

# FULL BEAUTIFUL

A Faery's Child

INTERVIEW  
Phil Brucato

PHOTOS  
Courtesy of  
Wendy Rule

THE MAGIC  
OF  
*Wendy  
Rule*

# If twilight has a voice, then that voice is Wendy Rule.

To hear her sing is to move from the comfortable world of electric light and synthetic darkness into someplace more primal. There's an implacable quality to that voice — a wilderness where nurture and terror combine. Wendy's art goes beyond the trite pretenses of Goth or Folkishness. Her voice can shift from maiden to crone in a single note, and although the emotional texture of her work seems melancholy, it's too rich to be so narrowly defined.

An old soul in a trickster's guise, Wendy hails from Melbourne, Australia. For the last decade, however, the world has been her home. Touring with her brand of ritual cabaret theatre, Wendy has walked faerie paths outside Yorkshire, watched sunrises in Berlin, and breathed the ashes of post-9/11 New York. Still, it's wilderness that inspires her most deeply. She might draw influences from smoky jazz clubs and wild techno raves, but if you want to find the true source of her artistry, just walk along a woodland river and watch the sun go down.

Despite the dark tone of her work, Wendy's no mopey Goth diva. In person, she cuts a flamboyant figure. A Gypsy pirate mama with juicy curves and plenty of attitude, Wendy enjoys fine food and good company. Her rich Aussie lilt curls around raw jokes and metaphysics with equal fluency. Booted or barefoot (never, she stresses, in mere shoes!), she keeps her feet firmly in the Good Earth even as she dances through it. Like the river running past her home, she's never quite still. Darkness is just part of a deeper realm for her.

Painting flowers and singing herself through trances, Wendy rambled through the wild places near her home in Melbourne while growing up. High-school theatre honed her appetite for performance, and by her twentieth birthday she'd hit the stage as a jazz singer. She soon built a strong local following, but some vital element was missing. After a series of collaborations, Wendy found her Deeper Magic through a series of intense encounters with Partnership, Love, Death, and Birth. Since that transformation, Wendy has recorded a collection of albums and videos, often in collaboration with cellist Rachel Samuels. Touring extensively in Europe, Australia and the Americas, she forges friendships wherever she goes. Despite her obvious affinity for Witchcraft, Wendy refuses to label herself by hierarchies or politics. "I see myself," she says, "more as a universal witch... I just do what I must and what feels right."

These days, Wendy's supporting her newest album, *The Wolf Sky*, in various gigs and rituals. Her partner, jeweller William Llewellyn Griffiths, performs percussion in her band and shares their travels with Wendy's son Rueben, now fourteen and a mystic in his own right. Back in Melbourne, Wendy lives near the heart of the city, nestled near the Yarra River and thick-forested parklands. I caught up with Wendy during the scattershot days of her most recent tour. Given her twilight image, I decided to ask an unexpected question...



**So — what makes Wendy Rule smile?**

My darling son Reuben can always make me laugh. And my boyfriend William, too. I smile when I'm in Nature, wandering alone — maybe whistling or humming a little tune. I have a circle of wonderful friends, and one in particular, Melissa, always has me in stitches.

**You seem to be every inch the Romantic. If I wanted to put together a soundtrack for Percy Shelley's poetry, your work would be at the top of my list. Do you see yourself in that role?**

I'm glad that you picked up on that, because the work of the Romantics has had a major influence upon my music. I don't really see my Romanticism as a role, though — more as a character trait. I've had a passionate interest in literature all my life, and the Romantics of the early 1800s continue to be my favorites. In fact, I actually think I dress a little like Lord Byron, all velvet coats and long boots. I adore the Romantic willingness to explore the full gamut of human emotion: the ecstatic highs and lows, joys and terrors. And their awareness and love of Nature is so like my own!

