

## Mary Chapin Carpenter - Bio

Mary Chapin Carpenter was born February 21<sup>st</sup> 1958 in Princeton, New Jersey. Chapin spent three years during her early teens in Tokyo, Japan where her father was the Publishing Director of LIFE ASIA. Her first love was ice-skating and in her mid-teens Chapin won the Princeton Senior Ladies Trophy. The family later relocated to Washington D.C. when her father became a lobbyist for the Magazine Publishers Association. Raised in a household where there had always been music, the move to D.C. also brought the joy of being able to attend live shows.

A gap year followed Chapin's High School graduation. During that year, Chapin performed at open mikes in numerous D.C. bars. Chapin's first paying gig was at Gallagher's in N.W. Washington. In 1978 she began attending Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, graduating three years later with a B.A. degree in American Civilization. Following university she once more frequented D.C. bars, in search of gigs. In 1984 she met John Jennings, the producer [or co-producer] of all her albums up to "**Time \* Sex \* Love \***." Initially they were in a trio with Bill Danoff, formerly of the Starland Vocal Band. Eventually they began making recordings of Chapin's songs. Had it not been for the intervention of Gary Oelze, proprietor of The Birchmere, "**Hometown Girl**," her debut recording, would almost certainly have been a Rounder release. What's more, the outcome of this tale would have been radically different. Oelze gave a tape of Chapin's songs to CBS A&R man Larry Hamby and the label subsequently signed Carpenter.

While "**Hometown Girl**" [1987] established her reputation as a stylish songwriter, it didn't yield any hits. "**State Of The Heart**" [1989] remedied that situation. The country hit singles "Never Had It So Good" and "Quittin' Time" brought Chapin the 1990 Academy of Country Music award for Best Female Vocalist. Further chart hits and music industry awards followed in the wake of the albums "**Shooting Straight In The Dark**" [1990], "**Come On, Come On**" [1992] and "**Stones In The Road**" [1994]. "Down At The Twist And Shout," from her 1992 album, brought Chapin her first Grammy, for Best Country Female Vocal Performance. Further Grammys followed in 1993 [for "I Feel Lucky"] and 1994 [for "Passionate Kisses"]. "**A Place In The World**" [1996] did less well commercially than its predecessors, and a greatest hits package, "**Party Doll & Other Favourites**" [1999] was Carpenter's next release. "**Time \* Sex \* Love \***" [2001], her eighth release for Sony/Columbia finds her treading much the same territory musically, as her 1996 album. The latter album was a co-production between Chapin, Jennings and Blake Chancey. On June 1<sup>st</sup> 2002 Mary Chapin Carpenter married building contractor Timmy Smith in Batesville, Virginia. They currently reside on a farm near Charlottesville, Virginia called "Elysium," a track of that title closed Carpenter's "**Between Here And Gone**." Carpenter teamed up with her buddy Shawn Colvin, plus Dar Williams and Patty Griffin and undertook a *songwriters in the round* style acoustic tour, during the fall of 2003. In the Spring of 2004 "**Between Here And Gone**" was released by Sony/Columbia and, recorded in Nashville, it was a co-production by Chapin and Matt Rollings, long-time keyboard player for Lyle Lovett's Large Band and a veteran of countless sessions.

Based on songs she has written, Carpenter has had two children's books published, namely "**Dreamland**" and "**Halley Came To Jackson**." In the past decade and more, she has performed on numerous compilation albums and on movie soundtracks such as "**Tin Cup**," "**Dead Man Walking**" and "**Fly Away Home**." Carpenter is a committed campaigner and fundraiser on behalf of charities such as The Wilderness Society and the Campaign To Ban Landmines. As I noted in the second paragraph, during the mid-1980's Carpenter almost became a Rounder recording artist. With the appearance of "**The Calling**" in early 2007 she joined Rounder's boutique label, Zoe. Like its predecessor the album was co-produced by Chapin and Rollings. In the Spring of that year while touring the album, Carpenter suffered a pulmonary embolism. In order to aid recovery, she reluctantly cancelled all subsequent tour dates. Sub-titled "**Twelve Songs Of Christmas**," "**Come Darkness, Come Light**" featured six seasonal songs penned by Carpenter [including two with John Jennings], plus a couple of traditional numbers and covers such as "On A Quiet Christmas Morn" by husband/wife duo Robin & Linda Williams. The disc was released by Zoe/Rounder Records in late September 2008.

Discography : "**Hometown Girl**" [1987] ; "**State Of The Heart**" [1989] ; "**Shooting Straight In The Dark**" [1990] ; "**Come On Come On**" [1992] ; "**Stones In the Road**" [1994] ; "**A Place In The World**" [1996] ; "**Party Doll And Other Favourites**" a career retrospective [1999] ; "**Time \* Sex \* Love \***" [2001] ; "**Between Here And Gone**" [2004] ; "**The Calling**" [2007] ; "**Come Darkness, Come Light**" [2008] :

Arthur Wood.

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