

= Faryl =

Faryl is the debut album by British mezzo @-@ soprano Faryl Smith , released on 9 March 2009 by Universal Classics and Jazz . Smith rose to fame after her appearance on the second series of Britain 's Got Talent , and signed with Universal after the competition . The album was recorded during December 2008 and January 2009 and features the track " River of Light " , a song set to The Blue Danube with newly written lyrics . Faryl was produced by Jon Cohen , and the backing music was provided by a 60 @-@ piece orchestra . As part of the album 's promotion , Smith made numerous television and radio appearances and filmed a music video for " River of Light " . Around this time , she met with then @-@ Prime Minister Gordon Brown at 10 Downing Street .

After its release , Faryl became the fastest @-@ selling classical solo album in British chart history , selling 20 @,@ 000 copies in the first four days , and a total of 29 @,@ 200 copies in the first week , higher than any other debut album of a classical singer . Faryl entered the UK Albums Chart at number 6 , rising to number 4 the next week , and was the third album by a Britain 's Got Talent contestant to reach the top ten in Britain . Smith subsequently embarked on a promotional tour in the US to publicise the album , where it reached number 6 on the classical chart .

Faryl was fairly well received by critics , who praised Smith 's performances and Cohen 's production . However , criticism was directed at the use of the orchestra and at the song choices . As one of the ten best @-@ selling classical albums in the UK in 2009 , Faryl was nominated for a Classical BRIT Award in the album of the year category , but lost to Only Men Aloud 's Band of Brothers . In 2013 , the album was certified gold by the British Phonographic Industry .

= = Background = =

Smith rose to fame when she , aged 12 , competed in the second series of ITV talent show Britain 's Got Talent . During the series , she performed " Ave Maria " and a cover of Sarah McLachlan 's " Angel " . After her initial performance , she received singing lessons from Yvie Burnett , a move criticised by the press . Although she was at one point the favourite to win , she finished outside the top three in the live final . During the competition , Smith rejected offers of a record deal , and afterwards rejected offers from Sony BMG , instead signing a £ 2 @.@ 3 million , multi @-@ album deal with Universal Classics and Jazz , the most lucrative ever offered to a schoolgirl .

= = Recording = =

Faryl was recorded in London during Smith 's Christmas holiday during December 2008 and January 2009 , and completed on 3 January . It features a 60 @-@ piece orchestra , which was recorded at Air Studios , in London . The album includes the song " River of Light " . The track is a recording of The Blue Danube , a waltz composed by Johann Strauss II , with newly written lyrics . Smith talked about " River of Light " to the press , saying that The Blue Danube " now has words put to it . I like it because it 's different . Everyone knows the tune and everybody has got high hopes for it . " Smith said that her favourite song on the album was her version of the Welsh hymn " Calon Lân " . Other songs include Smith 's version of " Amazing Grace " , a cover of " Annie 's Song " by John Denver , and a version of " The Way Old Friends Do " , rewritten for Smith by Björn Ulvaeus . Smith spoke about the song , saying " It was about divorce ... They didn 't think it was appropriate for me to sing about that , so Björn changed the lyrics so it 's about friendship . " The album was produced by Jon Cohen , who has previously worked with artists including the Operababes and Vanessa Mae .

On 23 February , The Sun reported that Universal had received the first shipment of Faryl , but due to a pressing error , though they looked like Smith 's albums , they actually contained the music of The Fall 's album Imperial Wax Solvent . Universal was reported to have " severe words " with the pressing plant . The mix @-@ up received attention from the international press , including an article in Canadian magazine Exclaim ! .

= = Promotion = =

Promotion began in January , with performances by Smith at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel and appearances at the debut of the Oliver ! 2009 revival . Smith also took part in a photoshoot for publicity and cover photos . According to writers for the Daily Mail , the cover photo was modified to give Smith " a smile worthy of a model from a Colgate advert " , due to her " gappy teeth " . Though generally critical of the move , the report conceded that it was better for Smith 's teeth to be digitally straightened , rather than forcing her " to endure a battery of dental surgery " . A television advert and music video for " River of Light " were recorded to further publicise the release , and Smith also appeared on the cover of April 's Classic FM Magazine . Further promotion in the weeks leading up to the release of Faryl included Smith appearing on Loose Women , The Paul O 'Grady Show , BBC Radio 4 , Radio Five Live and BBC Breakfast . She also appeared at the Children 's Champion Awards and met then @-@ Prime Minister Gordon Brown at 10 Downing Street . On the day of the release , there was an album signing in Smith 's hometown of Kettering , at the HMV branch . Smith said " I definitely want to be at home for the launch . I want to be surrounded by my friends and family because , obviously , it 's a big deal for me . "

