



# CYNTHIA SAYER

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## Biography

Cynthia Sayer is regarded as one of the top 4-string banjoists in the world today. A member of Woody Allen's jazz band for over 10 years, Cynthia's solo career has taken her well beyond these New Orleans roots to become an acclaimed bandleader and guest artist. She has a unique and expansive approach to the instrument which is all her own, and she is also a respected vocalist. Her eclectic repertoire ranges from swing and hot jazz to tango, western, classical, and more.

Sayer has worked with a variety of leading jazz and popular artists such as Wynton Marsalis, Marian McPartland, Dick Hyman, Bill Cosby, Warren Vaché, Les Paul, Wycliffe Gordon, Marvin Hamlisch, Kenny Davern, Bucky Pizzarelli, Milt Hinton, Randy Sandke, Scott Robinson, and many others. She has also played with some top bluegrass/roots/country artists, including Tony Trischka, Bill Keith, Odetta, Eric Weissberg, Mike Marshall, and John McEuen (Nitty Gritty Dirt Band).

Cynthia began playing the banjo at age 13, when, after begging her parents for a drum set, she one day discovered a banjo on her bed, clearly intended as a more peaceful substitute. Years later, after Cynthia chose the banjo over law school, her banjo teacher, Patty Fischer, would apologize to Cynthia's mother whenever they crossed paths at the local grocery store. Her mother always kindly reassured the woman that it wasn't her fault: Cynthia was bound to find her way into music one way or the other.

Cynthia's extensive career includes performances in New York City's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, playing for two U.S. Presidents, appearing with The New York Philharmonic, feature film and TV soundtracks including "Anything Else," "Bullets Over Broadway," "Purple Rose Of Cairo," "Sophie's Choice," "The Cosby Mysteries," TV commercials and radio jingles, and numerous national TV and radio show appearances in the USA and abroad. On the lighter side, she is the subject of a Trivial Pursuit game question and was the official banjoist for the New York Yankees.

Sayer's many festival engagements include the JVC Jazz Festival (New York and Boston), Molde Jazz Festival (Norway), Marciac Jazz Festival (France), Ascona Jazz Festival (Switzerland), Jazz Yatra (India), Kobe Jazz Street (Japan), Gold Coast Jazz Festival (Australia), and Sweet & Hot Music Festival (Los Angeles), among others. She is also the subject of a PBS documentary about the banjo, expected to be aired in 2011.

Cynthia Sayer has accumulated numerous awards and honors, including induction into the National Banjo Hall of Fame. Readers Polls from both trade and commercial publications named her "Favorite Living Banjo Player," "First-Choice Headliner," "Best Banjo Player" and "4-String Banjo All Styles." The Dresden International Jazz Festival awarded Cynthia their Festival Trophy, describing her as "*a pioneer of a new banjo style... an exceptional artist who, without showy gimmicks, captivates and excites her audiences.*" Three of Cynthia's albums have been named as a "Top Ten Classic Jazz Release" by *Cadence Magazine* for the year they were released. Her most recent CD, "Attractions," which includes legendary jazz guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, was nominated for both the prestigious 2009 Swing Journal Disc Award in Japan, and the Just Plain Folks 2009 Music Awards, plus was selected for the "Best CDs of 2007" list by the Jazz Journalists Association.

Cynthia graduated Magna Cum Laude from Ithaca College. She endorses Ome Banjos and GHS Strings.