

Patty Larkin – Bio

Patty Larkin was born in Des Moines, Iowa on June 19th 1951 and was raised in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin, a northern coastal suburb of Milwaukee. Larkin's mother was a painter and also played the piano, while her father, a businessman, enjoyed singing. Patty studied the piano for a period of eight years during her childhood but never developed a love for the instrument, and at the age of thirteen discovered the guitar. A year later she began writing her own songs. During this period she listened to the music of Simon and Garfunkel, and Joni Mitchell. Following graduation from high school, she enrolled at the University of Oregon in Eugene and graduated in 1973 with a degree in English Literature. Larkin played in a jug band, Willie & The Egyptians while based in Oregon. Bonnie Raitt's album "**Give It Up**" [1972] had a profound influence, Larkin claims, on her development as a musician. For Larkin it was a love affair, since here was a woman who not only sang but played lead guitar.

One of the venues that Raitt frequented during her early career was the legendary Club 47 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and it was to the city of Boston that Larkin relocated in 1974. Having made the decision to become a professional musician, Patty struggled for the first couple of years during which time she took a summertime course in jazz guitar at Berklee College of Music and went on to study with a number of other guitar teachers. She worked in a trio that played Latin music, and also joined the Celtic influenced Brattle Street Band. Through the late eighties the Patty Larkin Band played rock music covers in the city's clubs, but it was not an activity that she found musically fulfilling.

In 1982 Patty turned to solo work and, armed with her acoustic guitar, began performing the New England folk club circuit. In 1985 Larkin was signed by the Rounder/Philo record label and they issued her debut solo effort "**Step Into The Light**" the same year. The recording was co-produced by Gragg Lunsford and Patty, and she closed the collection with humorously self-deprecating, "Not Bad For A Broad."

"**I'm Fine**" followed a couple of years later, and her last Philo release, a concert recording, "**Live In the Square**," was made at the Sanders Theatre in Cambridge. The latter pair of discs were produced by Darleen Wilson. Larkin played the prestigious Newport Folk Festival in 1988, and concurrently began touring on a national basis. In the late eighties she joined Christine Lavin, Megan McDonough and Sally Fingerett in the first lie-up of the Four Bitchin' Babes but only stayed long enough to appear on the quartet's 1991 debut album. Larkin also became involved in the, still, annual "On A Winter Nights" tour that features John Gorka, Cheryl Wheeler and Cliff Eberhardt. The tour followed in the wake of the Christine Lavin inspired "**On A Winter's Night**" songwriter compilation on which Patty performed "Winter Wind." The collection was initially sold as a cassette at Lavin's solo concerts, but was subsequently issued on CD by North Star Records in 1990 and then reissued by Rounder/Philo in 1994.

From Rounder Records, Larkin moved on to west coast based Windham Hill label and her first album was titled "**Tango**." The title track also opened the "**Legacy II**" songwriter compilation that Windham Hill issued the same year. Where Will Ackerman produced "**Tango**," John Leventhal and Ben Wisch were at the controls for "**Angels Running**." When "**Strangers World**" was released in 1995, the City of Boston *fathers* declared July 18th Patty Larkin Day. BMG purchased Windham Hill in 1996, and Larkin's final recording for the imprint "**Perishable Fruit**" appeared the following year.

Through the nineties, Patty appeared on numerous compilation albums. She sang "Island Of Time" on another Lavin inspired seasonal compilation "**When October Goes**" [1991], and "Johnny Was A Pyro" for the Signature Sounds collection "**Live At The Iron Horse, Vol. 1**" [1997]. When Peter Galway and Astor Place Recordings put together the "**Time And Love**" [1997] memorial album for the late Laura Nyro, Larkin contributed "Poverty Train." The same team was responsible for the folk compilation "**Bleecker Street : Greenwich Village In The 60's**" [1999] and Patty covered the late Fred Neil's "Everybody's Talking." The same year Larkin turned up on Howard and Roz Larman's "**The Folkscene Collection, Vol. II**" singing "Justine" and performed "Open Arms (Don't Explain)" on "**Main Stage Live – Falcon Ridge Folk Festival**." Sticking with those summer events when the Sliced Bread label issued the four disc set "**Philadelphia Folk Festival: 40th Anniversary**" last year, Larkin opened Disc 4 with "Beg To Differ."

Vanguard Records was the next label to sign Larkin and her second live album, "**A Gogo – Live On Tour**," was recorded during her tour to support the "Perishable Fruit" album. The fourteen tracks were drawn from ten different concert appearances. So far in the new millennium, Larkin has released two studio recordings "**Regrooving The Dream**" [2000] and "**Red = Luck**" [2003]. These days Patty Larkin is a Cape Cod resident and her most recent discs have been cut at her Road Narrows Studio in Wellfleet.

Helmed by Patty Larkin, **“La Guitara”** was a fourteen-track collection featuring women guitarists. Drawing on a broad spectrum of music genres, past and present, national and international, the album was released by Vanguard Records during November 2005. The contributing artists were Wu Man, Sharon Isbin, Memphis Minnie, Mimi Fox, Kaki King, Ellen McIlwaine, Badi Assad, Alex Houghton, Vicki Genfan, Rory Block, Muriel Anderson, Jennifer Batten, Elizabeth Cotten plus Larkin. Proceeds from sales of the disc benefited "Guitars In The Classroom", a music education programme. Post the album release, Larkin toured with Kaki King, Mimi Fox and Muriel Anderson [November 2005] and then Sharon Isbin and Kaki King [March 2006]. **“Watch The Sky”** Larkin’s first solo album since **“Red = Luck”** was released by Vanguard Records during January 2008.

Discography :

Solo - **“Step Into The Light”** [1985] ; **“I’m Fine”** [1987] ; **“Live In the Square”** [1990] ; **“Tango”** [1991] ; **“Running Angels”** [1993] ; **“Strangers World”** [1995] ; **“Perishable Fruit”** [1997] ; **“A Gogo – Live On Tour”** [1999] ; **“Regrooving The Dream”** [2000] ; **“Red = Luck”** [2003] ; **“Watch The Sky”** [2008] :
with Four Bitchin’ Babes – **“Buy Me, Bring Me, Take Me : Don’t Mess My Hair”** [1991]
with Others – **“La Guitara”** [2005] ;

Arthur Wood

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