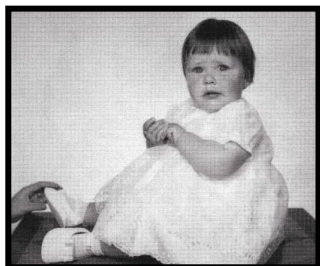


Suzanne Prentice OBE CM

1974, 1977 & 1978 Australasian Best Female Vocalist Award, 1977 Rising Star Award, 1981 Pegasus Award, 1981, 1982 & 1983 RIANZ Best Female Vocalist Award, 1987 Entertainer Of The Year Award, 1987 NZ Sport and Cultural Ambassador, 1990 NZ Commemoration Award, 1995 Order of the British Empire (OBE), 2008 NZ Country Music Legend Award, 2009 VAC Top Female Vocalist, 2016 Benny Award



Suzanne Lena Prentice was born on 19 September 1958 in Invercargill to Rose and Bob Prentice. Bob played the Hawaiian guitar and could whistle while Rose sang in an English dance band during the war. Suzanne attended *North Primary School*, *Rosedale Intermediate* and *James Hargest High School* where she learned to play piano and guitar. It was at *Rosedale Intermediate* that she performed in her first talent quest, coming second. The next year she won first prize at the 1970 *Southland A & P Show* then joined the *Southland Country Music Association*. Work started coming her way at various community functions so that by 1973 she was a household name in the district, performing on touring shows with overseas acts such as Hank Snow, Kenny Rogers, Buck Owens and Roy Orbison. She appeared on a television talent show called *New Faces* which led to a recording contract with *Music World* and a single, *Dust on Mother's Bible*, which became a hit in New Zealand and Australia. Her first album was called *Country Girl*.



Suzanne began doing regular spots on television shows such as *Country Touch* and soon had her own fan club. In 1974 she attended the *Second Australasian Country Music Awards* in Tamworth, New South Wales, and won *Best Female Vocalist Award*. In 1975 she won the television talent show, *The Entertainers*, which flew her and her mum to London and arranged club work and television appearances there. Back home she worked on *A Touch Of Country* and later had spots on *That's Country*.

In 1983 that Suzanne was embroiled in a controversy which led to the sacking of singer Brendan Dugan and the subsequent resignation of Jodie Vaughan and musical director Gray Bartlett when they pointed out to executive producer David McPhail that Suzanne was getting more than her fair share of appearances and that perhaps the fact that her manager Trevor Spitz was also the show's producer. Questions were asked in Parliament about double standards and *Actor's Equity* became involved until a full-scale inquiry was held which agreed with the trio. The *Nashville Network* in the USA refused to renew its contract and the show finished the next year. Suzanne quickly dropped Spitz and was frightfully embarrassed about the turmoil she had inadvertently caused.



Prentice won the *Australasian Best Female Vocalist Award* again in 1977 and 1978 and had her handprints placed on the *Hands of Fame* in Tamworth. She was also recognised in 1993 at the *New Zealand Hands of Fame* at Gore. She sang at the *Auckland Royal Command Performance* before Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1979.

From the late 70s to the early 90s she worked internationally, signed a contract with *CBS* in 1983 and recorded the albums *When I Dream*, *So Precious To Me*, *Sweet Country Music* and *One Day At A Time* which won the *Gold Guitar Award* as Australasia's top selling album of the year. She toured her Country Show through Canada and performed at the *Grand Ole Opry* in Nashville. In 1983 she appeared at the *3 day Silk Cut International Music Festival* at Wembley Stadium in London which also starred George Jones, Tammy Wynette, Boxcar Willie and the Flying Burrito Brothers. She has performed with Dolly Parton, Julio Iglesias, Johnny Cash, the Beach Boys and a host of international Stars.





In the 1995 *Queen's Birthday Honours*, Prentice was made an *Officer of the Order of the British Empire* (OBE) for services to music, the same year that Max Cryer was granted his *MBE*. In 1999 Suzanne began to battle her weight issues through diet and exercise. She published her book *One day At A Time* in 2002, a biography and workout manual. The sequel, *Keeping It Off*, was released in 2004.

She has been a committed supporter of *World Vision* for over 20 years, fundraising for their many projects and performing over 650 *Kids for Kids* shows singing with massed school choirs. In 2000 she toured Malawi with Dame Malvina Major visiting orphanages and villages ravaged by the Aids epidemic.

Suzanne received the VAC 2009 *Top Female Vocalist Award* and performed at the 2010 *Awards* night at the *Pumphouse*. In 2016 she was presented with the Benny Award. She stood for Mayor of Invercargill in 2010 against Tim Shadbolt and has recently set up a promotion and PR company called *Matilda Productions*. Prentice married Steve Dalton in 1977 and they have two children, Andrea and Blair.



She has strong beliefs on the responsibility of television programmers. 'They are directly responsible for the decline of the entertainment industry. They would argue that they are simply providing what their audience wants but I don't accept that. The lack of opportunity for the next generation of entertainers is of grave concern. Musical entertainment has all but disappeared from our screens and without television exposure there is little chance of identifying the next generation of Entertainers.'