

## Jo Carol Pierce – Bio

Jo Carol Pierce was born on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1944 in Wellington, Texas. Her father perished in the Korean War and Jo Carol and her mother subsequently settled in Lubbock where she attended high school. Aged nineteen she married the musician Jimmie Dale Gilmore, a union that produced a daughter, Elyse. The couple were together four years, spent time living in California, but like many performers from that area of North Texas, Pierce eventually gravitated to the state capital Austin where she lived for a time with guitarist Jesse Taylor [d. 2006]. In Austin Jo Carol found employment as a social worker, while in her spare time she wrote narratives. By the 1980's Jo Carol was writing plays, including musicals, for the stage and screen. Titles of her works include **“Falling,” “Papergirls”** and **“New World Tango,”** the latter a musical on which she collaborated with musician Joe Ely. Her best-known work is probably **“Bad Girls Upset By The Truth”** which she regularly performed in Austin clubs through the late 1980's and into the following decade, accompanied by Robert Jacks [vocals] and Mike Maddux [accordion]. Filmed in Bastrop, Texas, Lou Diamond Phillips starred in the movie **“Trespases”** [1986] for which Pierce co-wrote the screenplay, and the same year she took a small part in the Willie Nelson movie **“Red Headed Stranger.”** Pierce's play **“In the West”** was staged at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C. during 1991.

Two of her most avid Austin based fans were musicians Michael Hall [Wild Seeds] and Troy Campbell. Circa 1989, Campbell arrived in Austin from his native Ohio with The Highwaymen, although the band subsequently took the name Loose Diamonds, the title of one of Jo Carol's compositions. [Compilation] Albums that pay tribute to an artist usually occur after that artist has established an national/international reputation as a writer and/or recording artist, and only then, normally at the behest of a label, a group of musicians are invited to record an album of songs associated with/or penned by that artist. As far as Jo Carol is concerned that formula was turned on its head. Messrs Hall and Campbell were the producers of **“Across The Great Divide: Songs Of Jo Carol Pierce”** [1992], a collection that featured contributions from Joe Ely, Kris McKay, Loose Diamonds, Darden Smith, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Alejandro Escovedo, Terry Allen and more. The recording was released by the now defunct San Marcos based imprint Dejadisc. At the following year's Austin Music Awards, Jo Carol was acknowledged as Songwriter of the Year, while **“Across the Great Divide”** was Album of the Year.

The play **“Chippy,”** written by Terry Allen and his wife Jo Harvey, subtitled **“Diary Of A West Texas Hooker,”** was commissioned by the American Music Theater Festival in Philadelphia and the work made its world premiere there in 1994. As well as music composed by Terry and Jo Harvey, it featured songs penned by Ely, Butch Hancock, Wayne Hancock and Jo Carol [“Across The Great Divide,” “Boomtown Boogie” and “I Blame God”]. Produced by Joe Ely and Terry Allen a recording of **“Chippy”** was released by Hollywood Records in 1994. Jo Carol took the part of Tresa in the Stephen Purvis directed movie **“Deep In The Heart [Of Texas]”** [1996].

Troy Campbell, assisted by Frank Quintini, was responsible for the production of Jo Carol's debut album **“Bad Girls Upset By The Truth”** which the New Orleans based Monkey Hill label issued during 1996. The contributing musicians included Pierce, David Halley [guitar, vocal], Glen Fukunaga [bass], Mike Maddux [piano, accordion], Dana Myzer [drums] and Stephen Bruton [mandolin], with support vocals from Troy, Jennifer Warnes, Kim Longacre and Carol's husband, the artist Guy Juke. The recording featured twelve songs as well as the supporting spoken narratives. Employing a mix of folk and country music as the stylistic backdrop, it has to be said that Jo Carol's songwriting is unconventional, yet subjectively her lyrics are right on the money. In addition, it's worth noting that she's as much a performance artist/actress as a 'conventional' musician.

By the new millennium, a long time Jo Carol fan, David Halley [also raised in Lubbock] had returned to Austin, after a sojourn in Nashville, and the pair began writing together. The results feature on Jo Carol's sophomore solo work **“Dogs Of Love.”** Produced by Mark Andes [Spirit, Jo Jo Gunne, Firefall and Heart], the contributing musicians include Jo Carol [vocals, keyboards], Mike Vernon [guitar, bass], Mark Andes [bass, guitar, vocals], Guy Juke aka Blackie White - real name William DeForrest White [guitar, vocals, keyboards], Mary Welch [vocals, inspiration], Bruce Logan [drums] and others. Daniel Lee's **“Journeyman”** [2005], he penned the screenplay and directed the movie, featured songs composed by Jo Carol.

Discography : **“Bad Girls Upset By The Truth”** [1996] ; **“Dogs Of Love”** [2008] :

**Arthur Wood**

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