

PROGRAM DATE: 2019-02-28

PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: CLAIRE JOHNSTON – LEAD SINGER - MANGO GROOVE

SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPTION
DR. MALKA	Hello, I'm Dr. Amaleya Goneos-Malka, welcome to 'Womanity – Women in Unity'. The show that celebrates prominent and ordinary African Women's milestone achievements in their struggles for liberation, self-emancipation, human rights, democracy, racism, socio-economic class division and gender based violence.
DR. MALKA	Joining us in studio today in Johannesburg is Claire Johnston who is the lead singer of iconic South African music group Mango Groove. Welcome to the show!
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Thanks for that lovely introduction; it's great to be with you!
DR. MALKA	We're so glad you're here especially with the whole celebration of your 30 th anniversary, which is imminent.
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Yes it is and very exciting times for us; celebrating the release of the very first album which made an impact that we just weren't anticipating, so it's lovely to go back and feel all those feelings again.
DR. MALKA	To start with, reflecting back in history, Mango Groove began in 1984;....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...that's right...
DR. MALKA	...you joined in 1985 at the tender age of 17....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...I know; crazy....
DR. MALKA	...now after more than 30 years in the music industry I think that you've really as a group traversed South Africa's timeline, from being in the apartheid regime, which was a dark period for all of us, traversing through to liberation, the first democratic election which was infused with such hope and change for a politically free country;....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...ja....
DR. MALKA	...can you reflect on that journey for us, from when it began as this multi-ethnic group,....?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...which was obviously shied upon during that time?....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...exactly; very, very much frowned upon and not encouraged and as you say I was 17, I joined a band where our trombonist was a black man of 64...he was 64 years old; he had served in the Entertainment Corps in World War Two and I just loved what the band sort of represented. I'd grown up listening to Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald and Mango had just enough jazz, well basically.....and African jazz that sort of spoke to me so I was ecstatic to join this band but as you correctly say, in those days it wasn't encouraged for black and white South Africans to work together and we did experience difficulties, you can imagine. I joined the band in '85; in '86 the State of Emergency was declared, and you know we did have to be selective about venues, we'd have issues with if we ever travelled, which we did, around the country, we'd have to pick hotels quite carefully. There were those sorts of issues; John for instance, the founding member; he was arrested in Soweto for dropping Jack Lerole back at home; he was arrested under a pass offence. He was thrown in jail for breaking the pass

	laws. So those sorts of things coloured our very early years but the music sort of made it all possible, made it work, the music was what it was all about and people started to sort of get what we were about and we started to grow a little bit of a following and then in '89 when we released our first album that's when it really...it really exploded and our timing was good; so that's when it really became a proper South African story in a bigger sense.
DR. MALKA	Given this time span, can you share with us some of the more vivid memories; there must have been some incredible moments throughout...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...this journey; what are some of
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...absolutely....
DR. MALKA	...the key ones?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...absolutely; well when I joined the band I was incredibly shy, I mean really, really shy, I was, I guess as you...you know as you were saying, I was 17, I was...
DR. MALKA	...you were a baby....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...I was a child I mean I look back and I think my mum was incredibly trusting and supportive and I thank her for that, but I remember all sorts of weird and wonderful gigs. We did a gig once in Alex, during the day, and in-between...in-between songs we'd have to read out the prices – it was the opening of a store – we'd read out the prices of different grocery items, so “special today, X item 99 cents” I mean that stands out quite vividly, I've just had that flash in my head and then of course, you know, other things like travelling around the country, breaking down, then starting to perform at universities and getting a huge response from university kids and starting to feel like we were, you know, heading in the right direction; those sorts of things stand out, now that we're looking back as much as we are.
DR. MALKA	And when you say that the launch album in 1989; so that was five years into the journey....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yeah...
DR. MALKA	...a lot of people would have given up...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...you're absolutely right and a personal struggle for me was that in 1987, I think end of, I lost my voice for an entire year and the band went back to being instrumental for a whole year and this was during the time we were offered this wonderful record deal and I had to find out well what the hell was wrong with my voice and it turned out my...my tonsils were a big part of the problem and while they were in there taking out my tonsils they also got a...lased off a couple of nodules and then I was fit for purpose again, I was fit to record the album that was finally released in '89 and it did so well, much to our surprise.
DR. MALKA	Brilliant! As I was preparing for the interview and I mean we've spoken now looking at mid '80's and I thought back to that period but I also thought how life was and how much the music industry in particular has evolved, I mean that was...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...cassettes, then we moved to CDs, now we've got music on demand, we've got direct sales, you've got social media, you've got personal branding....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...it's a different beast, it really is...