After the UK release , Dickon Stainer , head of Universal Classics and Jazz , spoke of plans to publicise Faryl in the US , saying " America is going to be key . Because of her history on the talent show there 's already a great deal of interest in her . The demand is intense . " In April 2009 , Smith travelled to Los Angeles to begin her promotion of Faryl in the US . She appeared on The Ellen DeGeneres Show in early May as part of her promotional tour . Faryl was released in the US on 5 May . Smith said before the release that she did not expect it to sell as well as it did in the UK . She said that " in the US it 's a lot harder because I 'm not as well @-@ known . In the UK , a lot of people obviously watched ' Britain 's Got Talent ' and stuff , and that was like fresh in everyone 's minds . " After the release , she was more optimistic , saying " [ w ] hen I performed in New York , it reminded me of the HMV signing in Kettering and there was quite a big queue so I think my album was well received . " Smith returned from the US in early May . Despite the contrary being said when she performed on the third series of Britain 's Got Talent , Smith had no plans for a concert tour in 2009 ; she was quoted as saying that " I 'm too young and don 't think I would be able to do a tour on my own " . However , she did plan to return to the US during her summer holidays to again promote Faryl . She said that " everyone in America was really nice and they do like classical music , but it is so difficult to make it over there ... They seem to like their own singers , but I will just keep trying my best " . However , she instead took a short break from her music career in summer , before returning to the recording studio later in the year for Wonderland , her second album , which was released in November .

= = Reception = =

Reviewers were generally impressed by Smith 's performances . Pete Paphides , writing for The Times , said that the songs were performed " with power and restraint " , while Johnny Davis , writing for The Observer , said " [ y ] ou can practically hear Katherine Jenkins weep as Faryl flawlessly executes Amazing Grace " . Jason Birchmeier , writing for Allmusic , considered Smith 's performance even more noteworthy because of her young age . However , though he considered Smith 's voice impressive , Malcolm Mackenzie , writing for The London Paper , asked " will we care when the kid from Kettering loses her precocious appeal ? " Reviewers also responded positively to Cohen 's contribution to the album . Paphides claimed that his arrangements " suggest some kind of aesthetic endeavour beyond the basic thing for which they exist " , while Birchmeier claimed that the album was " produced with fine precision " .

Reviewers were more critical of the use of the orchestra . Helen Sloan , writing for Crackerjack ( Bristol Evening Post ) found that the orchestra rendered " the whole thing a bit bland and movie @-@ soundtrack " , and Birchmeier found it to be " a bit overwhelming " by the end of the album . Further , he was critical of the inclusion of " Amazing Grace " and " Ave Maria " , considering them to be overly predictable song choices . Though he was pleasantly surprised by some of the inclusions ( such as " River of Light " and " The Way Old Friends Do " ) , he concluded that " [ i ] t 's too bad that

[ Smith ] isn 't given more creative material to sing . One hopes her next album is more adventurous . "

Overall , Paphides awarded the album 3 out of a possible 5 stars , and compared it favourably to three other Mothering Sunday releases , Lionel Richie 's Just Go , Ronan Keating 's Songs for My Mother and Barry Manilow 's The Greatest Songs of the Eighties , considering it stronger than any of the others . Davis also awarded the album 3 out of 5 , while Birchmeier was slightly more positive , awarding Faryl 3 @. @ 5 out of 5 .

= = Performance = =

At the beginning of February , Faryl was placed at 295 in Amazon.co.uk 's best @-@ sellers chart and 13 in its easy listening chart , based on pre @-@ orders alone . A week before its release , the album was in the top 100 selling albums , and was the top @-@ selling opera album . Retailers in the UK ordered more than 80 @, @ 000 copies of the album in the week leading up to release , which Simon Cable , writing for the Daily Mail , noted was more than U2 's recent No Line on the Horizon . It also topped the Amazon.co.uk presale chart . On the day of the release , based only on presales , the album was at the number 1 spot on the UK Albums Chart . The album became the fastest @-@ selling classical solo album in Britain , beating Hayley Westenra 's Pure , selling 20 @, @ 000 copies in the first four days . The first week resulted in sales of 29 @, @ 200 copies , which is higher than any other debut album of a classical singer . Faryl officially entered the UK Albums Chart at number 6 , and climbed to number 4 the following week . Faryl made Smith the third former Britain 's Got Talent contestant to achieve a top ten album , after Paul Potts ( with One Chance ) and Andrew Johnston ( with One Voice ) . In the US , Faryl peaked at 31 on Top Heatseekers Albums chart , and at 6 on the Classical Albums chart , remaining in the charts for one and 17 weeks respectively . By February 2010 , over 160 @, @ 000 copies of Faryl had been sold , with over 150 @, @ 000 of these in the UK . In July 2013 , the British Phonographic Industry certified the album gold , denoting shipments of over 100 @, @ 000 units in the United Kingdom .

In February 2010 , after the release of Wonderland , Faryl was nominated for a Classical BRIT Award in the album category . The category is voted for by the public , and the shortlist comprises the ten best @-@ selling classical albums of the previous year . Faryl lost to Only Men Aloud 's Band of Brothers . Smith herself was also nominated in the young British classical performer category , becoming the youngest ever double Classical BRIT nominee .

= = Track listing = =

= = Personnel = =

= = Charts = =

= = = Chart positions = = =