

# Carter's Chord

## Biography

Carter's Chord is, as the name implies, a musical triad of proverbial notes in perfect and beautiful harmony: three singing and songwriting sisters who were literally born into and raised on music. Becky, Emily and Joanna Robertson were blessed with music by their parents, Barney and Carter Robertson, who toured and recorded with Waylon Jennings during the height of the Outlaw movement. Now Carter's Chord are poised to take the music they grew up on and the music they create into the future with a sisterly blend of talent, charm and voices that is sure to soon be known and loved by music fans in country and beyond.

Signed by superstar Toby Keith to his Show Dog Nashville label, Carter's Chord is the real deal as well as the full package, multiplied times three. And it takes but a listen to their self-titled debut album, co-produced by Keith and their Grammy-winning father Barney Robertson, to know that something special if not magical has arrived on the scene.

With all three sisters trading lead vocals as well as unifying in delectable harmony, *Carter's Chord* is one of those albums that captivates the ears from its first notes. With the debut single "Young Love" leading the charge with its imagery of love running like wild horses through the night, the CD's 10 tracks — with songs written by all three sisters individually and collectively as well as a number penned by their mother ("Summer, Early 60's") and tunes from some of Nashville's best songwriters — display both veteran assurance and youthful élan and innovation.

The sound of Carter's Chord is as country as a verdant hillside and as fresh and invigorating as a sip of well water. The sisters also bring their modern musical flair to a tradition that includes Southern rock and the blues as well as Outlaw country to create a distinctive new rocking country that's all their own, citing myriad influences like Patty Griffin, Counting Crows, Emmylou Harris, Marc Cohn, Black Crowes and a host of others. As with the best modern country music, Carter's Chord has a widespread appeal that will have fans of popular music soon likely singing the chorus of Emily's "Song of Blue" back to the girls themselves: "I'm in love with your music, I'm in love with your song." And in live performance — with Joanna's piano at the center of the sound and Emily's acoustic guitar providing a propulsive drive — the organic talents and vocal blend as well as the considerable charms of Carter's Chord are just as downright irresistible as the music on their album.

"The harmonies of Carter's Chord are so magical because they're sibling harmonies with that family blend," notes Keith.

The three Robertson sisters were born in Southern California into a household where

music was the center of family life as well as both a career and the prime creative joy for their parents. “We always joke that our house was like a music conservatory,” says Emily “Someone was always playing the piano or guitar or writing a song. We also grew up in church, so we always sang in choir. And we all took music lessons at some point. And when we were little we used to put on shows for our parents and make them sit for hours after dinner listening to us sing.”

It was a tradition that began in the musical families of pianist, producer and string arranger Barny and singer Carter Robertson, who grew up not far away from each other in the Bakersfield area of California’s Central Valley. They met while playing in a country band in Los Angeles, and after they both worked on recording sessions with Jessi Colter, the couple was invited to join Waylon and Jessi on tour and became members of Jennings’ legendary band The Wayloros.

When oldest sister Becky was born in 1981, the Robertsons left the road, but the music kept playing. “We come from a very big family with lots of cousins,” explains Joanna, “and our early memories from every family reunion and holiday gathering are of us laying on the floor listening to our parents and relatives sing around the piano. I can recall falling asleep listening to Hank Williams songs and church songs and every kind of song that you can imagine.”

As soon as the sisters could carry a tune, they chimed in. “All of our lives we’ve sung together at different family occasions and weddings,” Becky recalls. “We’d do the three-part harmony thing.” They made their major-label recording debut as youngsters singing on Waylon’s album of country music for kids, *Cowboys, Sisters, Rascals & Dirt*, which Barny Robertson produced — he has won a Grammy and earned five Dove Award nominations with his albums of music for children — and on its release, the sisters also performed with Jennings on a number of TV shows.

