

= Eva Cassidy =

Eva Marie Cassidy (February 2 , 1963 ? November 2 , 1996) was an American vocalist and guitarist known for her interpretations of jazz , blues , folk , gospel , country , rock and pop classics . In 1992 , she released her first album , The Other Side , a set of duets with go @-@ go musician Chuck Brown , followed by the 1996 live solo album titled Live at Blues Alley . Although she had been honored by the Washington Area Music Association , she was virtually unknown outside her native Washington , D.C .. She died of melanoma in 1996 .

Two years later , Cassidy 's music was brought to the attention of British audiences when her versions of " Fields of Gold " and " Over the Rainbow " were played by Mike Harding and Terry Wogan on BBC Radio 2 . Following the overwhelming response , a camcorder recording of " Over the Rainbow " , taken at Blues Alley in Washington by her friend Bryan McCulley , was shown on BBC Two 's Top of the Pops 2 . Shortly afterwards , the compilation album Songbird climbed to the top of the UK Albums Charts , almost three years after its initial release . The chart success in the United Kingdom and Ireland led to increased recognition worldwide ; her posthumously released recordings , including three UK number 1 records , have sold more than ten million copies . Her music has also charted top 10 positions in Australia , Germany , Sweden , Norway and Switzerland .

= = Early life = =

Born on February 2 , 1963 , at the Washington Hospital Center , Cassidy grew up in Oxon Hill and later Bowie , Maryland , suburbs of Washington , DC . She was the third of four children . Her father Hugh Cassidy , a retired teacher , sculptor , musician , former army medic and world champion powerlifter , is of Scottish and Irish descent , while her mother , Barbara (Kratzer) , was a horticulturist and originally German , born in Bad Kreuznach . From an early age , Cassidy displayed interest in art and music . When she was nine , her father began teaching her to play the guitar , and she began to play and sing at family gatherings .

At age 11 , Cassidy began singing and playing guitar in a Washington @-@ area band called Easy Street . This band performed in a variety of styles at weddings , corporate parties , and pubs . Due to her shyness , she struggled with performing in front of strangers . While a student at Bowie High School , she sang with a local band called Stonehenge . During the summer of 1983 , Cassidy sang and played guitar six days a week at the theme park Wild World . Her younger brother Dan , a fiddler , was also a member of this working band . She enrolled in art classes at Prince George 's Community College but dropped out after finding them unhelpful .

Throughout the 1980s , Cassidy worked with several other bands , including the techno @-@ pop band Characters Without Names . During this period , Cassidy also worked as a propagator at a plant nursery and as a furniture painter . In her free time , she explored other artistic expressions including painting , sculpting , and jewelry design . Despite holding a belief in God , Cassidy was not part of any organized religion .

= = Music career = =

In 1986 , Cassidy was asked by Stonehenge guitarist and high school friend , David Lourim , to lend her voice to his music project , Method Actor . This brought her to Black Pond Studios , where she met recording engineer and bassist Chris Biondo . Biondo helped her find work as a session singer and later introduced her to Al Dale , who would become her manager . She sang back @-@ ups for various acts , from go @-@ go rhythm and blues band Experience Unlimited to rapper E @-@ 40 . Biondo and Cassidy , who were in a romantic relationship for a time , formed the five @-@ piece " Eva Cassidy Band " with Lenny Williams , Keith Grimes and Raice McLeod in 1990 . They began to perform frequently in the Washington area .

In 1992 , Biondo played a tape of Cassidy 's voice for Chuck Brown , the " Godfather of go @-@ go " . It resulted in the duet album The Other Side featuring performances of classic songs such as "

Fever " , " God Bless the Child , " and what would later become Cassidy 's signature song , " Over the Rainbow " . The album was released and distributed in 1992 by Liaison Records , the label that also released Brown 's Go @-@ go albums . Brown originally intended to record an additional duet with Cassidy for his next solo album , but this was postponed due to ongoing negotiations between Dale and other labels for a solo deal . Cassidy 's unwillingness to narrow her stylistic focus to one genre hindered her chances of securing a deal . After talks broke down , the two decided to record their own duet album . As a duo , they performed at the Columbia Arts Festival and opened for acts like Al Green and The Neville Brothers .

