



# CLAUDIA NYGAARD

## STRADDLING THE FENCE BETWEEN FOLK AND COUNTRY

With a voice as warm and smooth as amber honey and impressive for both its power and intimacy, **Claudia Nygaard** delivers songs that are heartfelt, humorous, scrappy, and sensual. And so are the stories in between them. She is a captivating storyteller, with a twinkle in her eye that makes everyone in the audience think she is sharing a secret with them alone. Emotionally fearless, she shares her deepest sorrows with a rare vulnerability and tenderness one moment, then a quick wit and an outlandish, irreverent sense of humor the next.

As a salaried staff songwriter on Nashville's Music Row, Nygaard learned her craft well. Her latest CD "Let The Storm Roll In" rose to #1 on the Cashbox Roots/Country chart and #8 on the Folk DJ chart. Two of the songs, "Georgia Boy" and "J.C." won the Kerrville, TX Folk Festival "New Folk" songwriting competition for her, but they weren't the only songs that radio took a liking to. EVERY song on the album received airplay. "Storm" was also highly praised by the press. It received five stars from Americana benchmark magazine "Maverick", and Legendary folk music magazine "Sing Out" claimed the songs "rival the likes of Guy Clark or Ian Tyson".

Claudia tours tirelessly, and has torn up the highways of all 50 states and performed in 9 foreign countries. She has appeared at over 200 fairs & festivals, including the Kerrville Folk Festival and the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival in New York where she was chosen an "Emerging Artist" in 2009. Endorsements from merchandisers attest to her strength as a guitarist, and she accompanies herself in performance with a Tacoma JK50 Jumbo guitar, an Eastman 605CE hollow body archtop, and her tiny but bravado-drenched Lanakai ukulele.

Claudia Nygaard performs solo, with multi-instrumentalist Moe Dixon as "Nygaard-Dixon Line", and in the package show "Funny Folk", featuring some of the most hilarious comedic songwriters on the scene today: Cheryl Wheeler, Eric Schwartz, Cosy Sheridan, and Lois Morton. She is currently writing a children's musical, and working on a new CD for release for 2016.

## Claudia's Musical Beginnings

Claudia's music has its roots in the adobe clay of the San Joaquin Valley in California. Her father was in the construction business and worked weekdays in the San Francisco Bay Area, but he and her uncle had a small ranch about two hours east of there in the San Joaquin where they spent every weekend working their small herd of Hereford cattle. Saturday mornings Claudia would awaken to her Uncle Reed singing some old Hank Williams song on the edge of her bed, as he'd come in to wake her up. Then they'd all pile into the pick-up: Claudia, her dad, uncle, the dog, and sometimes a hired hand named J.C and they'd make the two-hour trip to the ranch. They'd listen to KEEN radio out of San Jose until they lost the signal, and then pick up KRAK radio once they got over Altamont Pass. Half way to the ranch they'd stop for a soda pop. Claudia got a cream soda, and the men got something in little paper bags that just barely held the cans. After awhile they'd start singing 'The Strawberry Roan', which had about as many verses as there were miles to drive, and they'd have a great time arguing about how the song actually went. Not tall enough to see over the dashboard, Claudia spent two hours eye-to-eye with that old truck radio every Saturday morning, and fell asleep watching that little yellow light in that radio on the way home Sunday night. She grew up living five days a week in the suburbs and being carted off to dancing school by her mother, but what she remembers about her childhood is the hot, dusty, smell of baked adobe, the morning smell of the dew on the alfalfa, the bright shine of the sun off the irrigation pipe, and the coolness of the water in the summertime when she slid into the irrigation ditches fed by the Delta Mendota Canal."

Her teenage years found her singing in school choirs and with the high school dance band, performing in musicals, writing poetry, and learning to play the guitar. Performing with the guitar she won "Miss Santa Clara" just out of high school which led to some modeling jobs and a job as the weather reporter for KNTV Channel 11 which helped her put herself through college. After graduating from San Jose State with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Theater she worked another year at KNTV until she was part of a layoff that left her unemployed. She had been sitting in with a band in a local club after the 11 o'clock news on Friday nights, and was meeting some local musicians in the area that included a singer/songwriter named Chuck McCabe. They fell in love. McCabe had a job for the summer singing on Cape Cod in Massachusetts, and suggested Nygaard come with him. Thinking it would be a fun thing to sing for the summer before getting another "real" job, she tagged along. She never had a "real" job again.

When her relationship with McCabe fell apart three years later, Claudia moved to Los Angeles where she won a singing contest at the famous country music emporium "The Palomino". She had her first standing ovation there, and became a regular performer, headlining many times. She and her band became well known in the Southern California area, winning honors two years in a row as one of the hottest bands in town in the Music Connection Magazine "Pick of the Players Poll". After years of singing in bars where her main job was to sell booze and impersonate a jukebox, appearing at the Palomino and doing a "show" allowed Claudia to discover that she was more than just a singer, she was an entertainer. The years in front of the camera at KNTV, chatting with a million people every night, had taught her ease in front of crowds that few acts had. With her charming stage patter she was a natural for fairs, and began touring up and down the state playing one fair after another.

