



Charlie Barker Biography

Short Biography

With over 20 years in the industry Charlie has released two studio albums, toured the venues and festivals of UK and Europe, performed at weddings and helped train some of the UK's next generation of musicians and performers.

She started her musical career as a classical cellist, which quickly progressed onto her love of guitar, vocals and songwriting a passion that has seen Charlie become an established artist on the acoustic circuit as well as further afield. Charlie became a BBC Radio Young Folk Awards semi-finalist as well as appearing on BBC 1's 'The Next Big Thing' and has had the opportunity to join legendary rock group Smokie as their UK tour support.

Her two studio albums 'Sleeping at the Station' (2005) and 'Ghosts & Heroes' (2011) span the folk, Americana and country genres with her signature story-telling originals and sensitive, acoustic interpretations. She gained critical acclaim and with her debut album which gained her impressive comparisons to Alison Krauss, Nanci Griffith and Eva Cassidy.

Originally from Sheffield and now based in Derbyshire, Charlie has dedicated much of her career not just performing but training young musicians across the region in performance and academic music study.

Long Biography

"Well thanks for that lovely introduction Mike, most people usually say, Charlie Barker... who's he?"

Those were the words of Sheffield singer Charlie Barker to broadcaster Mike Harding as she walked on stage at the semi-final of the Radio 2 Young Folk Awards.

Many times people, not in the know, have been expecting a grizzled cowboy with boots and Stetson to walk on stage, only to be greeted by a young woman standing behind a Martin guitar.

Within minutes Charlie pulls in the audience with her storytelling and crisp clear vocals. Charlie's conversational style, relaxed stagecraft and guitar playing complement her confident vocals.

In fact Charlie has been performing for a long time. She is a classically trained musician who has been playing cello since the age of seven and guitar since she could hold the instrument.

When many young girls were miming to Spice Girl tracks, young Charlie was learning to play Nanci Griffith and Janis Ian. Her spare time was spent in local folk clubs.

A child of the 80s growing up in Sheffield, Charlie's musical influences came from both the niche and mainstream, listening to her Father's vinyl recordings of Blondie, Jethro Tull and The Stranglers as well as Mary Chapin Carpenter and James Taylor.

Charlie played cello in a number of orchestras in South Yorkshire, before being selected, at the age of 15 to appear on the BBC1 TV programme "The Next Big Thing". She was the only young solo artist to both sing and play live before the studio audience.

"Appearing on TV at such a young age was such a valuable experience, it taught me how to deal with nerves and become more of a performer as opposed to someone who just sings songs. Joining a soul band gave me the opportunity to do something entirely different to what I'd always performed, but it wasn't long before I wanted to return to doing more acoustic music." says Charlie.

Charlie met Pete Thornton-Smith and Chris Sweeney of RootBeat Records when she took part in the Young Acoustic Roots competition at the Wickersley Folk Festival. This resulted in the recording of Charlie's first album 'Sleeping at the Station' with Chris Thornton-Smith producing the album at the BPAS studio.

These early friendships have continued throughout her musical life.

'Sleeping at the Station' was released in 2005 portraying Charlie's music with just guitar and cello featuring contributions from Chris Thornton-Smith (Kerfuffle) and Sam Sweeney (Bellowhead/ Leveret/ Kerfuffle). Many of the original tracks draw on experiences from her own life, other people's stories as well as songs from other writers.

Whilst studying for her degree in 2005, Charlie was making plans for album number two as well as founding her own business. Charlie also began her regular appearances on local radio as a talk show contributor and a Music/ Entertainment Specialist.

2007 saw the arrival of Charlie's son Thomas who was named after her late grandfather and World War II veteran, who is the subject of her popular song 'Poppies'.

Musical projects with long-time friend and award-winning piano accordionist and duo partner, Harriet Bartlett have seen Charlie touring the UK and Europe as well as appearances with country band Sweet Dixie Dreams which features the musical talents of Katriona Gilmore, Jamie Roberts, Gerry McNeice, Ben Sutton and Lynn Blakeston.

2011 saw the recording of her second album Ghosts & Heroes with Chris Thornton-Smith. It features guitarist Tom Sweeney (Kerfuffle) and percussionist and BBC Young Musician of the Year finalist, Jim

Molyneux (4Square).

Ghosts & Heroes brings together songs from artists that have shaped Charlie's music and includes new interpretations of songs from acclaimed writers including Alison Krauss, Mary Chapin Carpenter and Richard Thompson.

Charlie said: "I felt I wanted to take some time to recognise some of the brilliant writers and performers who made me want to pick up a guitar and start singing. After taking time out to complete my degree and spending time with my son, I was really excited to get back in the studio and I felt right at home."

In between recording her own material, Charlie had the opportunity to do some session work for various musicians most notably with acoustic, blues singer and guitarist Sunjay on his single 'Fire Down Below/ Don't Breathe A Word', his self-titled studio album 'Sunjay' in 2013, as a live band and session vocalist for the 2017 'Sunjay Sings Buddy' album, as well as featuring again on his 'Devil Came Calling' album in 2019 and receiving BBC Radio 2 airplay from Cerys Matthews.

2015 saw Charlie move into the realms of teaching music, having spent nearly half her life playing and performing. In addition to her work on stage, Charlie could be found coaching vocal, guitar and performance studies to students young and old through her own music school.

"I have loved seeing people achieve their goals through music. It's one of the best feelings. Whether they come to learn for pure enjoyment or to further their studies and careers, it is wonderful to watch and help people grow." says Charlie.

2018 was a year of many great surprises, as Charlie was invited as Smokie's official tour support for their UK tour dates in England, Scotland and Wales. She supported the band almost a decade before and once again proved to be an overwhelming hit, performing to audiences at Venue Cymru and York's Barbican to name a few.

After being in the music industry for over half her life, Charlie has a new musical project, which sees her working on new popular material for events around the UK both as a solo singer/ guitarist with her new shows 'Electric Dreams - Sounds of the 80s', 'Generations', 'The 90s One More Time', 'Soul Generations' and 'Love Country' as well as her acoustic/ singer songwriter project.

Watch this space.

Press Quotes

"A talented and inspirational lady." - **Counterfeit Magazine**

"Humorous and informative. A breath of fresh air." - **GetReadyToRock.com**

"Another album [Ghosts & Heroes] from a magnificently talented performer. It's been worth the wait."
- **Mike Ward, Daily Express & Star**

"Expertly produced, stunning instrumentation and passionate vocals all adds up to a great listening experience." - **Maverick Magazine**

"Her intrinsic purity of tone and expression betrays shades of Alison Krauss and Nanci Griffith. Her treatment of the ubiquitous 'Fields of Gold' gives Eva Cassidy a run for her money."

- Stirrings Magazine