In 1993 , Cassidy was honored by the Washington Area Music Association with a Wammie award for the Vocalist Jazz / Traditional category . The next year she was invited to perform at the event and chose to sing " Over the Rainbow " . A Washington Times review of the event called her performance " a show @-@ stopper " . She took home two Wammies that night , again for Vocalist Jazz / Traditional and also for Roots Rock / Traditional R & B. For a brief period that year , Cassidy signed a deal with Blue Note Records to pair up with pop @-@ jazz band Pieces of a Dream to release an album and tour the country . She sang two tracks in a mainly instrumental album . It was a musically unsatisfying experience for her .

After having a potential contract with Apollo Records collapse when the label went bankrupt , Biondo and Dale decided that she should release her own live album . In January 1996 , the material for Live at Blues Alley was recorded over a two @-@ day period at Blues Alley in Washington , DC . Due to a technical glitch on the first night of recording , only the second night 's recording was usable . Unhappy with the way she sounded due to a cold , she was reluctant to release the album . She eventually relented , on the condition that the studio track " Oh , Had I a Golden Thread " , Cassidy 's favorite song , would be included in the release , and that they start working on a follow @-@ up studio album . Her apprehension appeared unfounded as local reviewers and the public responded positively . The Washington Post commented that " she could sing anything ? folk , blues , pop , jazz , R & B , gospel ? and make it sound like it was the only music that mattered . " The subsequent studio album she worked on was released posthumously as Eva by Heart in 1997 . In the liner notes of Eva by Heart , critic Joel E. Siegel described Cassidy as " one of the greatest voices of her generation . "

= = Death = =

In 1993 , Cassidy had a malignant mole removed from her back . Three years later , during a promotional event for the Live at Blues Alley album in July 1996 , Cassidy noticed an ache in her hips , which she attributed to stiffness from painting murals while perched atop a stepladder . The pain persisted and a few weeks later , X @-@ rays revealed that the melanoma had spread to her lungs and bones . Her doctors estimated she had three to five months to live . Cassidy opted for aggressive treatment , but her health deteriorated rapidly . In the early fall , at a benefit concert for her at the Bayou , she made her final public appearance , closing the set with " What a Wonderful World " in front of an audience of family , friends , and fans . Additional chemotherapy was ineffective and Cassidy died on November 2 , 1996 at her family 's home in Bowie , Maryland . In accordance with her wishes , her body was cremated and the ashes were scattered on the lake shores of St. Mary 's River Watershed Park , a nature reserve near Callaway , Maryland .

= = Posthumous recognition = =

After Cassidy 's death , local folk singer Grace Griffith introduced the Blues Alley recording to Bill Straw from her label , Blix Street Records . Straw approached the Cassidy family to put together a new album . In 1998 , a compilation of tracks from Cassidy 's three released recordings was assembled into the CD Songbird . This CD lingered in relative obscurity for two years until being given airplay by Terry Wogan on his wide @-@ reaching BBC Radio 2 show Wake Up to Wogan , following recommendation by his producer Paul Walters . The album sold more than 100 @,@ 000 copies in the following months . The New York Times spoke of her " silken soprano voice with a

wide and seemingly effortless range , unerring pitch and a gift for phrasing that at times was heart @-@ stoppingly eloquent . "

Before Christmas of 2000 , Top Of The Pops 2 aired a video of Cassidy performing " Over the Rainbow " , which resulted in Songbird climbing steadily up the UK charts over the next few weeks . Just as ITV 's Tonight with Trevor McDonald aired a feature on Cassidy , the album topped the chart . Shot at Blues Alley by a friend with a camcorder the same night the album was recorded , the video became the most requested video ever shown on Top Of The Pops 2 . " There 's an undeniable emotional appeal in hearing an artist who you know died in obscurity singing a song about hope and a mystical world beyond everyday life " , wrote The Guardian .

Paul McCartney and Eric Clapton were among her new @-@ found fans . Jazz critic Ted Gioia writes , " you might be tempted to write off the ' Cassidy sensation ' [...] as a response to the sad story of the singer 's abbreviated life rather than as a measure of her artistry . But don 't be mistaken , Cassidy was a huge talent , whose obscurity during her lifetime was almost as much a tragedy as her early death . " Songbird has since achieved significant chart success throughout Europe and six times platinum status in the UK . Although still relatively unknown in the United States at that time , the album would eventually be certified gold in the United States as well .