DR. MALKA	...how've you managed to navigate?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Well, when we released our most recent album two years ago, it was...we were releasing it into a brand new world, a brand new landscape and I've had to become quite sort of social media friendly. I battle with it because you know when we first started out we would have photographers who would take photographs of us and release them to the press; people to write our press releases; now you've pretty much got to do it yourself, you have a team around you, but you've got to push out the message. So I've become a little bit better at it but I'm a little self-conscious about it, I don't like, you know it feels sort of braggy to say aren't we wonderful; you want other people to say it about you. So it is a...it's a different thing and you know you have to work harder to make money. The live things become the focus, which is great because Mango Groove is, I mean that's our strength, I think, live is our strength. We're having more fun now than ever, 11 of us on stage just all a bit crazy and just loving what we do, so now ja, live is an opportunity to sell merchandise; that's where you sell your albums. You can now release vinyl's all over again, which we are about to do, so you've just got to sort of learn what's happening and roll with it; make friends with it.
DR. MALKA	It's interesting on the merchandise piece, I had Louise Carver on the show a couple of years ago and her take on merchandise is jewellery as a completely different line...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...so it is, I've even bought some of her jewellery...
DR. MALKA	...so it's fascinating how it's not...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...clever....
DR. MALKA	...just the music angle as your primary product, but incorporating other creative elements...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...that is so right, there can be all sorts of spinoffs. Sort of thing, if I'm clever I should get my head around 'cause I'd love to make things like shoes and handbags, so, let's see...see if I get it together.
DR. MALKA	Mango Shoes.
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Mango Shoes.
DR. MALKA	What do you think have been some of the secrets to your longevity as a group?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	I think our conviction is a big part of the success, you know, we've always loved what we do. Obviously we've had some line-up changes over the years; we've had people passing..passing...passing on basically. Mickey Vilakazi sadly died around the time of the release of the first album, so he never got to see things really you know grow for us and that makes me sad. So it is the passion, it is the conviction, it is the...I suppose there's a degree of tenacity, you know, we really stuck it out through some really tough times, you know, the music industry is a very cruel mistress and I...I would caution anyone who's thinking about getting into it, I would say you must be very passionate and you must be very resilient; it's not for the feint hearted. So ja, I think it is that passion that keeps bringing us back to it; as much as I've done some solo projects Mango has always been my musical home and my happy place actually.
DR. MALKA	You mentioned there are 11 members...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...to the band...
CLAIRE	...yes....

JOHNSTON	
DR. MALKA	...that must be such an incredible dynamic; you've got vocals, you've got brass,...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...you've got rhythm; how do you compose, how do you develop your...not just the sound, but in terms of the tracks going forward...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...with this massive group of creative spirits?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	It's a lovely question. John's always been the driving...the initial driving creative force behind a song, so he'll come up with a concept; he'll very often then come to me, bounce it off me and then it'll get fleshed out amongst the rest of the band. Brass lines will be added, you know, textures will be added, vocals...extra vocals will be added and so the song will grow and develop its own sort of life and its own energy because of those 11 people all adding their own...their own take and energy....
DR. MALKA	...so it's a very organic process....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...it is actually quite organic, I mean John really is the, you know, as the founding member and you know Mango's very much his brainchild or passion child shall I rather say, so he's the guy definitely sort of controlling everything and you know in charge of the way it goes forward, but it's very, very inclusive and very organic.
DR. MALKA	And how long would you say it takes, from start to finish, as an average?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	It really does vary, some songs almost write themselves. Other songs, you know, with the Faces To The Sun album two years ago, some songs we revisited many times and they started off with a particular treatment and at the end of it they were completely stripped down and changed and better for it, so it really does...it really does depend.
DR. MALKA	You've also had a solo career....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...in conjunction, can you tell us a little bit of the differences, so one is group focus – enormous....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...and the other is very independent?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	In some ways I've realised, I mean probably because I sort of started so young with Mango Groove, with this sort of group identity, I'm more comfortable there. If it's just me I feel very exposed, I mean it's lovely, it's something I'll still do but I'm more at home with my Mango family. So when I do a solo project it needs to be quite different from Mango, I mean it mustn't sound anything like it, which is difficult 'cause people expect me to sound like that and meanwhile the reason I'm doing it is 'cause it needs to be <i>other than</i>, but no, it's always challenging, I always learn a lot about myself. The first solo album I recorded was mostly done in the UK. I worked in amazing places like Real World Studios, Peter Gabriel's studio, legendary studios in London; it was a real reinvention and I loved it but I was terrified and it was, you know, I'm proud of it, but it was also nice to get back to Mango.
DR. MALKA	You remind me of something I read from Jeremy Irons and I'm not going to be able to articulate it exactly as he said it, but he was saying that there is this...in acting you are....you're playing someone else, you're creating....
CLAIRE	...yes....