When the Robertsons relocated to Nashville, they became immersed in another extended family: Waylon, Jessi and Shooter Jennings and the members of The Wayloros and The Crickets. The close friendships as well as creative collaborations shared by Waylon’s musical community provided further musical grounding and education for the sisters. “Waylon became a big part of our lives,” Becky explains. “It was very interesting being surrounded by so much music, and Waylon and everyone around him were a huge influence on us.” The girls also got to enjoy a revival of their parents’ past when The Wayloros reunited to tour with Jennings during the last three years of his life.

So it was only natural that the sisters gravitated to making and writing music as their favorite pastime and, in time, their creative calling. They graduated from honing their three-part vocal harmonies and other musical talents as teens to the big stage when they were invited to play a set at the 2005 Jean Therapy benefit concert for diabetes research held in Waylon’s honor, performing alongside the likes of Colter, John Anderson, Tanya Tucker and Bonnie and Bekka Bramlett, backed by The Wayloros. It inspired the trio to cut a demo of the songs they were writing and introduce themselves to the Nashville record industry.

Carter's Chord caught the ear of Toby Keith, who signed them to Show Dog Nashville after a triumphant showcase — with Keith sitting in the front row — on Valentine's Day, 2006 at the Nashville club Two Doors Down. As Becky happily remembers, "Afterwards he said, 'Well, I don't need to hear anything else. Let's work out this deal.'"

"As soon as I saw these girls perform, I knew they had to be on Show Dog," says Keith. "I could see and hear that they not only have the talent but also the combination of musical roots and contemporary artistry to take them all the way."

He also signed on as their producer. "We were totally thrilled to have Toby's fingerprints on there," says Becky. "He also offered to have our father co-produce on the vocal part of things, which was perfect, because he's been producing us our entire lives. It was so much fun to be working in the studio, and there's Toby and there's our Dad, and everybody is working collectively to make this album what it is. It was just such an amazing experience for us."

Their mother's inspiration is reflected in the name of their act, which fit the sisters to a 'T' the moment it was suggested. "We've always liked the idea of a musical chord, a triad. And one day we were all sitting around thinking of what we could call ourselves, and one of us — we don't even remember who — just out of the blue said 'Carter's Chord.'" explains Joanna.

In the triad chord of this musical group, each sister contributes her talent and more to the union. As youngest sister Joanna says of her siblings: "Becky, being the oldest sister, brings a lot of a leadership to the group, and she's an incredible performer. Emily is the quieter one and has that aura of mystery, and she's the Mom who takes care of the rest of us a bit."

"Joanna is very caring and sensitive, and her mind is always going," says middle sister Emily. "The jokes that she comes up with are hilarious, yet her songs are so heartfelt and deep you would think she was 45 years old and divorced. Becky is very passionate and energetic about everything, whether it's this new song she just heard or that her fantasy football team is in third place."

Becky adds, "Joanna is really good at reading people and has a unique talent where she can really empathize with other people's problems and their point of view, and then turn it into a song that people can relate to. And her piano playing is the heartbeat of our sound. Emily is just so much fun to be around and adds a lot of laughter."

And the sisters don't just blend together musically. "We live together, we work together, and then we still choose to hang out together," Joanna says. "We're best friends, we love each other, and we know what the other is thinking before anyone even says anything."

As Carter's Chord now embark on their musical career, the lessons they have learned from their parents about both music and the business of music are invaluable. And Barny

and Carter Robertson are obviously proud parents as well as the biggest fans and supporters of Carter's Chord.

"It's so much in our DNA, and I think that they knew that we were doomed to want to do this for the rest of our lives," Becky explains. "Once they saw this was something that we really wanted, they've been extremely supportive. And it's so good for us because we've grown up with a lot of these aspects of the industry in our lives.

"There's no way we could have done this without them. They're not stage parents either," Becky adds. "They really let us take the reins and do what we want to do, and it definitely isn't something they pushed on us."

"We've always just kind of known that this is what we are going to do," Emily concludes. And it seems almost fated from the first that these true daughters of the Outlaw movement that changed the face of country music are destined to now make their indelible mark on popular music.