**Your music reaches deep into the soul. Where do you think that quality comes from, and how do you reach that place when you're creating art and magic?**

My music is one of the most important ways that I connect with my deep self. I find that in order for my music to really resonate with me, I must be completely truthful with myself. I really dive in and try to be present with whatever emotions are channeling through me. Sometime this can be pretty confronting, but I think it's my willingness to do this - to strip back layers of Self - that helps other people open up to their own deep, emotional essence.

**There are some very theatrical elements in your work. Where does that connection come from?**

For as long as I can remember, I've been a singer. As a little girl I'd spend hours off with the faeries in my garden, making up little songs. This, though, was a very private world. It wasn't until I was a teenager that I really felt an urge to perform in public. I began with school musicals, playing Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*! I was about fifteen then, and from there on outward I took private singing lessons. This led to other amateur theatre adventures, but really at this stage my focus was much more on singing than on drama.

I was also passionately committed to the study of literature. After high school, I went on to study literature and drama at college, but ended up doing a triple major in Literature and dropping the Drama. Even then, I was still involved in theatre to some extent, and had also formed my own little jazz band, Wendy and the Flyboys, performing regular shows around Melbourne.

But really, everything came together for me once I began performing my original music. I combined elements of theatre, music, and ritual — casting circle on stage and invoking various energies. In 1999, I wrote and produced my ritual play *An Underworld Journey* and once again dived fully into the world of theatre. After spending many years performing mainly in music venues (festivals, pubs, and clubs), I'm now once again drawn back to theatre, and have begun work on another ritual play that will be presented around autumn of next year.

**You've got an obvious jazz cabaret influence running through your music and stage show, too...**

Well, I used to sing jazz quite a bit, and actually still like to do a jazz gig every now and then. I love those old torch songs — moody and smooth. In my original music, I don't consciously create a jazz or cabaret sound... but of course my years of working in that realm would create some sort of imprint.

**In contrast with the likes of Enya or McKennitt, there's a wild desolation in your sound - almost a desert cry of the soul. Where does that cry come from?**

From the Underworld! I feel in some ways that I'm a sort of channel for the Dark Goddess. When I was younger I spent a lot of my time in the Shadows, and suffered a lot of emotional pain and depression. Writing my own music has been my way of healing myself. I'm a Scorpio (born on Halloween, in fact!), so traveling the dark lands of transformation feels natural to me... and very beautiful as well. I kind of feel as though it's my duty — or more, my calling — to act as a guide to people who find themselves in the Underworld. Our culture is very obsessed with the Light — always trying to be upbeat and happy. But Nature isn't like that. We must have our times of hibernation, of Winter. I hope that my music reminds people that this journey need not be morbid or terrifying. It might still be painful, but it's a healing pain.

**How did you come by your interest in magic?**

When I was a child I was very, very connected to the Faery world. I would trance out very easily — I'd love to have the level of ability now that I had when I was five or ten years old — and my closest friends were inhabitants of that world. In fact, it wasn't until I was about twelve that I accepted that I couldn't (physically) fly!

I've also always been in love with Nature — my great Lover. As a kid, I had a strong spiritual urge but wasn't really satisfied with the low-key Protestant upbringing I was offered. It was when I was pregnant with my son that I first became fully conscious of my Goddess self... and that led to my discovery of Witchcraft.

**Where do you see the line dividing intentional theatricality and personal reality?**

The line is very blurred. For me, every performance is a ritual. I set out to create a Sacred Space each time I perform, then invite the audience to journey with me. Sometimes the ritual element can appear quite theatrical — casting a circle is, after all, very dramatic — but it is always meaningful for me. I'm a very passionate performer, and my music is incredibly personal. I think one of my gifts as a performer is this willingness to be vulnerable on stage.

