



## POLAR MUSIC PRIZE

Patti Smith, Polar Music Prize Laureate 2011

Patti Smith, born in Chicago in 1946, the oldest of four siblings, was raised in South Jersey. From an early age she gravitated toward the arts and human rights issues. She studied at Glassboro State Teachers College and migrated to New York City in 1967. She teamed up with art student Robert Mapplethorpe and the two encouraged each other's work process, both of them pursuing painting and drawing and she poetry.

In February 1971 Smith performed her first public reading at St. Mark's Church on the lower eastside, accompanied by Lenny Kaye on guitar. In April of the same year she co-wrote and performed the play *Cowboy Mouth* with playwright Sam Shepard. Continuing to write and perform her poetry, in 1974 Smith and Lenny Kaye added Richard Sohl on piano. As a trio they played regularly around New York, including the legendary Max's Kansas City, centering on their collective and varied musical roots and her improvised poetry. The independent single release, *Hey Joe/Piss Factory*, featured Tom Verlaine.

Along with the highly innovative and influential group Television, the trio helped to open up a restricted music scene that centered at CBGBs in New York City. After recruiting guitarist Ivan Kral, they played CBGBs for eight weeks in the Spring of 1975 and then added drummer Jay Dee Daugherty. Smith described their work as "three chords merged with the power of the word." Smith was signed by Clive Davis to his fledgling Arista label and recorded four albums: *Horses* (produced by John Cale), *Radio Ethiopia* (produced by Jack Douglas), *Easter* (produced by Jimmy Iovine), which included her top twenty hit *Because the Night*, co-written with Bruce Springsteen, and *Wave* (produced by Todd Rundgren).

In October 1979, Smith retired from the public eye and moved to Detroit. In 1980, Patti Smith married Fred "Sonic" Smith and they had two children. In 1988 they recorded *Dream of Life* (produced by Fred "Sonic" Smith and Jimmy Iovine) that included the classic anthem, *People Have the Power*. It also marked her final collaboration with three of her closest companions, all who met with untimely deaths; Robert Mapplethorpe, who photographed her for the cover; Richard Sohl, who provided all of the keyboards; and her husband, who composed the music.

In the summer of 1995, with the help of old and new friends, Smith released *Gone Again*, (produced by Malcolm Burn and Lenny Kaye) a highly acclaimed meditation on passage and mortality. In touring the album, opening for Bob Dylan, it also marked her re-emergence as a performer. By 1997 a new band was formed with Lenny Kaye, Jay Dee Daugherty, Oliver Ray and Tony Shanahan. The group recorded *Peace and Noise*, which incorporated a blend of the spoken and sung in her trademark incantatory style and reflected the feel and inner play of a working group. Smith and the band



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toured and participated in benefit work, including the Neil Young Bridge School, Jewel Heart, and the Tibet House Foundation. The song 1959 from *Peace and Noise*, written by Smith and Shanahan, was nominated for a Grammy in 1998.

With *Gung Ho* in 2000, her eighth album on Arista Records (produced by Gil Norton), Smith continued the process of merging tradition with the new. As in former albums, she drew on the inspiration of spiritual and political leaders and events, as well as heralding the efforts of the common man. From Mother Theresa, who exemplified charity, to the resilient Vietnamese patriot Ho Chi Minh, *Gung Ho* explored those who – as the slogan implies – entered into service with enthusiastic heart. *Glitter in their Eyes* from *Gung Ho*, written by Smith and Oliver Ray, was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2001.

Patti is the author of *Witt, Babel, Wool Gathering, The Coral Sea, and Complete*, a catalog of lyrics, photographs, illustrations, original artwork and reflections. A volume of poetry, *Auguries of Innocence*, was published in 2005. Patti Smith's drawings have been exhibited at the Robert Miller Gallery in New York, the Museum Eki in Kyoto, the Pompidou Center in Paris, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In 1999 Smith read at The Whitney and Guggenheim Museums. In November 2000, she participated in the launching of the William Blake exhibit at London's Tate Gallery with a performance with Oliver Ray at St. James Cathedral, and also at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art in conjunction with its William Blake program in June 2001 and the Diane Arbus exhibit in 2005. In September 2002, *Strange Messenger*, an exhibition of drawings, newly created silk screens of images depicting the remains of the World Trade Center 9.11.01, and black-and-white Polaroid photographs printed in silver gelatin process, opened at the Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. In 2003 the exhibition toured The Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston Texas, The Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia Pennsylvania, The Parco Museum in Tokyo Japan, The Haus der Kunst in Munich Germany, Palazzo Diamanti Ferrara Italy and Museum Boijmans in Rotterdam. Her photographs were exhibited at the Palazzo Fontano di Trevi, in Rome, Italy June 2005. During 2006, her art show traveled to Glasgow, Scotland and Sligo, Ireland and continues to build as it travels around the world.

