

Helen Reddy's Success Secret:
"Success is being happy with who you
are and what you do."

Photo by Doug Kirkland



"I Am Woman" Helen Reddy – still inspiring women to roar

By Leigh Henderson

The Woman I Am, a retrospective CD of Reddy's songs and her memoir of the same title, will be released next month. Because of that we wanted to find out what she's been up to.

It was back in 1972 that Australian-born Helen Reddy recorded a song that was to become the anthem of women around the world. "I Am Woman" embedded itself into our collective consciousness by declaring women were strong, beautiful, and invincible. The short phrase, "I am woman, hear me roar," encouraged women to be heard in their personal lives and as they marched into the workplace.

Surprising some, Reddy's song quickly went to the top of the record charts, selling 25,000 copies a day, making her a millionaire, and earning her a Grammy. Counting her other top hits like, "I Don't Know How to Love Him," "Delta Dawn," and "You and Me Against the World," Reddy has sold more than 15 million albums and 10 million singles.

Reddy speaks with PINK about her song and her life.

PINK: Your memoir is arriving in book stores soon. What's the subject of your second book?

HR: Taking back our power. We – those with feminist values – have abnegated our responsibilities.

PINK: If you were to write a song for women today, what lyrics would you include?

HR: "I am woman, watch me soar." Women need to be aware of the enormous power they have within themselves and the great possibilities open to them. Women are more than half the population. Why aren't we 50 percent of all legislatures? Why aren't we 50 percent of all CEOs?

PINK: You grew up with parents who were performers; was it natural that you become one as well?

HR: As a child, I only thought of singing. There is nothing greater in the world. I knew I could earn as much as a man and I could keep my own name.

PINK: You were 24 when you arrived in New York City with \$230 and your 3 year-old daughter Traci. What drove you to take such a risk?

HR: Security. I wanted to be able to provide for my daughter. I had a better chance of a career and a livelihood in the states than at home.

PINK: What's behind the words, "I Am Woman"?

HR: Women were marginalized in the civil rights and anti-war movements by being told to lick envelopes. I had an awareness of my own strength and power plus the difference we could make if we got together. My song was a message I needed to get out there.

PINK: Your hit songs led to other professional achievements – from leading roles in movies to leads in shows on Broadway and London's West End to your own television show in the U.S. What moment stands out for you?

HR: I was rehearsing all alone at Royal Albert Hall; I enjoyed the beauty of singing.

PINK: What is the secret of your lifelong success?

HR: Success is being happy with who you are and what you do. You have to ask yourself, "Is the world a better place with you in it?" The day I realized I made a difference, I felt successful.

PINK: What led you to study psychology and parapsychology at UCLA and then later become a clinical hypnotherapist?

HR: My psychic sense was always there from a very young age. It's a gift I can give the community. I'm a clinical hypnotherapist working closely with doctors who have tried everything else to help their patients.

PINK: You're on the board of The Royal Hospital for Women Foundation?

HR: Yes. Our job is to raise private funds for research and special projects. In Sydney, I don't drive a car and quickly realized there is no bus stop at this and nearby hospitals. The president of the Foundation is looking into changing that not just for me but those who rely on public transportation.

PINK: What would you like to say to PINK readers?

HR: I expect them to step up to the plate and do their bit for other women around the world. We need each other. I encourage business women who have done well to put something into the well!

Leigh Henderson's Leadership Training Room is a management consulting and leadership coaching firm. For more info, check out www.LeadershipTrainingRoom.com

For more info on Ms. Reddy, visit www.HelenReddy.com