



BRANDI CARLILE: A VOICE WITHOUT LIMITS

Brandi Carlile’s music blends country, rock, folk, and pop sounds so much that it’s hard to place her music in a single category. She has built a loyal following over the years but didn’t have a career breakthrough until 2018, when she released her sixth album *This*. This album earned her national attention and three Grammy awards.

Born June 1, 1981, in tiny Ravensdale, Washington, Carlile was the oldest of three children raised by working-class parents who listened to country music. As a little girl, she loved to imitate the big voices of country stars Patsy Cline, Tanya Tucker, and Wynonna Judd, and she first sang onstage at age eight. “As soon as I was old enough to do anything—talk, walk, throw a ball, whatever it was—I was already singing,” she says.

Diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD), Carlile did poorly in school and eventually dropped out when she was sixteen. She moved to Seattle to pursue a music career, and with self-taught guitar skills, she earned money by performing in public places for tips. Carlile soon met Phil Hanseroth and Tim Hanseroth, identical twins who were struggling rock musicians, and the three formed a band together.

Carlile’s voice has a wide range, and she writes songs about emotional topics. “It’s about whatever puts the lump in my throat,” she says, “because that lump in my throat is a song.” Among her most heartfelt songs is “The Mother,” which she wrote about being the



parent (with her wife, Catherine) of their first-born daughter. “I am not just a mother, but it’s all that I am,” says Carlile.

In 2018, Carlile found a way to incorporate the energy from her lively performances into her sixth album,

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LISTEN

“The Story,” “The Mother,” “The Joke,” “Crowded Table” (with the Highwomen), “Every Time I Hear That Song”



BRANDI CARLILE: A VOICE WITHOUT LIMITS (CONTINUED)

By the Way, I Forgive You. Music critics called this album her finest work, and it earned her Grammys for Best Americana Album, Best American Roots Song, and Best American Roots Performance.

Carlile says she feels most at home in the Americana and country communities, but she continues to explore a variety of musical styles. In 2023, her band won three Grammy awards, including Best Rock Performance and Best Rock Song.



CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. List three types of music that are part of Carlile’s sound.

2. How did Carlile make money when she moved to Seattle?

3. In your own words, explain what Carlile means by “lump in my throat” in paragraph four.