In May 2001 , ABC 's Nightline in the United States broadcast a well @-@ received short documentary about Cassidy , a labor of love from Nightline correspondent Dave Marash who was a fan of her music . Over the weekend , all five of Cassidy 's albums occupied Amazon.com 's best sellers list top spots . The Nightline episode has since been rebroadcast three times due to popular demand . Producer Leroy Sievers has said that it is " probably the most popular Nightline ever " . In December , a nine @-@ minute segment on NPR resulted in a similar sales surge , with five of the top seven spots going to Cassidy . A rebroadcast of the Tonight with Trevor McDonald feature on Cassidy in Britain also bumped up sales .

Since Songbird , several other CDs with original material have been released : Time After Time (2000) , Imagine (2002) and American Tune (2003) . 2008 saw the release of another new album titled Somewhere . Unlike previous albums , which consisted solely of cover songs , this release contains two original songs co @-@ written by Cassidy . An acoustic album titled Simply Eva was released in January 2011 .

Together with word of mouth and internet fansites , online commerce has played a big role in Cassidy 's success . This point was further affirmed when in 2005 , Amazon.com released a list of its top 25 best @-@ selling musicians , which placed Cassidy in fifth position , behind The Beatles , U2 , Norah Jones and Diana Krall .

In 2004 , during the gala opening of the Bowie Center for the Performing Arts , the Bowie Regional Arts Vision Association , Inc . (BRAVA) dedicated the Star 's Dressing Room to Eva . Following a moving tribute to Eva , Chuck Brown took the stage and performed his duet " with " Eva as her photos and video appeared in the background .

= = Unofficial releases = =

A collection of previously unreleased studio recordings from 1987 to 1991 , was released in 2000 as No Boundaries . This release was not endorsed by the Cassidy family and was released under a different label . An AllMusic review of the album stated that even " a gifted vocalist like Eva Cassidy can only do so much with bad material " .

In 2002 , the self @-@ titled 1988 album by the band Method Actor , which featured Cassidy , was re @-@ released by the band 's guitarist and producer David Lourim with Cassidy 's name displayed prominently on the cover . The Cassidy family and Blix Street Records filed a lawsuit against Lourim , claiming that Cassidy 's name was used in a misleading fashion and that Blix Street has exclusive rights to her recordings . Lourim had Cassidy 's written permission to release the album and eventually the cover was changed to look like the original LP album while already released copies were affixed with a sticker indicating that they are not solo Eva Cassidy albums .

A bootleg recording that has been in circulation is called Live at Pearl 's . It was recorded at Pearl 's Restaurant in Annapolis , Maryland in 1994 . Copies of the recording were circulated among friends

and family after her death . Some of the songs on the recording are also on Imagine and American Tune . Another recording from the early ' 90s , featuring Mick Fleetwood on drums and recorded at his restaurant (named Fleetwood 's) in Alexandria , Virginia , was in the possession of writer / musician Niki Lee , the former wife of pianist Lenny Williams , 1988 @-@ 1996 . Lee discovered it in her garage and attempted to sell it on eBay in 2008 . She asserts that she converted the dollars to pounds incorrectly and was lambasted by Cassidy fans for her mistake . On September 19 , 2013 , Lee donated Cassidy 's lost recording , Eva Cassidy Live at Fleetwoods , to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland , Ohio . The recording will remain in the museum 's archives . Two other lost cassettes of Cassidy 's recordings are being remastered for entrance .

= = In popular culture = =

In 2001 , a book titled Songbird : Eva Cassidy : Her Story By Those Who Knew Her , on the life and work of Cassidy based on interviews with close family and associates was released in the UK . The hardcover edition has since sold in excess of 100 @,@ 000 copies . A US edition published by Gotham Books was released in late 2003 and includes two additional chapters on her influences and success in the US . Her life story has also been adapted into a musical and also a Broadway piece for cancer benefit .

