

Kimmie Rhodes – Bio

Kimmie Rhodes was born on March 6th, 1954 in Wichita Falls, Texas. She told me in 1989 *"I lived there for four years, then we moved to Lubbock."* At the age of five, Kimmie began singing in public. *"My daddy was a used car salesman and he would take me with him, when my mother was working. People would give me dimes to sing."* With her father [bass] and her brother [tenor], Kimmie then began performing in formal situations. *"I was the lead vocalist. We sang in church, at old folks homes and parties. I was in the school choir, church as well. Church is where I learned to sing harmony. I love to sing harmony."* Kimmie eventually married, left Lubbock, and in the early seventies settled on a ranch near Sunset, Texas. *"It was a family farm my grandfather had lived on, while I was growing up. My mother grew up there."* A dry land farm, Rhodes landed there at the beginning of what became a seven-year drought. *"The eighth year, it started raining like crazy. Unfortunately, it was all over for us by then."* Towards the end of her time on the farm Kimmie started learning to play guitar and began writing songs. *"I also did some painting. Only as a hobby."*

The first musician that Rhodes became acquainted with when she moved to Austin in 1979 was T.J. MacFarlane, Alvin Crow's manager/drummer. MacFarlane introduced Kimmie to local DJ/musician/producer/genius and good guy, Joe Gracey. *"Gracey had a basement studio of KOKE-FM he called Electric Graceyland. The first time I walked in there, he looked like he had been up for three days. He'd been recording with Stevie Ray Vaughan. Also The Skunks and Bobby Earl Smith. They had a publishing company called Contrabandistas Music."* Gracey agreed to help Kimmie become established in the Austin music scene. *"We liked each other instantly."* Starting to gig locally, Kimmie initially played venues such as the Alamo Hotel, Emma Joe's and went on to score gigs at the now defunct Armadillo World Headquarters and The Broken Spoke. Working with Gracey and Bobby Earl, Kimmie self-released a couple of 7" singles and after meeting Willie Nelson was offered the opportunity to record at his Pedernales Studios. The resulting ten-track album, **"Kimmie Rhodes And The Jackalope Brothers,"** [also] partly recorded at Austin's Lone Star Studios, was issued on the Jackalope label in 1985. The Jackalope Brothers were Joe Gracey and Bobby Earl Smith. Rhodes' sophomore album **"Man In The Moon"** was issued on the UK imprint Heartland Records, as was the follow-up **"Angels Get The Blues."** Gracey produced albums one and two, and Kimmie shared the credit on her third disc. The latter album was partly recorded at Sun Studios in Memphis. Rhodes' skill as a writer showed significant progress with each succeeding release, and following a five-year long hiatus she released the *Texas music classic* **"West Texas Heaven."** The now defunct French label, New Rose, was the first to issue it, while Stateside, it surfaced on Justice Records in the Spring of 1996. Apart from Jimmy Day's "Home John," the remaining songs on this Rhodes/Gracey production were composed by Kimmie. The CD liner included dedications to Joe Gracey Sr. and Beth Nielsen Chapman's husband, Ernest. **USA Today** rated it as one of the Top Ten Country Records of 1996. I should have added earlier, Joe and Kimmie were now married. In 1995 Kimmie sang on and contributed songs, including the title cut, to Nelson's Justice Records album **"Just One Love."** Through the nineties Rhodes placed songs in a number of movies. First, the black comedy **"Daddy's Dyin' Who's Got the Will"** [1990], then **"Mrs. Winterbourne"** [1997], followed by **"Babe: A Pig in the City"** [1998]. In 1999, "Ordinary Heart," co-written with Emmylou Harris, appeared on the **"Happy, Texas"** soundtrack. Emmylou's performance of the song was nominated for a Grammy. In 1998, Kimmie's trio of, early career recordings were reprised on the compilation CD, **"Jackalopes, Moon and Angels."** **"Rich From The Journey,"** turned out to be a *spiritually inspired* twelve-track Sunbird Records release, that featured a mix of original songs and co-writes with her son Gabe [who produced the album], Kevin Savigar [Rod Stewart's guitarist], Beth Nielsen Chapman and others. In late March 2000, David Letterman, a self-confessed fan, presented her on the **"Late Show."** The national television appearance helped promote the album. By the onset of Y2K Wynonna Judd, Trisha Yearwood, Amy Grant, CeCe Winans and John Farnham were among a long list of artists who had recorded Rhodes' songs. **"Love Me Like A Song,"** her latest album, and also a Sunbird release produced by Gabe, was released in the early summer of 2002. The CD liner featured some of Kimmie's paintings. In the last few years Rhodes has written or co-written [with Joe Sears] a number of plays, and along with members of her family appeared in productions of them. The titles of these musicals and reviews include **"Small Town Girl," "Hillbilly Heaven"** and **"Doing God's Chores."**

Through the late nineteen-nineties and into the new millennium, Austin based Deep South Productions issued a, to date, quartet of tribute discs to the late Blaze Foley [1949-1989]. Kimmie performed Foley's "If I Could Only Fly" on **"Volume 1 – In Tribute & Loving Memory"** [1998], while the most recent

release **“Songs For Blaze, A Friend Of Ours”** [2002] contained tribute compositions written by Foley’s legion of friends and admirers. The latter disc included one of the finest songs Rhodes has ever written, “Our Father’s Face.” Produced by Kimmie and Willie Nelson, and engineered by Joe Gracey, the pair cut a ten-song duet album titled **“Picture In A Frame”** and it was released in the Spring of 2003. In the Fall of 2003, **“Lost & Found”** a thirteen-track collection of songs, cut at various recording sessions during the previous decade, was issued by Sunbird Records, and in late 2004 was followed by a recording of new songs **“Windblown,”** from a stage production of the same name that debuted in Texas in early 2005.

“Ten Summers” was a fourteen-song retrospective that spanned the years 1995 – 2005, while **“Small Town Girl”** reprised another of Kimmie’s stage plays and featured seventeen original songs. The latter recording featured contributions from Joe Sears, Jamie Rhodes, Joe Ely and Beth Nielsen Chapman. Released in early 2008, **“Walls Fall Down”** was a twelve-song collection of new material.

Discography : **“Kimmie Rhodes And The Jackalope Brothers”** [1985] ; **“Man In The Moon”** [1988] ; **“Angels Get The Blues”** [1989] ; **“West Texas Heaven”** [1994] ; **“Jackalopes, Moons And Angels – A Collection 1985 - 1990”** [1997] ; **“Rich From The Journey”** [2000] ; **“Love Me Like A Song”** [2002] ; **“Picture In A Frame”** with Willie Nelson [2003] ; **“Lost & Found”** [2003] ; **“Windblown”** [2004] ; **“Ten Summers”** compilation [2005] ; **“Small Town Girl”** [2006] ; **“Walls Fall Down”** [2008] :

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 09/02, 04/03, 12/03, 11/04 & 01/08
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