JOHNSTON	
DR.MALKA	... this persona and you want a diversity and breadth of experiences but he said, consistently, people expect the same thing from you, that they expect you to play the same character....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...he's absolutely right. He is absolutely right, you know, when you make an impact the way Mango did in '89, you know you become...that's your identity, so when you try and break away from that, just for a little bit, people are surprised and a bit shocked and they almost can't buy into you as that other...as that other entity; you're absolutely right.
DR. MALKA	They've comfortably boxed...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...ja, this is who you are....
DR. MALKA	...you into this environment...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...what do you think you're doing doing that, that's not who you are. No that's tough and I imagine with an actor like Jeremy Irons who's got such a...he's got such a range and he must want to play all sorts of different things, I can imagine people wanting to corral him into certain roles; it must be frustrating.
DR. MALKA	Your studio albums from Mango Grove have included Mango Groove (1989), Hometalk (1990), 'Another Country' (1993), Eat a Mango (1995) and then there was a bit of a gap....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...To Bang The Drum (2009); another gap, to Faces To The Sun....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Yes, well spotted. Those gaps were...there were some business issues with record companies that we had; that's also the time that I decided to take a break and do some solo stuff, so that was an interesting period. I also got slightly immersed in the world of conservation, got...wrote and co-produced an album called Starehe which was a bit of a passion project where I worked with my ex husband John, who is also the founding member of the Mango Groove and then in-between Bang the Drum and Face to the Sun it was bit of a personally challenging time. John and I separated, my mom passed away and it was, you know, it was a strange time but during that time oddly we were still able to be creative and we were conceptualising the Faces to The Sun album, so you know, we've also never been particularly prolific, we've always sort of been considered about what we do, we don't sort of go roaring into things. So that's kind of how we've, ja, always been really over the years.
DR. MALKA	A lot of deliberation going into things...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes...yes....
DR.MALKA	...and as you said, when you're forging the tracks, that you go back, revisit, play with the textures,...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...that's exactly right...
DR. MALKA	...play with the sound and that gives you the time, if you're not being prolific....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...to really create a product that you're proud of.
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	That's very nicely said, one could also say we just procrastinate or agonise, which is true, we do, we...you know, we are frightened of rushing into things and because it's 11 people you do want to take your time, you want to layer things, you want to texture things, you want to do things justice, so that's the other excuse.

