



TDT'S COLLEGE OF USELESS KNOWLEDGE

CK/JT 101 Carole King, The Early Years

Born **Carol Klein** on February 9, 1942, into a Jewish household in Brooklyn, New York, Carol grew up near the multi-ethnic Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood. She was playing piano well by age four & quickly moved on to singing & songwriting by her early teens. Her first serious musical experience came while still a student at James Madison High School where she & some friends formed a vocal quartet called the Co-Sines. The group's name was inspired by the freshman math class they shared.

The Co-Sines members included Carol's first boyfriend, & future TV & movie director, Joel Zwick. Joel's credits would later include:

TV - Happy Days, Laverne & Shirley, Mork & Mindy, Bosom Buddies, The Love Boat, Perfect Strangers & Full House.

MOVIES - My Big Fat Greek Wedding & Fat Albert.

The Co-Sines achieved little more than neighborhood popularity, performing primarily at school & civic functions as well as an occasional unpaid appearance at a coffee house or other New York beatnik hangout of the late 50's. They quickly disbanded during their sophomore year.

James Madison High School opened in 1925 & is still in operation today. It's nationally known for its career focused education, decades before such interest oriented or magnet schools were ever heard of. Specializing in preparing their students for careers in the fields of music, law, medicine & mathematics. The list of distinguished JMHS alumni is unmatched by any other NYC high school. That list includes numerous NY State & US Senators, NYC politicians, four Nobel Prize & three Pulitzer Prize winners in addition to countless business & civic leaders. Not the least of which is Supreme Court Justice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who was a JMHS baton twirler & cheerleader & went by the nickname of Kiki.

Other notable JMHS alumni include:

MLB players Frank Torre (Braves & Phillies) & his older brother Joe, the former NY Yankees & current LA Dodgers Manager.

Judge Judith Blum Sheindlin (aka Judge Judy).

Comedians, Chris Rock & Andrew Dice Clay.

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William "Wild Bill" Gaines (Mad Magazine Creator & Publisher).

Mission Impossible Actor, Martin Landau.

Rock & roll DJ, Bruce "Cousin Brucie" Morrow.

Like many teenagers of her day Carole (by high school she'd added an "e" to her first name) dreamed of a successful music career. To go along with the appended "e", she decided to give herself a completely new last name, selecting "King" randomly from the Brooklyn telephone directory.

A huge fan of the songwriting team of Jerry Lieber & Mike Stoller (the duo that penned numerous hits for Elvis Presley, The Coasters & Ben E. King) Carole longed to write hit songs too. While still in high school, Carole became a regular at influential DJ, Alan Freed's local Rock 'N' Roll shows. There she became acquainted with many of the pioneers of the burgeoning rock & roll & folk music business, both performers & the behind the scenes writers, producers & record executives. Hanging out back stage & between shows, she learned first hand how songs are written, published & recorded. Valuable lessons that would prove indispensable to her future career.

Later, while attending Queens College in NYC, she became friends with other budding young songwriters Paul Simon, Neil Sedaka & Gerry Goffin. She & Goffin forged a songwriting partnership when the teenage duo was signed by Aldon Records, whose offices were in the historic Brill Building in New York City. In addition to Aldon Records, the Brill Building was home to many other music publishing, producing & recording companies & was the heart of the east coast popular music business & the New York equivalent of Detroit's Hitsville USA or Sun Studios in Memphis.

By 1962 the Brill Building contained 165 music businesses. A musician could find an agent, publisher, sheet music printer, cut a demo, promote the record & cut a deal with radio promoters, all within this one building. The creative culture of the independent music companies of the Brill Building came to define the influential "Brill Building Sound" & the style of popular music songwriting & recording created by its writers & producers.

Carole King described the atmosphere in the Brill Building publishing houses of the period:



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"Every day we squeezed into our respective cubby holes with just enough room for a piano, a bench & maybe a chair for the lyricist, if you were lucky. You'd sit there & write & you could hear someone in the next cubby hole composing a song exactly like yours. The pressure in the Brill Building was really terrific because Donny Kirshner would play one songwriter against another. He'd say, "We need a new smash hit", & we'd all go back & write a song & the next day we'd each audition for Bobby Vee's producer."