At the 2002 Winter Olympics gala , and later on tour , figure skater Michelle Kwan brought Cassidy 's music to a new audience when she skated to a recording of Cassidy 's version of Sting 's " Fields of Gold " . Kwan 's part in exposing the music of Cassidy to the international and American public led Cassidy 's label to present her a gold record from the certification of Songbird . Subsequently , other figure skaters such as Kristi Yamaguchi , Sarah Hughes and Kimmie Meissner have used Cassidy 's music in their routines .

Anglo @-@ Georgian singer Katie Melua is a keen fan of Cassidy . Her debut album Call Off the Search contained the song " Faraway Voice " , written in Cassidy 's memory . Melua has also performed Cassidy 's arrangement of " Anniversary Song " in concert . On Christmas Eve 2006 , she performed alongside video footage of Cassidy singing Over The Rainbow on BBC One 's " Duet Impossible " . One year later , Cassidy 's " What a Wonderful World " was spliced together with new vocals by Melua and released as a single exclusively at the British retail chain Tesco . It debuted at # 1 on the UK Singles chart on December 16 . All profits from the single went to the British Red Cross . Irish singer Chris de Burgh has stated that his song " Songbird " from his album The Road to Freedom was written in honour of Cassidy . Singer Mary Chapin Carpenter made reference to Cassidy in the song " My Heaven " on the album Between Here and Gone : " More memories than my heart can hold , when Eva 's singing ' Fields of Gold ' . " In 2008 , her rendition of " Fields Of Gold " was also featured in the final set of scenes on the season finale of " Army Wives " on Lifetime television .

In 2008 , Cassidy 's recording of " Autumn Leaves " was used by the Canadian National Professional Latin Champions , Andre and Natalie Paramonov , when they competed in America 's Ballroom Challenge as finalists in the International Latin Competition .

The first film to feature an Eva Cassidy recording was Flight of Fancy starring Dean Cain . Since then her music has appeared in various film and TV series including the Dawson 's Creek season four episode titled " The Graduate , " Judging Amy , Joe Somebody , Love Actually , Maid in Manhattan , The Man from Elysian Fields , Alpha Dog and Smallville . Cassidy 's arrangement of " Over the Rainbow " is a popular cover choice by singing competition contestants , with American Idol season 5 runner @-@ up Katharine McPhee and The X Factor season 3 winner Leona Lewis among the singers . Her interpretation of " Imagine " has been performed by American Idol season 7 runner @-@ up David Archuleta .

In March 2012 , Sweden 's Caroline Larsson and Bengt Magnusson released an album titled A Tribute to Eva Cassidy . The Eva Cassidy biography Behind the Rainbow by Johan Bakker won The People 's Book Prize 2011 / 2012 in London on May 30 , 2012 .

= = Possibility of feature film = =

A number of filmmakers have proposed films based on Cassidy 's life , and have worked with her family to greater or lesser degrees , but to date these projects have not progressed past the early development stages . In late 2007 , AIR Productions acquired the rights to produce a film based on Cassidy 's life . It is being produced by Amy Redford (daughter of Robert Redford) , Irwin Shapiro and Rick Singer . In an interview a year earlier , Cassidy 's parents suggested Kirsten Dunst or Emily Watson as possible actresses who could play their daughter .

= = New Album = =

To mark the 20th anniversary of the Blues Alley concert , Blix Street Records will release Nightbird , a 32 track double CD album , in November 2015 . Nightbird comprises the complete Blues Alley concert recordings , including 8 previously unreleased songs , from the night of January 3 , 1996 . The European version of the CD package will also include a DVD comprising 12 video performances from the Blues Alley concert . Nightbird will also be released as a 4LP vinyl package worldwide .

= = Discography = =

= = = Albums = = =

= = = Singles = = =

= = = Unauthorized releases = = =

= = Videography = =

= = = Books = = =

Rob Burley ; Jonathan Maitland ; Elana Rhodes Byrd (2003) . Eva Cassidy : Songbird : Her Story by Those Who Knew Her . Gotham Books . ISBN 978 @-@ 1 @-@ 59240 @-@ 035 @-@ 5 .

Johan Bakker ; Behind the Rainbow , the tragic life of Eva Cassidy (2012) Omnibus Press , 207 pages , ISBN 978 @-@ 1 @-@ 78038 @-@ 231 @-@ 9 (Winner of The People 's Book Prize 2011 / 2012)