

Tift Merritt – Bio

Tift Merritt was born in Houston, Texas in 1975. Tift's mother was from North Carolina, while her father was a Texan. Eventually Mrs Merritt decided that she'd had enough of Texas, and told her husband that she and Tift were moving to North Carolina. The clincher being that if he cared to follow them, then that would be swell. Well he did, and they all lived happily ever after in Raleigh, NC. Tift's father was a folk music fan and he passed his love for the genre on to his daughter. By the time she was in her teens Tift had picked up the guitar, at which point her dad taught her four chords. She went on to learn much more about playing the instrument, and these days they say she can throw off pretty mean lead guitar licks. In terms of the music she listened to while growing up, Tift willingly admits to a flirtation with the songs of Joni Mitchell. Following graduation from high school Tift spent a couple of years in the Carolina coastal town of Wilmington, followed by a spell living in New York where she made a demo tape of songs she had written. Moving back to North Carolina she enrolled in the state University, and in 1997 met Zeke Hutchins in her American Studies class. Hutchins had been raised in Durham, NC and earlier that decade had completed his first year at University before heading off to New York with his alt-rock band, Queen Sarah Saturday. When the band's deal with Thirsty Ear Records didn't bring the participants, fame or fortune, Zeke returned to Carolina and the university in Chapel Hill. Much enamoured by what he heard on Tift's New York demo tape, Zeke decided they would become a band. They began working in local clubs and bars as a guitar and drums duo, performing Tift's songs. By the summer of the following year the Carbines had coalesced, with a line-up of Tift [guitar, vocals], Zeke [drums], Margaret White [fiddle], Christopher Thurston [bass] and Greg Readling [keyboards, pedal steel]. Early the following year that line-up released the only Carbines recording [to date], a 7" single, on their own Oil Rig label, of "Juke Joint Girl" b/w "Cowboy." Later that year, Tift made an album with another local band, the Two Dollar Pistols. It was titled, **"The Two Dollar Pistols with Tift Merritt."** Styled as classic country male/female duets, and featuring the Pistols singer John Howie Jr. and Tift, the pair included a couple of their collaborations "If Only You Were Mine" and "Counting The Hours" among the seven cuts. In the spring of 2000 Tift won the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest at Merlefest. While she was initially courted by the local independent imprint, Sugar Hill Records, Tift eventually signed a solo recording deal with Lost Highway Records. By the time her solo debut was recorded late last year in Los Angeles with assistance from her Carbines, and production by Ethan Johns [Ryan Adams], White and Thurston had departed and the latter was replaced by Jay Brown. Her debut album **"Bramble Rose"** was released in June 2002, and was followed two years later by the George Drakoulias produced **"Tambourine."** Drakoulias' track record includes productions for Black Crowes, Maria McKee and The Jayhawks, and the **"Tambourine"** session players included Mike Campbell [Tom Petty], Don Heffington [Lone Justice, Emmylou Harris], solo act in his own right Neal Casal, plus on harmony vocals McKee and Gary Louris [The Jayhawks]. **"Tambourine"** was nominated for a Best Country Album Grammy, while the Americana Music Association [AMA] nominated Tift for their 2005 Album, Artist and Song of the Year awards.

In late 2005 Tift self-released the nine song, live album **"Home Is Loud"** which was recorded on 4th June that year at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh. Recorded on 20th October 2005, and first broadcast on 21st January 2006 on a bill Tift shared with Ryan Adams, the New West label issued a DVD of her appearance on **"Austin City Limits"** during late 2007. On this almost sixty minute long, ten-song recording Merritt was supported by her four-piece road band. Tift's third studio recording **"Another Country"** was released by Fantasy Records during late February 2008.

Discography : **"The Two Dollar Pistols with Tift Merritt"** [1999] with The Two Dollar Pistols ; **"Bramble Rose"** [2002] ; **"Tambourine"** [2004] ; **"Home Is Loud"** [2005] ; **"Another Country"** [2008] :

DVD **"Live From Austin, Tx."** [2007] :

Arthur Wood

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