



Fiona McDonald.

Height 160 cm

MC/Entertainer Biography
JOHNSON&LAIRD

How's this for a send-off: Fiona McDonald spent her last night in Australia jamming with indie rock band REM around the grand piano in the group's hotel lobby. The singer-songwriter had been working in Sydney record stores to earn her keep, but after two years she'd decided to call it quits and return home. That night she hooked up with the touring REM through friends of friends, and now has a travel story that's hard to top.

One of New Zealand's most successful singer-songwriters of the 1990s, Fiona is best known as a member of the iconic Kiwi bands the Headless Chickens and Strawpeople. She's picked up three awards for best New Zealand vocalist at the New Zealand Music Awards, and helped produce a string of hits for both bands. She's also written and sung numerous advertising jingles, released her own album *A Different Hunger*, and hammed it up for a musical version of Peter Jackson's cult splatter movie *Braindead*.

The bubbly performer has crossed from stage to small screen as a tough-love judge on the first series of TV ratings winner *New Zealand Idol*, and host of quickfire make-over show *10 Years Younger in 10 days*. A polished presenter, Fiona has also fronted the travel-focused *Discover TV* commercials, and co-presented series one of *Communicado* production *The Big Art Trip*.

Her big musical break came halfway through an arts degree at the University of Auckland. She was working part-time as a dj, assistant station manager and jingle singer at student radio *bFM* when her dulcet tones caught the attention of local band *Diatribes*. She ditched the degree and spent the next year or so singing by night and working in retail by day to pay the rent until Australia called and she headed offshore.

A born performer, Fiona would coerce her schoolfriends to smear on makeup and stick out their tongues as American rock band *Kiss*, to entertain at her all-girls school camp concerts (she was lead guitarist and 'spaceman' *Ace Frehley*). The petite performer is a little more sedate in her dress these days, and loves wearing long feminine dresses on stage a reaction to being in a bandful of boys, she says - but despite reaching just 160cm you'll never see her in high heels, at least on stage. Her stage shoe of choice is a pair of chunky boots; she likes to stomp around up there. Stage fright doesn't bother her, it's more the stage height. A candidate for mild vertigo and claustrophobia, you won't find Fiona admiring the view from the top of tall buildings, or peering into confined spaces.

She admits she's no adventure seeker but she loves getting back to nature by camping and kayaking. Her dream is to buy a motorhome, slap two kayaks on the roof and tour New Zealand's top camping and kayaking spots. When not running around after her two small children, Fiona tends the family vegetable plot and worm farm, and one day hopes to run a full marathon and leave everyone for dust.