

Carol Noonan - Bio

Carol Noonan's ancestors were mainly Irish, and as far as her introduction to music was concerned she clearly recalls being raised on a diet of subjectively dark and melodically ponderous, English and Irish folk ballads. A self-taught guitar player, the foregoing were the first songs to enter her repertoire, although she subsequently took a liking to with early works of Joni Mitchell [as well as those of Judy Collins and Joan Baez]. In time she began performing in folk clubs around Maine. Having studied music at Conservatory, in 1986 Alan Williams, Rick Harris and Carol formed the band, Knots & Crosses. Individually influenced by the pop, blues and folk music, the trio's unique sound evolved after they witnessed a performance by Richard Thompson Band's who were touring in support of their 1986 album **"Daring Adventures."** That said, five seemingly long years of bar and club gigs followed, a period when numerous attempts were made to gain record company interest. Demo tape after demo tape of original songs failed to produce the much sought after recording deal. In the end, the band self-released their first album **"Creatures Of Habit"** [1991]. The title song, penned by Noonan and Harris, became a turntable hit on a number of AAA Boston radio stations. Late in 1992 Williams and Noonan's marriage faltered, just as they began work on the second album **"Curve Of The Earth"** [1993]. By the late eighties, Carol was being nominated for Boston Music Awards, and in 1993 she picked up the title, Outstanding Female Vocalist. Strange to relate, after seven years of struggling to score a record deal the band were signed by Island Records. A corporate reshuffle at the label saw them dropped just as they began work on their third album. Traumatized by the experience, they decided to call it a day. In 1999 the Signature Sounds label issued a compilation of the 1991 and 1993 Knots & Crosses discs titled **"There Was A Time,"** that included two new songs, "Apparitions" and "Waiting For You" specially recorded for the release. Knots & Crosses sold 20,000 albums during their career, a not insignificant achievement considering they were a home-grown phenomenon. Intent on pursuing a career in music, Carol went on to form her own band. She subsequently signed with Rounder Records, and Philo their contemporary imprint issued her debut solo effort **"Absolution"** in 1995. Her band at that time included, Kevin Barry (acoustic, electric guitar), Paul Bryan (electric bass, backing vocals and co-producer), Duke Levine (electric guitar, mandolin & lap steel), Tom West (Hammond organ) and Ben Wittman (drums and co-producer). Steve Morse's liner note included the comment *"Noonan writes about everything from spiritual crises to romantic rebirths, while spanning pop, folk, country, Irish and English influences. She's forged a distinctive, dreamy style that is as breathtaking as her rich alto voice, soaring into the heavens even as she hits you in the heart."* Her second and third Philo albums, **"Noonan Wrecking & Building"** [1996] and **"The Only Witness"** [1997], were credited to the Carol Noonan Band. The band line-up remained constant, apart from the substitution, respectively, of Messrs. West and Wittman by Mike Deneen (keyboards) and Jay Bellerose (drums) on the third album. Her second husband's business, making nets for the fishing industry, suffered a downturn in the late nineties, after the US government imposed new restrictions on New England fishermen. Carol shelved her life as a musician for a time, and took a couple of day jobs to pay the rent on their farm. Eventually the business recovered, and in 1999 Carol self-released the Paul Bryan produced album **"Carol Noonan,"** a mix of her own compositions and covers including Richard Thompson's "Devonshire," as well as the traditional songs, "John Riley" and "Lagan Love." Her latest release, a collection of western theme covers and three originals titled **"Big Iron"** was produced by Bryan and Chris Rival.

Discography :

Carol Noonan : "Absolution" [1995] ; "Noonan Building & Wrecking" [1996] ; "The Only Witness" [1997] ; "Carol Noonan" [1999] ; "Big Iron" [2001].

Knots & Crosses : "Creatures Of Habit" [1991] ; "Curve Of The Earth" [1993] ; "There Was A Time" [1999].

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 01/02

[650 words]