**If music is a magical act, what intentions do you bring to it, and what kinds of results would you like to see arise from it?**

Music and theater has its beginning in ritual. My intention is to remind people to connect with their wild, deep selves. Because my music is very emotional, I think it creates a gateway for people to allow their feelings to become more accessible. I also like to remind my audience of the never-ending cycles of Life, Death, and Rebirth. What I bring to my music is my pure, deep, magical Self. And what I hope arises from it is an awakening to these same qualities in all of us.

**Have you encountered any obstacles or hazards as a Witch, a woman, and an artist who's both?**

Yes, it can certainly be a tricky being an artist in this culture! I'm completely independent as a musician, which has the advantage of total creative freedom but also means that I don't have the managerial and practical support that working with a record label would bring. This means that I work damn hard managing myself. I do everything from writing the material to booking gigs, promoting, organizing tours for my band, keeping up my website, and so on. In Australia, we just don't have the population to sustain anything as eclectic as what I do, so touring overseas is a really important part of my career.

I think that my Witchcraft is what has enabled me to keep sane and healthy. My journey as a Witch reminds me that my music is much more than a career for me: it's my soul journey.

**You're quite the vagabond. How does the spirit of Australia inspire you?**

Well, because I am Australian, it's hard for me to answer; it's so much a part of me that I can't really separate out my magic and art from my homeland. I believe that a sense of the vast spaces of Australia is reflected in my music; I also have a frustrating sense of isolation - I even have a song called "Continental Isolation" on my first album. I adore Australia, but sometimes wish it wasn't so far away from Europe and North America. However, the distance I have from those dominant cultures does allow for some interesting insights. It's almost as though, by being one step removed from the rest of Western Culture, we Australians gain a fresh and lovely understanding of it.

**What impressions would you like to share about your homeland, and, for that matter, since I live in America, what's your impression of the U.S.?**

Australia is actually very cool. Gorgeous wilderness of course, but also some very cultured cities. I'm sure you hear lots about Sydney, but Melbourne is really where it's at in terms of art and music. I find that it's quite European, with a vibrant café culture and lots of little alleyways and music clubs and cozy little bars. Any night of the week, there will be a huge selection of artistic offerings to choose from. And, yes, there is something kind of Wild West about Australia. There's certainly a renegade spirit that runs through our culture. Unfortunately, I'm very disappointed in our political state — it's becoming more and more conservative and closed-hearted — but I'm sure many Americans feel the same about their country, too!

Still, I love visiting America. Your wild places are absolutely beautiful. I feel a special affinity with New England area, especially the gorgeous forests. But it is the epic redwoods of Northern California, and the stark beauty of New Mexico that make my heart soar the most. I've developed strong friendships with many people in the States, to the point that I feel I'm really part of a much bigger tribe.

**We're experiencing some scary times. As a traveling spiritual artist, where do you think we are heading?**

Well, there is no doubt that it is a terrifying time to be living in. But besides the fear and hatred that sometimes seems to fill the world, what I see is pockets of strongly motivated and connected people who are genuinely working at spreading love, not only for each other but for Mother Earth as well. Coming to the end of the era of oil, we are inevitably heading for change... but there's no reason that this transformation needs to be catastrophic. It could, in fact, mobilize people in a very positive way. The danger seems to lie in people remaining too attached to their old structures.

**Who are some of the people who've inspired your career?**

William Blake, Bjork, Joselyn Pook, Kate Bush, Nick Cave, Leo Tolstoy, W.B. Yeats, Edvard Munch, Lisa Gerard, The Doors... oh, and especially the work of the ancient Greeks. Greek and Celtic mythology have had major impacts on my work, and my life. The list could go on forever!



**At the moment, it's difficult to obtain your albums outside of Australia. Are there any plans or options available for folks who'd like to get your albums?**

I wholesale to a company called Azure Green [www.azuregreen.com] that sells my CDs on line. The company's website doesn't list all my titles, but they certainly stock them, so it's worth sending them an email. *newWitch* will also be carrying *World Between Worlds*, *Lotus Eaters*, and *The Wolf Sky*, you can order from them by calling 888-724-3966.