Her friendship with Neil Sedaka, who'd recommended the Goffin & King songwriting duo to his Aldon boss Don Kirshner, inspired Neil's first national hit song, 1959's "Oh, Carol." In return Carole wrote & recorded her tongue-in-cheek response, "Oh, Neil" but it sold poorly. Carole also released another handful of unsuccessful singles, including "The Right Girl", "Baby Sittin" & "Queen of The Beach", all to yawning response from pop music fans.



King & Goffin soon became more than songwriting partners as their friendship blossomed into romance & they were married in September 1960. The young married couple, still in their teens, shared an inherent instinct for classic pop song construction but it had been Carole's lifelong desire for a career in music that had initially convinced then boyfriend Gerry to give it a try.



Shortly after their wedding they finally broke through to national prominence when one of their songs, "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow", by The Shirelles, reached #1 on the Billboard charts. Then immediately another #1 hit with "The Loco-Motion", recorded by Carole & Gerry's teenage babysitter, "Little Eva" Boyd with Carole adding backup vocals. After that the hits poured forth & the duo would become two of the most prolific & successful songwriters of the rock era. The list of their hits, for a wide variety of artists & genres, reads like a who's who of rock & roll & includes among many others:

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YR	SONG	ORIGINAL ARTIST	CHART POS.	ALSO RECORDED BY
1961	Take Good Care Of My Baby	Bobby Vee	1	Dion & The Belmonts Bobby Vinton Smokie Robinson
	Some Kind Of Wonderful	The Drifters	1	Marvin Gaye
	Halfway To Paradise	Tony Orlando	32	Bobby Vinton
	Every Breathe I Take	Gene Pitney	42	
	Walkin' With My Angel	Bobby Vee	53	Herman's Hermits
	Who Put The Bomp In The Bomp, Bomp, Bomp	Barry Mann	7	
	Run To Him	Bobby Vee	2	Donny Osmond
1962	Chains	The Cookies	17	The Beatles
	Keep Your Hands Off My Baby	Little Eva	12	The Beatles
	He Hit Me (and it felt like a kiss)	The Crystals	5	The Motels
	Go Away Little Girl	Steve Lawrence	1	Mark Wynter Donny Osmond The Happenings
	When My Little Girl Is Smiling	The Drifters	28	
	Point Of No Return	Gene McDaniels	21	
	Crying In The Rain	Everly Brothers	6	A-ha Dave Edmonds
1963	Don't Say Nothin' Bad (about my baby)	The Cookies	7	
	I Can't Stay Mad At You	Skeeter Davis	7	
	Hey Girl	Freddie Scott	10	Donny Osmond George Benson Carole King Billy Joel Bobby Vee The Temptation

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YR	SONG	ORIGINAL ARTIST	CHART POS.	ALSO RECORDED BY
	One Fine Day	The Chiffons	5	Rita Collidge Aaron Neville Natalie Merchant
	Up On The Roof	The Drifters	5	Laura Nyro James Taylor Neil Diamond Billy Joe Royal
1964	I Can't Hear You No More	Betty Everett	68	Dusty Springfield Helen Reddy
	I'm Into Something Good	Earl-Jean McCrea	38	Herman's Hermits
	Oh No, Not My Baby	Maxine Brown	24	Manfred Mann Dusty Springfield Aretha Franklin Rod Stewart The Partridge Family Cher Linda Ronstadt
1965	Don't Forget About Me	Barbara Lewis	18	Dusty Springfield
	Just Once In My Life	The Righteous Brothers	9	
1966	Don't Bring Me Down	The Animals	12	Tom Petty
	Goin' Back	Dusty Springfield	12	The Byrds Diana Ross
	I Can't Make It Alone	PJ Proby	43	Dusty Springfield
1967	Pleasant Valley Sunday	The Monkees	3	
	You Make Me Feel Like A Natural Woman	Aretha Franklin	8	Laura Nyro Rod Stewart Mary J Blige Celine Dion
1968	Porpoise Song	The Monkees	62	
	Wasn't Born To Follow	The Byrds	48	

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YR	SONG	ORIGINAL ARTIST	CHART POS.	ALSO RECORDED BY
1970	Hi-De-Ho (that old sweet roll)	Blood Sweat & Tears	14	Dusty Springfield Helen Reddy

Their songs were always impeccably structured. Their music was written especially for teens & dealt with timeless themes of love, rejection & jealousy & with teenagers dealing with them on their own terms. Carole's heart tugging melodies & Gerry's real life lyrics captured the tone & vernacular of their audience's inner experiences with uncanny accuracy.

