



**ENGAGEMENT EXCLUSIVE**  
**MARTINE McCUTCHEON AND JACK McMANUS**  
**RING IN THE NEW YEAR AS THEY SHARE THE HAPPY NEWS OF JACK'S SURPRISE CHRISTMAS PROPOSAL**

She told **HELLO!** magazine last year that marriage to her handsome singer-songwriter beau Jack McManus would be "the pretty bow around the beautiful package we have – the finishing touch."

Now we can exclusively reveal that popular stage and screen actress Martine McCutcheon, 34, is a step closer to tying the knot after Jack popped the question just before Christmas.

Talented Jack, 26, whose singing style has drawn comparisons to James Morrison and Keane, proposed to his fair lady on 20 December, four years to the day since the couple first started dating.

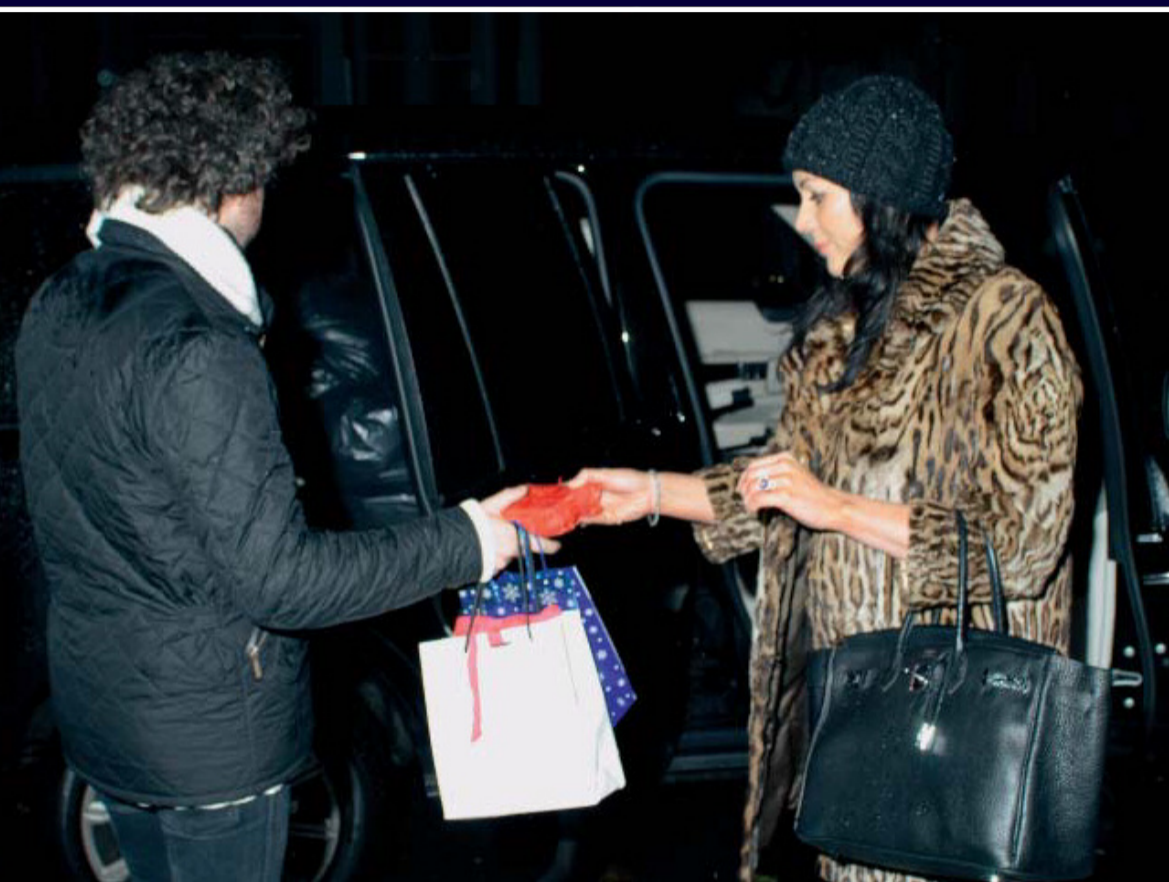
"Christmas is Martine's favourite time of year, and it was also their four-year anniversary, so it seemed ideal," a friend of Martine's tells **HELLO!**

Martine has made no secret of the fact that, like many glamorous women, she enjoys the finer things in life and in an exclusive interview with us in September she joked that the idea of having to choose the engagement ring might have been putting Jack off asking her to be his wife.

**CUSTOMMADE RING**  
 But in the end Jack did her proud, presenting the stylish star of hit film *Love, Actually* and West End musical *My Fair Lady* with an exquisite custom-made diamond and French ruby ring from the renowned jeweller Susannah Lewis in London's exclusive Burlington Arcade.

The couple, who have been guarded when it comes to talking about their romance, decided to keep the news private over Christmas, to give them time to celebrate their precious moment with their family and friends. But as our exclusive photos show – the couple are seen shopping for Christmas presents and throwing a party at their home over the festive season – they couldn't be happier with the development. ▶

Christmas is always Martine's favourite time of year and this time she had extra cause to celebrate – her engagement. Pictured with Jack at a Christmas party at their home, Martine shows off her custom-made engagement ring (right); and also proudly displays the diamond and ruby band on a shopping trip in London (left)



Musician Jack gives his famous fiancée a helping hand into the car. The couple kept Jack's proposal a secret from the press so that they could enjoy private celebrations with family and friends over the festive season and they tell us that they are yet to make any concrete wedding plans

**'We are delighted and very in love and looking forward to sharing our lives together'**

"They haven't made any concrete wedding plans yet," says the friend. "They simply want to enjoy the excitement of being engaged."

The smitten pair were introduced by a mutual friend at a gig in London in 2006. In their joint interview with **HELLO!** last September – the only one they have ever given as couple – Jack revealed how he'd been "magnetically drawn" to the raven-haired beauty.

**INSTANT CONNECTION**  
 "I definitely felt something very strong instantly. There was something really magnetic about her. Not just looks wise, although of course she's beautiful, but I was so drawn to her."

He added about his star girlfriend, who first found fame in the 1990s as Tiffany Mitchell in *EastEnders*: "Although I obviously knew who she was, I could sense there was so much more to her and I was definitely hoping for the chance to know her

better." Their first date was at a tapas bar in London and they later told us that both of them had felt "a special connection" and "a real chemistry".

But having suffered her fair share of heartache and disappointment on the romantic front in the past – and seen her failed relationships played out on the pages of the national press – Martine was determined to keep her partnership with Jack under the radar for as long as possible and give it time to develop at its own pace.

Now the couple, who share a home in South London and have spoken about their keenness to start a family, are looking forward to cementing their love.

"We are delighted, very in love and looking forward to sharing our lives together," Martine exclusively confirms to **HELLO!**

INTERVIEW: BELINDA ROBEY  
 PHOTOS: © JOSH BASKIN.COM

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