

## Sharon Shannon – Bio

Sharon Shannon was born on June 8<sup>th</sup> 1968 in Corofin, County Clare [in West Ireland] and was raised in the nearby village of Ruan. Her parents were Irish set dancers and part of growing up for Sharon and her three siblings was learning to play musical instruments. Having become accomplished on the tin whistle, at the age of eleven Sharon picked up the instrument that has brought her fame - the button accordion. In concert, Shannon also plays the fiddle and melodeon. Attending, and performing at, the weekly Friday night ceildh in Toonagh, organised by Frank Custy, was a regular feature of Shannon family life during her teenage years.

Founded in July 1981, Sharon's first group was Disirt Tola and they released a self-titled album in 1984. The line-up included her older brother Gary [tin whistle, flute], older sister Majella [fiddle], younger sister Mary [banjo], Gearoid O'hAllbhairn [concertina] and Ronan Browne [pipes]. Following high school, Sharon attended University College in Cork for a year and then spent two years living in Doolin, Clare where she had regularly played *sessions* during her mid-teens. Director Jim Sheridan subsequently invited Shannon to provide the music for the Druid Theatre Company production of Brendan Behan's "**The Hostage**." The two-month long run took place in Galway City.

In Galway, Sharon worked in a duo with former De Dannan member, Johnny "Ringo" McDonagh. McDonagh went on to form Arcady, and for the first year of its existence Sharon was a member of the eight-piece ensemble along with Brendan Larrisey, Frances Black, Sean Keane, Patsy Broderick, Nicholas Quemener and Cathal Hayden. That line-up recorded one album, but it was never released.

Sharon took part in *sessions* with Mike Scott and Steve Wickham [a fiddle player whom she had first met in Doolin] when The Waterboys came to record the album "**Fisherman's Blues**" at Spiddal, Galway in the Spring/Summer of 1988. In May the following year, at the behest of John Dunford, who co-produced the Spiddal sessions with Scott, 24 hours of *live sessions*, led by Sharon, were recorded one weekend at Winkles Hotel in Kinvara, Galway. Performers attending the sessions included Gerry O'Beirne, Donal Lunny, Adam Clayton [U2], plus Steve Wickham and Mike Scott. Invited to join The Waterboys, Sharon put her solo album on hold and spent the next eighteen months touring the world with the band. She appeared on their 1990 album, "**Room To Roam**."

Free to resume her solo career, Shannon and Dunford, conducted further recording sessions at Windmill Lane Studios in Dublin, resulting in the debut album "**Sharon Shannon**." Unprecedented, at the time of its release, Irish tv's "**The Late Late Show**" dedicated a whole show to presenting the music on Shannon's debut recording. The collection featured two cuts from the Kinvara sessions, and became Ireland's # 1 folk album in the latter part of 1991 and remained in that position into the following year, in the process selling 50,000 copies. Sharon contributed the traditional tunes "Blackbird" and "Coridinio" to the compilation album "**A Woman's Heart**" [1992], which took its title from an Eleanor McEvoy song, and the collection eventually sold in excess of 500,000 copies. Maura O'Connell, Dolores Keane, plus Frances and Mary Black were also featured on the collection.

"**Out The Gap**" was helmed by reggae artist and producer Denis Bovell, and was predominantly recorded in Brixton, London. The session players included a Jamaican rhythm section as well as Irish and English folk musicians. For her next solo album, "**Each Little Thing**" Shannon collaborated with the late Kirsty MacColl on "Libertango" a song previously cut by Grace Jones. A dance remix of the track "The Bag Of Cats" spent six weeks on the Irish pop singles chart. The retrospective "**Spellbound**" featured new and previously released material. The same year Sharon toured Europe with classical violinist Nigel Kennedy, accompanying him in performances of his "Jimi Hendrix Suite." For the triple platinum seller "**Diamond Mountain Sessions**," Shannon played fiddle and accordion alongside guest vocalists Steve Earle, Jackson Browne, John Prine and Dessie O'Halloran. Forming the band The Woodchoppers, Shannon cut "**Live In Galway**" and released it on her own Daisy label. The band line-up included her sister Mary [banjo].

Through the nineties and into the twenty-first century, Sharon has regularly toured the States, UK, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Japan. "**Libertango**" was released in the early Fall of 2003. During December 2004/January 2005, in Galway, Sharon cut the quartet album "**Tunes**" with De Dannan leader Frankie Gavin [fiddle], Mike McGoldrick [flute] a member of Capercaillie, Flook and his own band Fused, and Jim Murray [guitar]. The compilation "**The Sharon Shannon Collection 1990 -**

**2005**” achieved double platinum sales, while the following year her **“Live At Dolans”** DVD went straight to # 1 on the Irish Charts. In 2006 Sharon toured Australia with Michael McGoldrick, Jim Murray and Dezi Donnelly [fiddle] and in order to have an album to sell, the quartet cut **“Upside Down.”** Adopting the nom de plume Renegade, the latter quartet subsequently recorded their self-titled ‘official debut’ at Sharon’s Poets Corner studio. On **“Renegade”** Murray and McGoldrick supply the vocals and the guest performers include 2Play and Roachie. Gaffo, one of Sharon’s dogs, supplies barking vocals on the track “Got A Hold On Me.”

Discography :

Solo - **“Sharon Shannon”** [1991] ; **“Out The Gap”** [1995] ; **“Each Little Thing”** [1997] ; **“Spellbound – The Best Of Sharon Shannon”** [1998] ; **“The Diamond Mountain Sessions”** [2000] ; **“Live In Galway”** [2001] ; **“Libertango”** [2003] ; **“The Sharon Shannon Collection 1990 - 2005”** [2005] ; **“Live At Dolans”** [2006] :

with Sharon Shannon, Michael McGoldrick, Dezi Donnelly and Frankie Gavin – **“Tunes”** [2005] :

with Sharon Shannon, Michael McGoldrick, Dezi Donnelly and Jim Murray – **“Upside Down”** [2006] :

with Renegade [Sharon Shannon, Michael McGoldrick, Dezi Donnelly and Jim Murray] - **“Renegade”** [2007] :

DVD – **“Live At Dolans”** [2006] :

### **Arthur Wood**

Kerrville Kronikles 11/03 & 09/07

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