During this time she also began winning awards for her songwriting from the Los Angeles Songwriter's Showcase, and for both her singing and songwriting from the Music City Song Festival. This gave her the confidence take her songs to the Hollywood music publishers. They liked her songs, but encouraged her to make the move to Nashville. So she did. Claudia sold everything that wouldn't fit in the back of a 5x8 U-Haul trailer and headed east. She spent the first year she was there, 2,000 miles away from everyone she knew and loved, curled up the fetal position by day while she worked the graveyard shift in a convenience store by night. Finally she uncoiled enough to risk playing her songs for some publishers, and encouraged by their response she went after (and landed) a job as a staff songwriter for Greenwood Music, owned by "God Bless the USA" country singer/songwriter Lee Greenwood. When major personnel changes occurred at Greenwood Music, including the departure of the manager who signed her to the company, Claudia elected to leave and bought back her entire catalog, forming her own company "Cattlelog Music". Nygaard performed

several showcases in Nashville during this period, and began to develop a "buzz". Executives from Capitol Records became interested in her as an artist, and once again she felt she was finally gaining ground until a new CEO took over Capitol and decided that rather than sign new artists they needed to slash their roster.

Through it all, Claudia couldn't give up the rush of singing to a live audience and continued to delight audiences at over 200 fairs from Alaska to New Hampshire, and from North Dakota to Florida. She headlined at smaller fairs, and was the opening act at larger ones, sharing the stage with such stars as Tracy Lawrence, John Michael Montgomery, Marty Stuart, John Anderson, Shenandoah, Glen Campbell, Mel McDaniel, Riders in the Sky, The Marshall Tucker Band, Jerry Clower, The Forester Sisters, David Frizzell and Shelly West, Faron Young, Kitty Wells, Bobby Bare, Billy "Crash" Craddock, Jimmy Rodgers, Jim Stafford, The Drifters, and the Ventures. In the fall of 1989 she received a standing ovation from 8,000 people when she opened the show for John Anderson at the South Mississippi Fair in Laurel, MS.

A couple years after leaving Greenwood Music, an invitation to attend "Midem" (a music conference in France) gave Claudia the opportunity to perform for a few UK record labels, and she was quickly signed by Round Tower Music. Round Tower released the CD "Somewhere Else To Go" on Claudia, which charted in the top ten on the European Americana charts. It was also one of the top twelve records of the year in 2001 for the UK magazine Country Music Roundup. In December of that year, CMRU chose Claudia for the cover of the magazine.

Back in the states, Nygaard continued to perform at fairs and festivals, but encouraged by the response to her tunes that she had received in Europe, she was no longer slipping one or two of her own songs into her show, she was now playing mostly her own songs. Other singer/songwriters Claudia knew in Nashville were playing songwriter festivals, and Nygaard decided to enter one festival in particular that she heard wonderful things about. The Kerrville Folk Festival down in Texas. Having always straddled the fence between county and folk she wasn't sure if she was "folky" enough for the festival so she entered her most folk sounding songs. She was chosen a finalist that first year, but didn't win. She entered the next year and again was a finalist but didn't win. Fast-forward a few years, and wanting to go back to the festival anyway she decided to enter once more. This time she entered what she considered to be her best songs, regardless of whether they were on the folkier side or the countrier side. She won, and not only won the contest, but also a whole new way to make a living playing her own music. She now performs her own songs in concert halls across America, and at folk festivals like the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival where she was chosen an emerging artist in 2009.

The 2011 release of "Let The Storm Roll In" was Claudia's second attempt at producing, and she let the songs dictate for themselves how they were to be presented. With a focus on choosing the instrumentation that best captured the emotion of the song, she added the exuberance of a tuba to the rollicking "Miss Kitty", and cello to capture the last moments shared by a daughter and her father on "His Left Side". The twelve self-penned songs in this collection were beautifully showcased through the talents of musicians that included Colin Linden of Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, Grammy winners Andy Reiss and Jeff Taylor of the Time Jumpers, multi-instrumentalist Fats Kaplan, Telecaster genius Redd Volkaert, ace dobro player Randy Khors, and frequent Prairie Home Companion steel favorite Cindy Cashdollar. The rhythm section was made up of Johnny Cash sideman Dave Roe on upright bass, and Rick Lonow on percussion. It also includes a passionate duet with Lennie Gallant, a winner of numerous awards including artist and album of the year from the Canadian East Coast Music Association. All twelve songs on the CD received airplay.

**FOR PHOTOS AND MORE INFORMATION:**

<http://www.claudianygaard.com/epk.html>

**FOR INTERVIEWS CONTACT:**

LottaVizAbility at 615-336-1392, or [lottavizability@gmail.com](mailto:lottavizability@gmail.com)