Carole had a gift for arrangement, knowing how to build a hook through subtle chord manipulation & instrumental counterpoint. To help sell her songs, she began recording quick, low cost demos to better illustrate her ideas to the producers. These demos were so good that often the producer only had to copy them & add the proper instrumentation to have a hit record.

Don Kirshner soon realizing that he had, over time, been increasing King's production jobs in addition to giving her the first chance at every new hit to be written. With Sedaka busy with his own singing career, Goffin & King had become Aldon Music's most bankable asset. A few months later Don Kirshner rewarded King with the release of her recording of "It Might as Well Rain Until September", instead of giving it to Bobby Vee, who Carole had written it for.

"It Might as Well Rain Until September" reached #22 on the US charts in 1962 but was followed by a couple of flops & failed once again to jump start King's long hoped for performing career. It would be another 8 long years before Carole would again touch the Top 100 chart as a performer. During the same time period the songs she & Gerry Goffin wrote were making other performers wealthy superstars, an ironic twist that had to be enormously frustrating for the would be singer.

Kirshner decided that Goffin & King were capable of running a record label & put them in charge of the new Dimension Records. For over a year it had a more consistent track record than any of its competition, including Phil Spector & his "Wall of Sound" from Philadelphia. The label was sold in mid 1963 as part of Kirshner's deal with Screen Gems & continued for another few years. Goffin & King were assigned to bolster the

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careers of Screen Gems mediocre roster while taking care of Kirshner's clients. By 1964 they had come up with another twenty three hits, but their best work was behind them & the British Invasion had begun.

Goffin & King were well known by, & were musical heroes of, many of the new English groups. The Beatles recorded Carole's "Chains" & Paul McCartney was quoted as saying he wished he could write tunes as well Goffin & King. On their first US tour, in February 1964, meeting Goffin & King was a priority for the four lads from Liverpool & The Beatles were not the only British band that felt that way.

Goffin & King, with Phil Spector, also wrote for the Righteous Brothers while continuing to write for other artists, with an increasing portion of the songs being rhythm & blues or soul. By 1965, their writing talents were becoming less important in the music business as artists like The Byrds, The Young Rascals, The Beach Boys & Bob Dylan, following the lead of The Beatles, wrote & recorded only their own original material.

Kirshner responded to the changing times with a renewed faith in simple music, now targeting the new generation, too young to be smoking pot or protesting the Vietnam war on campus. In 1965, Goffin & King were selected to write the theme song for Sidney Sheldon's new television series, I Dream of Jeannie, but an instrumental by Hugo Montenegro was selected instead. Goffin & King's 1967 song, "Pleasant Valley Sunday", a #3 hit for The Monkees, was inspired by the couple's move from the big city to the bland suburban sameness of West Orange, New Jersey. Goffin & King also wrote several songs for the Monkees' film "Head", a low budget, & ultimately unsuccessful, response to The Beatles "Help".

"Head" was co-written & produced by a very young Jack Nicholson just months before being selected for his first big acting break, "Easy Rider". "Head" received lackluster critical reviews & virtually non-existent box office receipts. The movie only succeeded in alienating the band's teenage fan base, while also failing to attract a more serious adult audience they'd been striving for. "Head's" abysmal reception instantly halted studio plans for further films with The Monkees. It also corresponded with a steep drop in the group's popularity as recording artists. The film's soundtrack peaked at #45 on the US charts, the first time any LP by The Monkees had failed to reach the Top 5.

By 1967 Goffin & King's marriage was crumbling due to creative disenchantment, internal pressures & the changing times. They were divorced in 1968 but for the next

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few years Carole continued to consult Goffin on the music she was writing for herself. Eventually King lost touch with Goffin because of his declining mental health & the effect it had on their two daughters.

One of the great songwriting duos of the early rock era, with well over 100 chart topping hits to their credit, were no more. The team of Gerry Goffin & Carole King were awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award by the National Academy of Songwriters in 1987 & were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame as songwriters in 1990.