DR. MALKA	And you've got....well we'll leave those excuses....but you've got such a distinct sound and....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...ja...
DR. MALKA	...that there's nothing else like Mango Groove.
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	I suppose not, I suppose we are...you know you either love us or you hate us but you sort of know it's us, ja.
DR. MALKA	I think that that's definitely associated with South Africa....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...oh it's...well South Africa's our inspiration, absolutely.
DR.MALKA	And you can also hear nuances and influences coming into like a Freshly Ground or...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes....
DR. MALKAother new comers; how do you feel almost from a legacy point of view of your sound being able to influence younger generations?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	I would love that, I mean for instance you know with Mango we were so influenced by Spokes Mashiyane and Lemmy Special and Miriam Makeba, so I think every generation of artists has been influenced by you know the generation before, so if we've had, you know, any impact on younger artists I'd be absolutely thrilled and honoured and that is, as you say, that is legacy when you have...when you make impact on future generations.
DR.MALKA	Now coming back to where we are....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes....
DR.MALKA	...as 2019, you are celebrating your 30 th Anniversary of the debut self-titled album 'Mango Groove'....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...that's it exactly...
DR. MALKA	...you are doing a celebratory concert at Monte Casino in March....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...can you tell us a little bit more about that?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Absolutely. So we opened one concert at the Teatro at Monte Casino on the 8th March and the demand's been so great we've had to open a second concert so thank you very much to everyone for all the wonderful support; we really are you know just delighted and excited. So, I mean we've been gigging a lot over the last few years but this feels different, I think it's because we're looking back, because we're particularly looking back at that first album, so you get very nostalgic, we're going through old memory boxes, old photographs, old you know magazine covers and it's been quite emotional. So there's going to be a big AV component to the show; some music videos and some old snapshots and you know hopefully quite an emotional journey, certainly for us, and then a couple of surprise guest artists and just songs that hopefully people know and love; what you'd expect from a Mango Groove sort of 30th year celebration; that's what...that's probably what you'll get.
DR. MALKA	Any tickets left?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Well I know they're flying, so you know, you need to hurry.
DR. MALKA	And Computicket?.....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Computicket thank you, yes, Computicket, absolutely.

DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Claire Johnston who is the lead singer of iconic South African music group Mango Groove. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter:@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	Now despite being busy in the band and you'd started out at 17, you still managed to complete a degree in English, Philosophy and Politics at Wits in 1988; education is a skill and resource which contributes to women's empowerment as well as to the betterment of the lives of their families....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...totally....
DR. MALKA	...and as I mentioned offline I recall a conversation with Sibongile Khumalo about the neglect of arts education within our education curriculum...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...ja...
DR. MALKA	...and she was explaining how performances is linked to social development, how you....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...ja....
DR. MALKA	...behave, how you engage with people, build confidence....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...she's quite right....
DR. MALKAteam spirit...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yup...
DR. MALKA	...and creativity....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yup....
DR. MALKA	...well what are your thoughts?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...and self-healing, I think it's becoming something that is being...I think I read correctly, it's being prescribed somewhere in Europe, possibly in the UK, that people that are depressed, particularly young people, it's recommended that they actually get involved in music, get into the arts in some way and that it is healing and I have definitely found that to be the case. I came from a broken home where my father was quite abusive and very talented, very musical and always encouraged me to, you know, pursue my dream of singing; I was singing from the age of three and I have no doubt that me turning to music and to theatre to some extent was a way of transporting myself and self-healing. So I'm a big believer in that and the importance of... and the health of pursuing something creative.
DR. MALKA	And what would you say the role of education has had on your career and your development?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Well when I left school in 1985, the same year I joined Mango, I came away feeling...I mean I'd had a good education but it was an apartheid South Africa, you know, edu...it was a TED education (Transvaal Education Department) education and we were taught certain things that I, you know, when I joined up...when I met Mango Groove I started to realise that my eyes had been closed to a very large degree and I was going to go and study drama at Wits and I changed my mind, I suddenly thought you know what I want to flesh out my education, I want to do something like philosophy, politics. English I just always loved, particularly the creative side of it, but the politics and philosophy, just...it became important to me to sort of know how to think and that's where that came in and I think it's been very useful, I mean I've never been employed, I've always been self-employed or self-unemployed if you prefer and...and I have no regrets, I think I've been in a better position in my own career you know as a performer because of

