

Mary McCaslin – Bio

Mary McCaslin was born on 22nd December 1946 at St. Elizabeth Nursing Home located in the Indianapolis, Indiana suburb of Beechgrove and, soon afterwards, was given up for adoption. When Mary was aged six her adoptive parent's moved to Los Angeles, initially settling in the suburb of Redondo Beach and later moving to Norwalk. Raised on a diet of television westerns, McCaslin quickly became enamoured with the lore of the cowboy and the life of Native American tribes on America's wide-open, unblemished plains.

Mary also developed a love of country and western music at an early age. By her mid-teens that affair was tested by the arrival in the U.S.A. of The Beatles and other Brit Pop bands, as well as the rise and rise of Detroit's stable of Tamla Motown label hit makers. Aged fifteen McCaslin purchased her first guitar, a Stella. Three years later Mary began performing regularly at The Paradox, an Orange County coffeehouse and, later, at other west coast venues. Working a day job at a telephone company, the teenager persevered with her music career. Aged 21 McCaslin cut a single for the Capitol label, which teamed acoustic interpretations of Lennon/McCartney's "Rain" with Michael Nesmith's "This All Happened Once Before." The sessions, produced by the late Nik Venet, also yielded an album that finally saw the light of day in 1999. Released by the German based label Bear Family Records it was titled "**Rain – The Lost Album.**" Circa 1967 "**Happy Is The...**" the liner of the debut album by The Sunshine Company contained the credit "*A special thank you to Miss Mary McCaslin for her guidance on 'Rain' and 'I Need You.'*"

McCaslin's debut solo album, produced by Larry Murray [ex Hearts & Flowers], "**Goodnight Everybody**" was released by the now defunct Barnaby label during 1969. This collection of eleven cover songs included "You Keep Me Hangin' On," a mid-sixties chart hit for the Supremes and Vanilla Fudge. In 1980 the Piccadilly subsidiary of the Washington state-based First National label, reissued the album as "**Blue Ridge Epitaph.**" In the summer of 1972 while performing at California's Sweets Mill Folk Festival, Mary met performing songwriter, Jim Ringer. The pair soon began performing together, a partnership that lasted for over a decade. 1973 saw Mary cut her sophomore album, for the then fledgling North Ferrisburg, Vermont-based Folk label, Philo. "**Way Out West**" was the first of three consecutive discs McCaslin recorded for the imprint, and the eleven-track collection featured eight McCaslin penned originals.

Released in 1975, and featuring more McCaslin originals, Mary co-produced "**Prairie In The Sky**" with Jim Ringer, while two years on "**Old Friends**" was a collection of Mary's favourite songs by other writers. The ten-song set closed with the McCaslin composed album title song. During 1978, Mary worked on the soundtrack of the documentary "**Of Babies And Banners**" which charted the rise of the American Woman's Movement. During the same year, Jim and Mary were married. Having performed the Barbara Keith tune "The Bramble & The Rose" at their wedding, the following year they cut a duo album of cover songs of the same name for Philo. The front of the album liner featured a portrait of Jim and Mary by the multi-talented writer, musician and painter Eric Von Schmidt.

In the late 1970's Philo signed a production deal with Mercury Records, and the latter imprint released the McCaslin and Michael Couture produced "**Sunny California.**" Under promoted by Mercury, the album was not a major seller. Alongside five McCaslin originals and a cover of Ringer's "The California Zephyr," there were covers of sixties' classics "Save The Last Dance For Me" and Sam Cooke's "Cupid." Jim and Mary contributed a couple of songs to the 1980 Burt Lancaster movie, "**Cattle Annie And Little Britches.**" In the spring of 1981 Mary signed with the now defunct Chicago-based Flying Fish label and they issued the Mitch Greenhill produced "**A Life And A Time.**" The disc featured three of Mary's compositions including a reappraisal of "Northfield" from "**Way Out West**" and a new version of the cover song "You Keep Me Hangin' On." There were also readings of Jim Ringer's "The Band Of Jesse James" and Michael Nesmith's "Some Of Shelley's Blues."

In 1984 Philo released the compilation "**The Best of Mary McCaslin,**" and followed eight years later with a CD version sub-titled "**Things We Said Today.**" Through the eighties, Ringer's health deteriorated and public appearances by the duo eventually ground to a halt. They separated towards the close of that decade and in March 1992, Jim Ringer passed. Mary relocated to Santa Cruz, where she presented her "Fat Farm" music show on local radio station KZSC for a number of years. She also became a guitar teacher at a local store, Sylvan Music, and continues to occasionally contribute features

to the Santa Cruz Sentinel. McCaslin has continued to tour nationally, and in 1994 her composition "Way Out West" was included on the celebratory compilation, "**Philo So Far...The 20th Anniversary Folk Sampler.**"

In the late spring of 1994, returning to Philo, the label released Mary's seventh solo album "**Broken Promises,**" a collection of ten McCaslin originals and three covers – including Lennon/McCartney's "Help." In her liner notes Mary wrote, *"So much time has passed since my last recording that the possibility of making an album of new songs seemed like a far-off dream."* A thirteen gap separated "**A Life And A Time**" and "**Broken Promises,**" and an almost similar gap ensued before the appearance of her next studio recording, the appropriately titled self-release "**Better Late Than Never.**" The latter twelve-song collection featured five McCaslin originals/co-writes plus covers such as Neil Young's "Losing End" and Jackson Browne's "You've Forgotten." In 1999 the aforementioned 'archive recording' "**Rain**" finally surfaced. On June 15th 2002 Mary joined Lacy J. Dalton and Ginny Mitchell on the stage of Santa Cruz High's Performing Arts Theatre, for a benefit concert to help save the wild horses of Storey County, Nevada. An 'in concert' CD and DVD titled "**Girls From Santa Cruz**" was subsequently released. These days Mary lives in Santa Cruz with her second husband, Greg Arrufat.

Discography :

with Jim Ringer – "**The Bramble & The Rose**" [1978] :

with Lacy J. Dalton & Ginny Mitchell - "**Girls From Santa Cruz**" also available on DVD [2002] :

Solo - "**Goodnight Everybody**" [1969] ; "**Way Out West**" [1973] ; "**Prairie In The Sky**" [1975] ; "**Old Friends**" [1977] ; "**Sunny California**" [1979] ; "**A Life And A Time**" [1981] ; "**The Best Of Mary McCaslin**" compilation [1984] ; "**The Best Of Mary McCaslin : Things We Said Today**" compilation [1992] ; "**Broken Promises**" [1994] ; "**Rain – The Lost Album**" [1999] ; "**Better Late Than Never**" [2006] :

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Kerrville Kronikles 12/06.

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