You can also order from my website (see below) and I'm also in the process of exploring some options for download services. Hopefully soon I'll find a label in the U.S. willing to press and distribute my albums. Of course, the best way to pick up an album is to come along to one of my shows when I visit the States next year. Watch my website for details and updates about my touring plans. I love to see my fans in person!

**If you had a huge production budget in the studio, what would you like to do with it?**

I'd like to spend as long as I needed recording an album in a gorgeous studio in the middle of a forest. I'd like to have the budget to be more experimental in the studio. It's frightfully expensive recording an album, and I'm always very mindful of having to be efficient with my time.

**What would your dream project be?**

I'd like to create an extraordinary tree house to live in, surrounded by gorgeous forest and close to a sparkling river. There, I could lie back and look at the winds in the trees, dreaming and thinking and composing...

**Mmmm... wonderful. Speaking of dreams and composition, what advice might you offer to young or aspiring artists - Pagan or otherwise?**

Always, always, to be true to your Self. Listen to what your heart wants to create, not to what you think might be successful. Music is a very fickle business. At the end of the day, whether or not I become some sort of superstar, I'm very proud of the work I've created.

**Where do you draw hope for the future?**

In the enduring power of humans to continue to love.

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## Wendy Rules!

To hear the Aussie Muse in all her glory, check out the following releases. Many tracks are available to download at Wendy's official site: www.wendyrule.com.

### My Top 13 Wendy Rule Songs

1. Chariot (*Zero*)
2. Circe (*The Lotus Eaters*)
3. Continental Isolation (*Zero*)
4. Creatures of a Day (*World Between Worlds*)
5. Horses (*The Lotus Eaters*)
6. Inanna (*World Between Worlds*)
7. The Killing Moon (*Artemis*)
8. Firehorse (*The Wolf Sky*)
9. La Femme de la Mer (*The Lotus Eaters*)
10. The Lake Isle of Innisfree (*Deep Within a Faërie Forest*)
11. L'Pavane (*Deep Within a Faërie Forest*)
12. Under the Willow (*World Between Worlds*)
13. The Wolf Sky (*The Wolf Sky*)

### Full-Length Studio Albums

- **Zero** (Shock Records #WENDY006, released 1996). A potent debut, *Zero* shows an artist of formidable promise already in full bloom.
- **Deity** (Shock Records #WENDY007, released 1998). Though marred by weak production values, *Deity* succeeds thanks to Wendy's vocals on songs like "Open My Senses" and "Shine."
- **World Between Worlds** (Shock Records #WENDY008, released 2000). One of my "essential Pagan music" picks (see Chalice & Keyboard in *newWitch* #8), this album is a dark masterpiece of chants and trance.
- **The Lotus Eaters** (Shock Records #WENDY009, released 2003). Inspired by the shock of 9/11, this album offers lush meditations of faith, loss, and restoration.
- **The Wolf Sky** (Shock Records #WENDY011, released 2006). As dark and stirring as its name suggests, Wendy's newest album is her most stylistically diverse work to date.

### Collaborations and Side Projects

- *Deep Within a Faerie Forest* (Sequoia Records #X116, 2004). Recorded with American artists Gary Stadler and Lisa Lynne, this album is rather twee; still, Wendy gives resonance to light material.
- *A Night of Jazz with Wendy Rule and Friends* (Shock Records #WENDY0010, 2004). Live recording of jazz standards with the Wendy Rule touch.

### Other Works

- *An Underworld Journey* (independent video release, 2000);
- *Artemis* (four-track CD single, out of print but available for download at Wendy's site; Shock Records, 1999);
- *The Best of Pagan Song* (collection; Serpentine Music Productions #SMP8, 2004);
- *Continental Isolation* (three-track CD single, now out of print; Shock Records, 1996);
- *Wendy Rule Live* (independent release, now out of print; 1997). ☺