

When Red Cordial Turned into Wonderdust

“I first loved music for all the wrong reasons,” Lizzie Flynn says with a smile.

At eight years old, Lizzie and her cousin Cecilia would hurry through their small-town streets after school to piano lessons at Mrs Williamson’s house. Not for scales. Not for theory. Not even for the upright piano waiting in the lounge room. They were racing toward the kitchen table.

“Waiting for us was a cool glass of red cordial” she recalls. Raised by what she affectionately calls her “health nut” mama, access to sugary drinks was very limited at her house.

“Red cordial made ‘Skip to my Lou’ skip along with excitement in those piano lessons.”

Music stayed with her through high school, surviving a clarinet rendition of *Danny Boy* at Speech Night, singing a solo in a left-field, but popular Superman spoof musical — and by the time she graduated she knew music was her favourite subject, but did not realise that going to university to study music was a serious option.

A journalism degree followed. And a boyfriend. Then came what she now sees as a pivotal turning point. “Luckily, something happened to me after I graduated that has proved very helpful for many aspiring musicians,” she laughs. “I became unemployed.”

In that in-between time, Lizzie immersed herself in music. Her brothers, one living in Texas, the other in Melbourne, mailed her albums filled with acoustic folk and singer-songwriter treasures: Shawn Colvin, the Indigo Girls, Paul Kelly, and Tiddas. But it was going to a live gig and seeing Deborah Conway perform that sealed her fate.

“I wanted nothing more than to write songs like she did, so I went out and bought a guitar.

Her mother, who at the time was breeding Border Collies, was concerned. “Declaring that I had ‘too much time’ on my hands, she said that if I didn’t find a job, then I had to help her with the dogs. I was, literally, in the doghouse.”

Lizzie laughs at the memory. “I cut my teeth on bar chords while Border Collie puppies cut their teeth trying to bite my toes. It wasn’t a bad time, but I knew I needed to make some changes...”

Determined to take music more seriously, she auditioned for the Contemporary Music degree at Southern Cross University in Lismore, majoring in vocals. The experience broadened her listening and sharpened her craft. She met singer Lisa Brennan, now a lifelong friend, and at that time they performed gigs as a duo *Lily*, a highlight being included in the program at Woodford Folk Festival.

After Lismore came Melbourne and a postgraduate study at The University of Melbourne, living in share houses with creative personalities, a band called *Ode to a Goldfish* and a job teaching music at a Greek primary school while learning Beginners Greek herself. “At least I could understand the 6-to-9-year-olds,” she mused.

In that time Lizzie recorded her first solo album ‘Stitches’ which was also the name of the title track on the album, and featured 10 original songs.

‘And decisions are like stitches, where we sew our lives together and I guess we just patch over our regrets...’ (Stitches)

Lizzie’s next big decision was to move to Dublin, which had been on her mind for some time.

“With a last name of Flynn, I always had a yearning to live in Ireland,” she says. Having grown up listening to her grandmother play traditional Irish tunes on piano, she felt an immediate connection to the city’s vibrant independent music scene. She found work as a secretary by day and spent her nights watching and performing gigs.

“I was influenced by the heartfelt melodies and lyrics of the Irish singer-songwriters,” she reflects. “It made me practice more. And it made me write a lot of songs — mostly about love and homesickness.”

On returning to Brisbane, that body of work became *Hush*, her debut independent album. Supported by an Arts Queensland Grant, *Hush* gained favourable reviews and allowed her to tour the East Coast of Australia.

‘Well, your words are spilling out, all over the sky, and there are things that I don’t want to try, Cos you try and talk to make it alright, but all I want of you, of you tonight...’ (Hush)

Since then, Lizzie has released two further albums. *You & The Open Sky* was launched successfully at The Powerhouse in Brisbane, with the theme of living every moment to the fullest being embraced in her single ‘Awakening’.

*‘Keep me in this moment, everything slow motion,
Time is never broken, Time can bend...’(Awakening)*

And 2026 takes us to Lizzie’s fourth album *Wonderdust*, which was recorded in Brisbane by multi-award winning guitarist, composer and producer, Michael Fix (<https://michaelfix.com/>). This album is not credited solely to Lizzie but also to three Brisbane musicians called The Runaway Trains: Gareth Mewes (violin); Benja King (Double Bass) and Samuel De Santi (guitar, mandolin). These super talented musicians have been performing with Lizzie for several years and have influenced the arrangements of this collection of songs. Drawing on folk, pop, acoustic and Celtic textures, this album balances lyrical vulnerability with strong melodies with Sam De Santi adding the mandolin which drives the rhythm. With a nod to her beginnings, Lizzie

also features her best friend from her days at university, Lisa Brennan, who arranged and sang the fantastic backing vocals.

*'Happy Birthday, the candles burning bright
One year colder and still, I long for you tonight
In that shirt faded and blue, always sing so out of tune
With your knife ready in hand, you could cut my cake and heart in pieces too...'* (Wonderdust)

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From Melbourne skies to Irish inspiration.
From Lismore friendships to the sounds of Brisbane.
From Red cordial into Wonderdust.

Lizzie's journey of curiosity, courage and hard work has been transformed into a luminous fourth album.

Wonderdust, by Lizzie Flynn & The Runaway Trains, is available on Bandcamp, with an album launch in Brisbane on April 26th.

Lizzie Flynn is a singer-songwriter based in Brisbane who performs with The Runaway Trains. Lizzie has also been commissioned to write songs for various projects, including theatre shows for the QLD Cabaret Festival, (<https://www.lizzieflynn.com/cabaret-stop-the-clocks/>) and a curated art project at QAGOMA for the 11th Asia Pacific Triennial Kids! (2024/2025). (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIFSaXsY9-Q>)