

the daisy label

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SHARON SHANNON BIOGRAPHY 2005

Sharon Shannon comes from Clare on the West coast of Ireland, an area historically steeped in music. She began playing music as a young child and while still in her teens was asked by Jim Sheridan (My Left Foot, The Field) to provide the music for his stage production of Behan's The Hostage. She began her solo recording career in 1989. The Waterboys' producer, John Dunford, gathered together a wide variety of musicians including Donal Lunny, Philip King, Mary Custy, U2's Adam Clayton, Steve Wickham, and Mike Scott. Shortly after this Mike asked Sharon to join him in The Waterboys. This collaboration also involved her featuring in their "Room to Roam" album.

By 1991 Sharon had completed her own album, which included tracks from Stephen Cooney, Trevor Hutchinson and Hot House Flower's, Liam O'Maonlai. This album, a stunning cocktail of Portuguese, Cajun, Swedish, Scottish and French-Canadian influences rapidly secured a place in the history books by becoming the most successful Irish traditional music album ever released. Hailed as the "traditional album of the nineties" it was also described by New Musical Express as a crossover record, which "was creative, deft and lovely".

The inclusion of two of Sharon's tracks on the all female compilation 'A WOMANS HEART' which sold a staggering 500,000 copies, increased Sharon's profile but it was The Late Late Show tribute to Sharon which included all the guests from her debut album that made Sharon Shannon a household name. Viewed by over one million people this show firmly established Sharon as one of Ireland's leading musicians.

The release of her second album "Out the Gap" broke further musical boundaries, reflecting the many musical influences, which she has absorbed, and although maintaining her own unique style she has expanded her musical versatility by teaming up with veteran reggae artiste and producer Denis Bovell. Recorded almost exclusively in Brixton, London, it featuring a Jamaican rhythm section and a collection of Irish and English musicians including the great Richie Buckley on saxophone. The lead track called 'The Mighty Sparrow' (in honour of the diminutive Caribbean singer) was a favourite with Irish radio.

In 1996 Sharon was amongst a host of international musicians, Bono and Adam Clayton, Elvis Costello, Neill and Tim Finn, Mark Knopfler, Kate Bush, Liam O'Maonlai, Brian Kennedy, Christy Moore and Sinéad O'Connor to appear on the EMI album "Common Ground". During that summer she returned to the studio to record her own album which, amongst other guest musicians, features a collaboration with Kirsty McColl on a Grace Jones song. "Each Little Thing", which is her third album, was released in February 1997. A dance remix of a track called 'The Bag of Cats' released as a single stayed in the Irish top 20 pop charts for six weeks.

Her fourth album titled "Spellbound" was released in September 1998. This compilation featured new material, live tracks and tracks taken from her previous albums. During the same year, Sharon was asked by classical violinist Nigel Kennedy to join a combo of musicians to perform his 'Jimi Hendrix Suite'. They performed this work in some of the major European cities. Over the past few years Sharon has toured extensively in the U.S. and Europe, also visiting Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong and Japan. Her increasing popularity in the U.K. has brought her music to an ever-growing audience. She has played for Irish President Mary Robinson, for Lech Walesa in Warsaw and for President Clinton in the White House. Sharon also accompanied President Mary McAleese on her Australian State visit.

On the live front, Sharon has toured extensively - Japan, the US and the UK. In July 1999 she played with Coolfin around Ireland as part of their warm up tour for a show with the Kodo Drummers from Japan, which took place in the RDS, Dublin. She has also guested on the band's album "Coolfin". In

the autumn of 2002 and early 2003 Sharon toured with Sinéad O'Connor's band in Ireland, the U.K and Europe.

Sharon's groundbreaking album, 'The Diamond Mountain Sessions', released in Autumn 2000 took her in a very different direction. Her own accordion and fiddle playing was as full of virtuosity as ever but this time she was accompanied by stirring vocal performances from the likes of Steve Earle, Jackson Browne, John Prine and Dessie O'Halloran from the island of Inishbofin off the Galway coast.

The album went triple platinum in Ireland and was widely critically acclaimed. Sharon and her band - The Woodchoppers - toured for a year worldwide and it was a recording of the band's performance in Galway that gave Sharon her next album. Released in December 2001 on Sharon own Daisy label LIVE IN GALWAY captures Sharon and the Woodchoppers in rare form. 'Live in Galway', release date January 2002, features tracks from all Sharon's former albums as well as two previously unreleased tracks. Sharon is joined on the album by her then touring band 'The Woodchoppers'. The album was recorded live in Galway in May 2001 and is a great reflection of Sharon's talent with a unique live feel.

In 2003 Sharon took to the road with a scaled-down band comprised of guitarist Jim Murray, Mary Shannon on banjo and mandolin and introducing newcomer Pauline Scanlon on vocals. They recently finished a very successful six-week tour of Australia with more dates in Europe in the summer including the acoustic stage in Glastonbury.

Sharon's seventh album, 'Libertango', featured singers, Kirsty McColl, Sinéad O'Connor, Pauline Scanlon and musicians, Mary Shannon, Jim Murray, Richie Buckley, Steve Wickham, Donal Lunny and many more. Libertango was released in September 2003 and the lead single, 'What You Make It (da, da, da, da)', featuring rapper Marvel and Lady K, was a Summer radio hit in Ireland that year.

In 2004 Sharon and her band toured in Europe and The States performing at festivals such as Womad, Cambridge, Las Palmas, Trentino in Italy, Edinburgh and two in Boston along with a successful three week tour of Australia.

Sharon Shannon has just finished an album with two other legends, Frankie Gavin, (fiddle) who fronted the seminal trad band De Dannan for over 25 years and flute player, Mike McGoldrick, from Manchester who has been a member of Capercaille and Flook and who fronts his own band called Fused. These are accompanied by Jim Murray (Sharon's long-time sideman on guitar). The material is mostly traditional Irish with a smattering of traditional Asturian tunes, some newly composed Scottish tunes and some newly composed tunes by each of this talented quartet. Gavin, McGoldrick, Murray and Shannon showcased this new material at Celtic Connections. Will play at Cheltenham Festival in February and undertake an Irish tour in May as well as Festivals throughout the Summer.