of the more sumptuous ballads on offer with a glorious melody.

## The List

### New you

**Books** RESOLVED to transform your life in 2011? *What You Believe Creates Your Reality* by Maggie Currie (Book Guild, £9.99, ISBN 978-1-84624-466-7) and

*How To Get Off Your Backside And Live Your Life!* (Live It, £14.99, ISBN 978-1-906954-11-6) by life coach Joyce Campbell will help you, as will Sue Hunter's *The Sole Trader Quick Start Handbook* (Dash House, £6.95, ISBN 978-0-95673571-3) if you plan to start your own business.

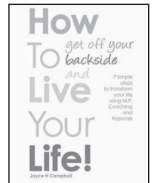
**CD** NEED inspiring music? Look no further than *The Classical Album 2011* (Decca) which features arias from a galaxy of Decca's stars.

### Concert

THE National Youth Orchestra of Scotland will welcome in the New Year on Thursday with *Postcards From America*, a programme of music drawing inspiration from the US at Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall. It will be conducted by Julian Clayton and starts at 7.30 pm. ☎ 0141 353 8000 or go to [www.grch.com](http://www.grch.com)

### DVD

COMEDY series *The Trip* (BBC DVD, £19.99), starring Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon, will bring laughter into your 2011 as they play exaggerated versions of themselves touring restaurants and competing over who does the best impressions. Very funny and honest.



### Choir

IF you fancy some stirring music to blow away the cobwebs of 2010, the Edinburgh Royal Choral Union is poised to give its 124th annual performance of Handel's *Messiah* under the baton of guest conductor Brian Kay tomorrow at the city's Usher Hall. It starts at noon. ☎ 0131 228 1155 or go to [www.usherhall.co.uk](http://www.usherhall.co.uk)

### Waltzes

STRICTLY got you into the Viennese waltz? See it in its many variations danced to the glorious music of the Strauss family in the *Johann Strauss Gala at Dundee's Caird Hall* on Thursday at 7.30 pm ☎ 01382 434940 or [www.dundee.com](http://www.dundee.com), Aberdeen Music Hall on Friday at 7.30 pm ☎ 01224 641122 or [www.musicallaberdeen.com](http://www.musicallaberdeen.com) or Glasgow Royal Concert Hall on Saturday at 3 pm and 7.30 pm ☎ 0141 353 800 or [www.grch.com](http://www.grch.com).

### Families will enjoy

**Stars** TOMORROW for three nights on BBC2 rock star scientist Professor Brian Cox and comedian Dara O' Briain host live stargazing from observatories around the world. Linked to it are local events around the UK to inspire a new generation of astronomers. For your nearest one go to [www.bbc.co.uk/stargazing](http://www.bbc.co.uk/stargazing)

**Dance** ALL the family can learn to step dance together with the new tutorial DVD released by dance group Dannsa. It's designed for beginners and those of intermediate ability and costs £15 from [www.dannsa.com](http://www.dannsa.com)

**CDs** PEGASUS ENTERTAINMENT has released five CDs of favourite songs from children's films including *Snow White*, *Pocahontas*, *Beauty And The Beast*, *Mary Poppins* and *The Jungle Book* which you and the little ones can sing along to.