In 2003, Patti Smith was the recipient of the Torino Poetry Award, as well as the Premio Tenco Award in Italy and in 1975 was awarded the Academie Charles Cros, Grand Pris du Disque Award in France for the recording of *Horses*. Patti also received the prestigious Women of Valor Award at the ROCKRGRRL Music Conference on November 10, 2005 – exactly 30 years to the day since *Horses*' release.

On June 10, 2005, Smith was awarded by the Minister of Culture for the French Republic, the grade of "Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres", the highest grade awarded to an artist.



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In the past few years, Patti Smith has had the privilege to visit and participate in events at several literary foundations, including Hermann Hesse Museum in Montagnola, Virginia Woolf's Monk's House in East Sussex, England, and the Casa-Museo Federico Garcia Lorca in Granada, Spain.

Aside from recording, performing, art, and writing, Patti is strongly involved in social issues and continues to participate in various human rights organizations. A book of poetry, *Auguries of Innocence*, was released in fall 2005 for Ecco Press/Harper-Collins and she has finishing a book on her growth as an artist and her friendship with Robert Mapplethorpe to be published in early 2010.

On October 20, 2002, Smith was signed to Columbia Records. In spring 2004, her first Columbia recording, *trampin'*, was released. The 30th anniversary re-issue of *Horses*, entitled *Horses/Horses* was released in fall 2005, and was heralded as one of the most poignant reissues in the recording industry. It included the digital re-master on one disk and a live disk that was recorded at The Royal Festival Hall as part of the Meltdown festival in London Summer 2005. The musicians on the live recording feature Lenny Kaye, Jay Dee Daugherty, Tony Shanahan, Tom Verlaine, and Flea of the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

On March 12, 2007 Smith was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Spring 2007 a new CD of cover songs, entitled *Twelve*, was released on Columbia Records comprised of band members Lenny Kaye, Jay Dee Daugherty, Tony Shanahan, and Jackson Smith, featuring such guest artists as Flea, Tom Verlaine, Rich Robinson and Sam Shepard.

Smith is continuing her writing and art projects and has been touring with her band. In January 2008, the documentary by Steven Sebring, *Dream of life: the Movie* premiered at the Sundance Festival and continued to receive awards at various film festivals worldwide. In March 2008 the most comprehensive exhibit of Patti Smith's art, including photographs, drawings, selected manuscripts, and short film essays opened at the Foundation Cartier in Paris. On May 16, 2008 she received an honorary doctorate degree from Rowan University in New Jersey, where she attended when it was previously known as Glassboro State College.

The start of summer 2009 began with a photo exhibition and reading at Dimbola Lodge in the Isle of Wight, the home of celebrated Victorian photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, followed by a performance at Ornette Coleman's 2009 Meltdown Festival at the Royal Albert Hall in London, and band concerts in Macedonia, Croatia, Serbia, Korea, and Japan.

A very special week of events in Florence Italy in September 2009 was highlighted by an exhibition of photographs from Smith's 1979 concert as well as her own



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photographs, a screening of *Dream of Life: the Movie*, a spoken word performance, and ending with a concert featuring Patti Smith and her Band in the Piazza S. Croce.

In the fall of 2009 Patti Smith performed at the Morgan Library and Museum in conjunction with the William Blake exhibit, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in conjunction with the Robert Frank exhibit and The CUNY Graduate Center as part of a series of one-on-one conversations with the Graduate Center president.

The movie *Dream of Life* premiered on PBS "POV" on December 30th 2009 January 2010, she shared an evening of reading and discussion at the 92nd Street Y with Sam Shepard. The publishing date of her book *Just Kids*, reflecting her early years with Robert Mapplethorpe, was published in January 19, 2010 and has become a bestseller and is being translated and published throughout Europe and Asia.

On May 17, 2010, Pratt Institute of the Arts honored Patti Smith with an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Art in a ceremony that took place at Radio City Music Hall. That same week, Jean-Luc Goddard's *Film Socialisme* premiered at the Cannes Film festival, in which Patti Smith and Lenny Kaye appeared. They also participated in the Cannes amFAR benefit.

The summer of 2010 took Patti Smith and her Band throughout Europe in July and in August she was joined by Michael Campbell and her daughter Jesse to perform in Italy. In the fall, Patti Smith continues recording as well as continuing her schedule of readings/acoustic appearances, and exhibits of her photographs in selected galleries. In September her memoir, *Just Kids*, was awarded the Non-Fiction Book of the Year by the North Atlantic Independent Booksellers Association. On November 17th Patti won the prestigious National Book Award for non-fiction.