

Carlene Carter has been releasing music for more than four decades. The daughter of June Carter Cash and country star Carl Smith, and stepdaughter of Johnny Cash, she is the physical embodiment of the Carter Family in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Her Don Was-produced album *Carter Girl* is a critically-lauded collection of Carter Family songs and originals, inspired by successive generations of her family. That album led to her spending time on the road on John Mellencamp's *Plain Spoken* tour, both as a support act and joining him on stage nightly to perform duets. She also played a role in the touring production of *Ghost Brothers of Darkland County*, the southern gothic musical play written by Stephen King and Mellencamp. Thereafter, she recorded *Sad Clowns and Hillbillies* with Mellencamp, an album that includes newly penned songs by Carlene.

Carlene started her career singing with The Carter Family while still a teen. With the 1978 release of her self-titled debut album, she established herself on the edgier end of the country music spectrum, having recorded it in England with Graham Parker's band The Rumour. When Maybelle Carter died later that fall, Chet Flippo wrote in *Rolling Stone* that she "lived to see her granddaughter Carlene merge Nashville with contemporary rock and roll."

Her third album, *Musical Shapes*, still often cited as being ahead of its time for its blend of country and rock, was recorded with her then-husband and producer Nick Lowe and his group Rockpile in 1980. Making their home in London, Carlene spent a year on the West End stage in the musical *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, then filled in for her aunt Anita one night when The Carter Family played Wembley with the Johnny Cash show. She ended up touring with them for the next two years, until she felt ready to go out on her own again, encouraged by Dwight Yoakam, who told her, "Carlene, there is a place for you in country music."