	my degree. Probably given me a level of understanding and of confidence.
DR. MALKA	Ja and that capacity for critical thought.
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	And critical thought, absolutely and for ja, for sort of self-analysis.
DR. MALKA	Now on the 8 th March, which co-incidentally, is snap bang in the middle of your concerting, women across the world celebrate International Women's Day and this year's theme is "Think equal, build smart, innovate for change" and there's a hashtag of #BalanceforBetter'. In your opinion, what areas do you think we need to build on the most to benefit women in the future?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	In South Africa?
DR. MALKA	Mmmm.
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	I think we've got to start with giving women a stronger sense of themselves. I think very often we come into the world as second class citizens; we consider ourselves to be second class citizens and that's fundamentally important is for us to realise that we have every right; we have the same rights as men. It's..... humanity that we should be just super aware of and that hopefully will empower us but then of course there are the greater issues, I mean there are still women being paid less than men which is a huge bugbear of mine, I was very proud, or I am very proud, my mum passed away about almost seven years ago now and when she left my father she had never really worked before but she had to go back...she had to out into the workplace and she got a job in an insurance company and I'm so proud of her that she did this; she went to them I think a couple of months into her employment and said I really do need to be on your pension plan, I'm a single mother with a daughter. Oh no, no, no, no, it's only the men who get that and my mother said I beg your pardon and she challenged them and she was the person who got them to implement a pension plan for women. Now we need that sort of practical thing to happen as well but that can only come if women...we almost...we have to fight our corner I'm afraid. I know there's some obviously very enlightened men out there, there are some great men out there who obviously feel the same, so it is about education; it's about educating young men and young women to respect everybody.
DR.MALKA	And like you say, when I think of the South African context, we have got so many single mothers....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...it's a huge thing in this country....
DR. MALKA	...that there isn't a man in the...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...no....
DR.MALKA	...household to say okay...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...no....
DR. MALKA	...no he's the main breadwinner and he'll be contributing; it's the moms...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...no, that's it, it's a different...it's a different world and corporate South Africa needs to wake up to all of this.
DR. MALKA	And on the salary issue, I think when I looked at some of our recent stats, women are underpaid something like 23% compared to their....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...I don't understand this....
DR. MALKA	...male counterparts....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...I don't understand....

DR. MALKA	...and at the end of last year I was fascinated, there was a campaign in Europe where women were putting an out of office notice on their emails saying - and this was in relation to their salary differential - by saying you know now we're in the month of November and this equates to X% of us basically working for free....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...wow, now that's powerful...
DR. MALKA	...and if I looked at it from a South African context, given this 23% gap, we effectively would be out of office from August...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...wow, I quite like that. Ja, that...I think one needs to put things like that to understand the impact and the injustice of the whole picture.
DR.MALKA	So given what we know now; how do you think South Africa will look in 10 to 20 years time concerning women's rights and gender equality.
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	I think we're on a good track. I think women are speaking up for themselves more; I think there is a greater awareness of the fact that, you know, equality is essential. I think with our changing South Africa, with our hopefully...hopefully becoming more enlightened in all sorts of areas and hopefully that's one of the main ones.
DR. MALKA	In the last few years there's been a wave of movements like Me Too, Time's Up and they're publicising sexual harassment and to a large extent it seemed to be about actresses and performance artists....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...ja...
DR.MALKA	...highlighting as victims of harassment and being quite upfront and admitting to this; what do you think about these campaigns, are they harmful/helpful to furthering the agenda for women?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	I think they're probably helpful. I think what is emerging is the fact that it has been an ongoing problem for a very long time and I think every woman, every woman I know, myself included, has a story or two like that, where we were brought up in a time where it was considered...it was okay, it was actually okay to be manhandled or to be treated a particular way. In fact, it was almost a compliment if a man sort of came onto you very strong and wouldn't take no for an answer and perhaps gave you a grope; it was almost an implied compliment and I'm very relieved we've got to a point where we're realising it isn't okay to go around grabbing women. It's not a compliment; it's abuse. So I understand why some people are thinking it's potentially going a bit too far and everyone's you know coming out with their story but I think it's pretty valid, I think most young women or most women - my generation - let's put it differently, most women in my generation went through a lot of that. So if we can...if this can put an end to a lot of that sort of behaviour I'd be very happy.
DR.MALKA	But apart from the groping aspect and...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...ja....
DR. MALKA	...the complete intrusion and invasion of your....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...of your space...
DR. MALKA	...body and your space....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...ja....
DR. MALKA	...it was also the...almost like a...like a ticket as a lead; if I do this to you, then I will give you a step up in your career.
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	True. The casting couch...we always heard about the casting couch when I first started out in show business and I kept sort of fearing a casting couch

