Bonnie Raitt station #1 - biographical notes

Source: Contemporary Musicians

- **Born:** November 08, 1949 in Burbank, California, United States
- **Nationality:** American
- **Occupation:** Blues singer


Born Bonnie Lynn Raitt, November 8, 1949 in Burbank, CA; daughter of John (a musical theater actor) and Marjorie (Haydock) Raitt; married Michael O'Keefe (actor) in April 1991. Education: Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA

Addresses: Record company - Capitol Records, 1750 N. Vine

Robert Hilburn commented in the Los Angeles Times, "At an age when many pop-rockers are in the twilight of their careers, Bonnie Raitt exudes the energy and ambition of someone just entering her prime-which she may well be." A performer who loves to tour, Raitt is also a tireless champion of social issues. Within the musical realm, this includes encouraging women to play the guitar and helping aging, financially distressed blues musicians.

Raitt's husky vocals and slide guitar playing are the core of a musical style that defies categorization. As she explained in Guitar Player, "I'm certainly blues-based, but I've never felt that I was totally a blues artist. I've been doing the same mixture of rock and roll songs, ballads by contemporary songwriters, [and] off-the-wall jazz songs." Raitt is famous for playing bottleneck slide guitar. And while Raitt is modest about her playing abilities-she demurred in Guitar Player, "I play the same Muddy Waters lick over and over"-she placed first in the magazine's readers poll for four consecutive years.

Raised a Quaker, Raitt grew up in New York and Los Angeles. She began playing guitar at age nine and learned to play, in part, by copying her favorite blues recordings.

In 1977, Raitt's LP Sweet Forgiveness turned into her first gold album and produced a hit cover of Del Shannon's song "Runaway".

Working with producer Don Was, Raitt recorded Nick of Time. The album surprised many with its hit songs "Thing Called Love," "Nick of Time," and "Have a Heart." Raitt won four Grammys: three for Nick of Time, and one for best traditional blues recording, for her duet with John Lee Hooker, "In the Mood." Nick of Time went on to sell more than four million copies and the album catapulted Raitt into super-stardom.

The media attention generated by her breakthrough albums gave Raitt new opportunities to promote political and social causes as well as to express her views on the music business. Raitt co-founded the Rhythm and Blues Foundation, an organization devoted to assisting aging and
often poor musicians. In the New York Times, Raitt commented on using fame to advance causes: "You just do what you can.... As long as I've got a mouth, somebody's going to be hearing about it. I'm just glad I won those Grammys, so now I get on a better page when the newspapers cover these things."

Raitt is working to encourage other women to play the guitar, which led to the Bonnie Raitt-signature Fender guitar. The only Fender instrument to honor a woman, its production resulted in a giveaway program and provided women with an instrument that features a slimmer neck—which is more suited to smaller hands—and a copy of a guitar that Raitt plays. Raitt was enthusiastic about the future of women guitarists in Guitar Player, saying, "I'm waiting for the next Stevie Ray Vaughan to be a woman.... We're like a sneeze away from a great lead guitar player with that kind of attitude.... We just have to make sure [women] get the exposure they deserve."