

SUSAN JACKS

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- SUSAN JACKS

In the mid '80s, after nearly a quarter century in the rough and tumble world of professional music, Susan Jacks figured she had finally found her niche.

The former member of The Poppy Family was hoping to revitalize her singing career in Nashville, just around the corner from the Grand Ole Opry.

Like many of her musical counterparts, the Saskatoon native had to overcome personal problems, bad management, and a failed recording or two over the years. Even worse, Jacks has often had trouble fitting into a particular musical groove.

It hounded her from the '60s when she sang alto, bass, and soprano in her school choir. It continued after her professional debut at age 14, later with The Poppy Family, and even when she went solo.

"After I went out on my own I'd sing pop and country. No one seemed to know what to do with me," she said in a mid-'80s interview from Nashville, where at the time she was living with her husband Ted Dushinski and their young son. "I remember playing at Expo in Vancouver. They introduced me as a country and western singer. I cracked up."



Susan Jacks tried her luck on the Nashville scene and once ran a fast food business with her husband. Photo: Courtesy of Susan Jacks

While living in Dixie, Jacks was confident she had at last found her musical groove singing “popular, country-style” music.

“My life has some direction these days, I’m back on the road and writing songs. I’m getting things together. I feel like I’ve reached another plateau in my career.”

It was a long, often tough road for Jacks, who as half of The Poppy Family with former husband Terry Jacks, sang hits like *That’s Where I Went Wrong*, *Good Friends* and *Which Way You Goin’ Billy?*.

In the early ‘70s, the west coast-based Poppy Family split up and her marriage to singer-songwriter Jacks fell apart. She recorded a number of singles and albums, but lost \$60,000 to a manager after lending him money he never returned. Another \$30,000 disappeared about the same time, when an album containing her single *Anna Marie*, was recorded but never released.

She was pregnant at the time and was forced to sell her car and house to survive. She took two years off and in 1980, her son Thad was born. The baby helped inspire her return to music.

“I began to think that a child must be brought up in an environment he can be proud of. He gave me a lot of confidence and strength so I set out again.”

She teamed up with Bruce Allen, manager of Loverboy and later Bryan Adams, and released her *Forever* album in the early ‘80s. For a time, she was reunited, creatively at least, with Terry, who produced her *Ghosts* album.

Shortly after, she decided it was time to change locales. She moved to the U.S. in 1983 after deciding Nashville was best to develop her adult contemporary-country style of music.

“I was living in Canada and there was a transition taking place. Rock was becoming the predominant force, with groups like Loverboy going strong. It was tough to come from another direction, so it was best to go to Nashville, to take my strong suit and work on it.”

In the mid ‘80s she recorded two singles, *Tall Dark Stranger* and *Another Woman’s Man*. Neither was overly successful.

Later, she played the club scene in Nashville and wrote songs with two other artists. She toured Canada occasionally, and featured a 15-minute Poppy Family medley in her show.

After releasing a new single with country roots in the mid ‘80s, she said: “I’m feeling so comfortable because I’ve finally decided my best niche is when I’m doing what I want to do. When I try to please everybody, I lose it. I think I can do it best in Nashville.”

Jacks and Dushinski, a Saskatchewan native and former CFL player who passed away from lung cancer in 2005, once dabbled in the fast-food business, running a pierogi-cabbage roll/Polish sausage outlet in a Nashville shopping mall.

For many years Jacks has been living back on Canada's west coast. In 2017, at age 68, she was recovering from a serious kidney disease, seven years after receiving a new kidney from her brother Bill.

For more information, visit: www.susanjacks.com