	and thank goodness it never came to it, but you're right, there were all...legendary stories about the number of young women who did x, y and z in relation to a particular man in order to get ahead in their careers, as if their talent wasn't enough. So it's all of that, you're right, it's a complex picture and it's a very ugly picture.
DR. MALKA	In many ways I think with movements like this it is saying "no more".
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	It is saying no more, enough, absolutely and that's right and I think there are a lot of good men out there who didn't know this was actually going on but it's time for everyone to just face the reality and to put an end to this.
DR. MALKA	And now, turning towards a personal perspective, one of the questions that I ask all my guests on this show who've made tremendous inroads in their respective careers is about what they consider to be some of the factors of their success which led them to where they are today. Some people speak about perseverance, hard work...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...a particular person; can you share with us what have been some of your driving factors?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	What was interesting for me looking back at...I...you know I had this amazing sort of drive, even at the age of 3/4/5 to sing, I wanted perform. I don't know what was driving that, whether I wanted approval, whether I liked making people happy, whether I liked being admired, 'cause I was always admired when I sang, so this became like a really nice fun thing. So there was that, it was in me to want to perform, so that was a given. I was encouraged very much by both parents to do it and that of course helped and then I think just having an incredibly supportive mother who was able to trust me enough to take me to an audition at the age of 10 despite her misgivings and me getting into the show and her then just passionately believing in me and in fact she was disappointed when I came to her when I was 17 saying Ma, I've changed my mind, I think I'm just going to...I'd rather do politics, philosophy and English instead of drama and she said hah but you've always wanted to do drama, you know, she was always so completely behind me. So I just, ja, thank you to her because she was a huge part of it and then you know she hooked up with a lovely man called Ron, who also was very supportive. So there was nothing in my way, I was...you know you hear so many people saying I had to really convince my parents. I was so lucky; I coasted through with that lovely support.
DR.MALKA	And one of my questions was going to be about the strong women in your life, clearly your mom has been....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...my mom, ja, ja, my mom who had a really rough time and I still get really upset when I think about it sometimes actually. So ja, she...I wish she was here now, I wish she was here for the 30th anniversary, she would just love it.
DR. MALKA	Well she's walked the journey, that's for sure...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...she certainly has walked the journey, indeed.
DR. MALKA	You've shared with us some of these important moments; can you tell us what have been some of the pivotal aspects in your life when you were growing up?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Pivotal aspects in the sense of.....?
DR. MALKA	...what's made you who you are today?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...who I am...
DR. MALKA	...influenced you....

CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Definitely books, I was obsessed with books, an only child, very bored in the school holidays I'd sometimes plough through three/four books in one day; lived in my imagination massively, nothing was impossible....
DR. MALKA	...all fiction?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Mostly fiction, absolutely, but I truly believed that anything was possible and so I was a dreamer and I think dreamers; you can get smacked along the way but I think if you have a dream, a big dream and you push through with it, you can maybe potentially achieve it and it seems to a large extent I have, you know, you're not prepared for some of the pitfalls along the way, but you still pick yourself up and you...you carry on. So I think I've learned to be strong. I'm incredibly oversensitive about some things I mean I really am and then I try and remind myself that's what creative people are, you're meant to feel these things because if you don't feel these things you're not going to be a very good creator of anything or communicator of anything, but uh, so that's something I need to just watch with myself is the oversensitive thing. But ja, ultimately I think I am pretty strong, I think women are, I think we are...I think we underestimate ourselves.
DR. MALKA	That's come through a lot, I must say, in terms of the programmes that I've done...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...ja...
DR. MALKA	...on underestimation, lack of belief...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...in oneself....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes...not good enough, you know, there's too much of that, there's too much of a sense of comparison with x, y and z and that's something we have to watch with this whole social media explosion, you know, I think I feel for young people sometimes getting sucked into too much of it and it not being good for self-esteem; I think that's something to watch.
DR. MALKA	Well you've got someone there who often is not real, someone who doesn't know who you are and are relaying a comment in what, 160 characters?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Exactly, so that's something we all need to guard against, taking too seriously.
DR. MALKA	What would you like your legacy to be?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Wow, my legacy. Well I'm hoping the music will live on for a very long time and that I've been a small part of that, you know, I'd like to think in 50 years, 100 years someone will listen to Special Star and feel good; that will be wonderful. As a woman, as opposed to being a little girl, I was a little girl when I joined a band, I'm now a grown woman of 51, I'd like to do more for young women, I'd like to get more involved in something that makes a difference. So yes, I have some plans, so we'll see...see what happens.
DR. MALKA	We've talked a lot from the music aspect which has obviously been your key driver on your career....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...ja...
DR. MALKA	...but you also mentioned briefly your interest in conservation....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...ja....
DR. MALKA	...please can you share a little of that and what you've done?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	I've just become very aware of the fact that it's not this sort of rarefied touchy feely thing of getting into a, you know, vehicle and going to admire

