

Burns Sisters – Bio

Based since the early 1980's out of Ithaca, New York, the Burns Sisters Band is currently composed of Marie, Jeannie and Annie Burns. At one stage there were five sisters in the band. These days the youngest, Terry, is a songwriter, while Sheila, the oldest, is an art teacher in Ithaca. Mr. and Mrs. Burns raised their brood in nearby Binghamton, and John J. Burns, now retired, was a politician. Elected the first Democrat mayor in the state, he was subsequently appointed Democratic Party Chairman for New York State. In 1964 John J. was Bobby Kennedy's campaign manager, when John F.'s younger brother stood, successfully, as a candidate for Senator of the State of New York. The girls' mother, Teresa McMahon, had been an opera singer. During their high school the older Burns boys' had formed a rock band - music, it appears, was a constant in the Burns household.

In 1980 the sisters appeared, singing, in the late Louis Malle's "**Atlantic City.**" At the outset the Burns Sisters performed as the trio we know today, but after recruiting Sheila and Terry, they signed a recording contract with SBK Productions/CBS Records during 1985. Featuring original material and covers, the quintet cut two, now out of print, pop styled albums. Their debut "**The Burns Sisters Band**" was produced by Richard Goddard, while Bob Marlette and David Kershenbaum co-produced "**Endangered Species.**" Following the loss of their CBS contract the quintet disbanded for a time.

During the early 1990's, the sisters were involved in a number of outside musical projects. Jeannie formed a Folk-influenced trio called Isn't It, with sister Terry and Walter Strauss. A folk/rock album "**Into The Wild**" credited to Annie Burns & The Rain was released during 1994. The Rain included Rich DePaolo (guitar, slide guitar, percussion). Mac Benford moved to Ithaca in 1990 and to celebrate his fiftieth birthday assembled the Woodshed All-Stars, an old-time string band. Marie became their vocalist. Having released the cassette only "**First ½ Century**" [1991] on the Marimac label, five years later Rounder issued their sophomore album "**Willow.**" Marie has also worked with Ithaca band Southern Tears.

Deciding to cut one more album as a five piece, the sister's self-released, on their own Art For Art's Sake label, the nine-song folk/rock collection "**Songs Of The Heart.**" By the time Rounder Records came calling a few years later, the band had shrunk once again to a trio. Their Rounder/Philo debut "**Close To Home**" produced by Rich DePaolo, saw the Burns Sisters begin to tour outside New York state. Their second Philo project, "**Tradition,**" subtitled "**Holiday Songs Old & New,**" proved to be something of a family and friend's affair. As well as Annie, Jeannie, and Marie, it featured their respective offspring, plus collaborators such as Mac Benford, John Kirk and Martin Simpson. Recorded in Nashville and produced by Springsteen's bass player Gary Tallent, it was hardly surprising that "**In This World**" possessed a country feel, as opposed to their earlier folkie efforts for Rounder. Completed by late 1999, what proved to be their final Philo release, "**Out Of The Blue**" didn't appear till midway through the following year. "**Tradition**" apart, all their Philo releases featured a mix of Marie, Jeannie and Annie composed originals and co-writes, plus a few well chosen covers.

During the early years of the new millennium, the sisters launched the next phase of their evolving musical careers. In the fall of 2000 Marie Burns self-released the self-produced "**Free Little Bird**" her debut solo album on the Sure Thing Records label. Her canine inspired song collection "**Good Dog**" followed in the summer of 2002. Jeannie's solo debut "**Coming Up Close**" produced by guitarist Jim Henry was recorded at the original Signature Sounds Recording Studio in Massachusetts and appeared in early 2001, while Annie's sophomore "**Days In Italy**" arrived later the same year. Henry toured with the Burns Sisters as their accompanist for a number of years, and since 2004 has toured with Tracy Grammer.

Rumours abounded for a time that a Louisiana-based independent record label was scheduling a new Burns Sisters recording, but nothing surfaced. A live Burns Sisters album was also mooted. Since the spring of 2004 the sisters have contributed to a number of **Ribbon of Highway, Endless Skyway** tours. This ensemble show, the brainchild of Bob Childers (the show's narrator), and the sisters' longtime pal Jimmy LaFave, and LaFave's booking agent Val Denn, pays tribute in narrative and song to the work of Woody Guthrie. As a recording unit, the Burns Sisters Band returned to the fray in late 2006 with the self-released, "**Wild Bouquet.**"

Discography : **“The Burns Sisters Band”** [1986] ; **“Endangered Species”** [1989] ; **“Songs Of The Heart”** [1992] ; **“Close To Home”** [1995] ; **“Tradition : Holiday Songs Old & New”** [1996] ; **“In This World”** [1997] ; **“Out Of The Blue”** [2000] ; **“Wild Bouquet”** [2006] :

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 11/06.

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