

Dana Gillespie - Back to the Blues (1999)

Written by bluesever

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01. Who's Got The Blues to Blame - 5:03 02. Too Blue to Boogie? - 3:53 03. Blue Night - 4:35 04. Baby Blue - 5:15 05. Blue Water - 4:37 06. Back to the Blues - 3:35 07. Travelling Man Blues - 4:13 08. Guardian Blue Angel - 3:58 09. The Sky Will Still Be Blue - 3:30 10. It Makes Me Blue - 5:27 11. Turning Over a Blue Leaf - 4:51 12. Queen of the Blues - 3:46

These days Dana Gillespie is renowned as a blues singer. But back in the 1960s, she was an ingénue pop/folk singer whose relationship with singer Donovan helped set her on the road to success. However, despite some great singles – including, most notably, the Donovan-penned You just gotta know my mind – and a couple of highly credible albums, her career was slow to take off.

She was born Richenda de Winterstein Gillespie on 30 March 1949 in Woking, Surrey. She grew up dividing her time between England and the family villa on Lake Maggiore in Italy.

As a child she took a keen interest in sports and by 13, she was the British junior water skiing champion, a title she held for four years in a row. She also had a passion for music, and she became the drummer in a band she formed, performing some local gigs.

As a teenager, she was drawn to London's club scene, becoming a frequent visitor at the Marquee club in particular. She even got to sing in the club, and was promptly offered a contract by The Yardbirds' manager, though she turned it down.

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She also began hanging around with folk singer Donovan, and their association led to a recording deal for Dana with his label, Pye Records. He also played guitar on Donna Donna, which was issued as her debut single in 1965. It was swiftly followed by Thank you boy, produced by Jimmy Page (later of Led Zeppelin). Neither 45 shifted in any great quantity and Dana began acting, appearing in the 1966 films Secrets of a windmill girl and Fumo di Londra (Smoke over London). Returning to music, she toured with The Hollies and others and cut a version of the Manchester group's Pay you back with interest, which was issued as a single in 1967. When Decca's Dick Rowe spotted her, he was quick to sign her up. (He is reported to have been less interested in her singing ability than in, er, two of her more visible assets.)

Donovan wrote the terrific You just gotta know my mind, which became Dana's debut 45 for the new label in November 1968. Again Jimmy Page took production credits. Great things were expected of the release but it wasn't to be. The song was also recorded in French and issued in France as Tu n'as vraiment pas changé. (The B-side, Il m'aime, il ne m'aime pas, was a version of her own composition He loves me, he loves me not.)

She kept up her acting work too, appearing in the Hammer horror film The lost continent. On the music front, an album, the highly accomplished Foolish seasons, gained a US release that year. Though Dana now dismisses some of its more lightweight tracks, the LP stands up as a great example of late 1960s British psych-pop.

A second LP, Box of surprises, was issued a year later. Dana had penned all of its tracks and the album was folkier and bluesier than its predecessor. Neither LP troubled chart compilers, however.

In 1970 she joined the rock musical Catch my soul and met David Bowie's manager, Tony Defries. Dana was already friends with Bowie and it was suggested that he should produce her third album. However, by the time she came to record Weren't born a man in 1973, Bowie's career had taken off and he didn't have time to do it, though he did write a track, Andy Warhol, for the album, which was also issued as a single.

Dana headed off to New York City to promote the album, but after a further LP, she became caught up in litigation with her management company, which took three years to resolve. She was prevented from recording during this period, so she focused on acting, appearing in Ken Russell's Mahler in 1974, The people that time forgot in 1977 and opposite Dudley Moore in Hound of the Baskervilles in 1978, where her ample bosom became the subject of much

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innuendo. A few further TV appearances followed in the 1980s.

When she returned to music, it was to blues that she devoted herself. Indeed, it is as a blues singer that she is now known. She also recorded a few albums in Sanskrit under the name of Third Man. She continues to sing blues internationally to this day. --- readysteadygirls.eu

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