	<p>the wildlife, it's about a system; an ecosystem that we need to...that we are a part of and that we are basically riding roughshod over and we're not showing the requisite respect to it and as a result we're destroying the things that sustain us. So just as a practical point of view we need to start viewing ourselves as part of the natural world as opposed to just sort of striding across it. So that's becoming an important thing for me, if I can also get involved in teaching people, in a...you know the best way to teach anyone anything I've realised is through something like music, is through enjoyment, through fun, so that's something I'd be looking at getting more involved in.</p>
DR. MALKA	Beyond the conservation aspect, which is something very personal to you, you've also had an experience of breast cancer.
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	<p>Yes, that's right. A year ago I was diagnosed with breast cancer and it's a terrifying thing when you hear that word coming out of the doctor's mouth and but I got really lucky, I had surgery, they took out the lump and then literally a month ago I got the news that I'm completely clear. I have to be very careful, I have to go every year now, but my message to women out there is to go for mammograms. I say this because self-examination would not have found this lump. I had to go for I think it was two mammograms and two biopsies and that's what revealed the...this nasty lurking...lurking lump. So I really would...after...I think after the age of 40 I think you should go and get a baseline and then every two years after that otherwise, you know, who knows what the status of my cancer would be if I hadn't gone for a mammogram; so please guys.</p>
DR. MALKA	And the reality is that you don't feel any different...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...no...
DR. MALKA	...in those early stages....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...no....
DR. MALKA	...you've got no idea....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	<p>...you've got no idea. So it starts off as this lump hidden away in your breast and if you don't find it early on it will travel and it will get into your lymph nodes and once it's there, then it can take over your body and then....</p>
DR.MALKA	...it's terminal....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	<p>...then it's terminal and this really is one of the most easily curable cancers; so....</p>
DR. MALKA	Well thank you for the health message as well; I'm... it really is an important message....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	<p>...I know it really is; I feel very strongly about this, I feel I want to share this with people.</p>
DR. MALKA	So the future is more music....,
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...connecting with younger women on....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...definitely....
DR. MALKA	...hopefully they can learn some of the lessons without walking the journey...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	<p>...and bang their heads, exactly....</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>...and transforming ideas and notions about conservation and an appreciation for where we live.</p>

CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Thank you for putting it so beautifully, I was rambling along; no, you've summed it up perfectly, exactly, those are things that are very close to my heart.
DR. MALKA	And lastly, as we close out our show today, could you please share a few words of inspiration to young women who are considering pursuing a musical career, or any other fact for that matter?
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	Well I think if you've got that passion you are going to have to do something about it, you can't just you know leave it and pretend it's not there, so if you have the passion to do something creative or something ambitious, run with it and believe in yourself and if you get shot down pick yourself up and dust yourself off and keep on going because we all have it; we all have people saying oh you'll never make it or this sound will never work. Just be true to yourself and be original if you're in a creative area...in a creative field, who...what are you in that field, what is your style, what moves you, what is authentic to you and I think that's...that's a good way to sort of start.
DR. MALKA	Importance of authenticity...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...and self-identity...
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...exactly and then of course you're going to have to be sort of business savvy as well I'm afraid because it is a business; the creative world attracts money and where there's money there are charlatans, so you've just got to be a bit suspicious, be very careful and just be true to yourself.
DR. MALKA	Thank you very much for those words of wisdom....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...thank you...
DR. MALKA	...and we wish you all the best of luck for the next leg in your journey....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...thank you so much....
DR. MALKAand have a wonderful 30 th Birthday celebration....
CLAIRE JOHNSTON	...it is a bit like that, it's feeling very celebratory.
	PROGRAMME END