

# You're gonna wanna make room for 'ROOM TO GROW!'

By CP Christopher Peppas

If Carmen Nickerson were an author, she would write an autobiography. It would be a compilation of her life with the ups and downs, all the bumps in the road that we experience.

But since she's a highly-touted and accomplished Singer/Songwriter, she wrote an album instead.

Which brings us to *Room to Grow*. This is a very personal glimpse into where Carmen has been and where she is going. Despite the fact that she has come very far (light years in fact), she still has room to grow.



This effort can best be described as her diary put to music. And one can listen to it over and over and curate more and different feelings each time.

Carmen gives us eight originals, each one a stand-alone chapter, and one poignant cover of Cat Stevens' *Wild World*, which we'll flesh out later on.

"It's not a country album, but it has a country song," Carmen said in a recent interview. "It's not a blues album, but it has a blues song. Not a pop album, either, but..."



The first song, *Emily*, "is an outlier," Carmen explained. "It's about Emily, a woman who used to come and dance when I was singing with Eddie Butts (for around thirteen years)."

The title slice, *Room to Grow*, "looks at the innocence of children and how they look at life," Carmen said.

"Then *Wrecking Ball* (with no apology to Miley Cyrus necessary or forthcoming) talks about hard times and coming through it all. A life lived."

Other songs touch on what Carmen calls “the emotions of a lifetime...looking back on when you’ve been deceived by someone. It is about forgiveness, introspection and reflection.”

In *I’ll Never Forget*, the theme is not at all opaque: I forgive you, but I’ll never forget.

The cover is placed toward the end of this look back. *Wild World* is presented here with a softer, slightly slower tempo that speaks to a look back at things we’ve done in our youth and how we choose to remember them.



The final cut, *Ascension*, ends on a most uplifting note. We literally rise above the din, “getting beyond our differences,” Carmen said. And the hope for a future where we can all get along.

This is the first solo studio album for Carmen, but she did it with more than a little help from her friends.

Carmen’s sometime bandmate, collaborator and co-writer of songs on this opus, Willy Porter, was chief among them. Carmen contributed some originals and co-wrote songs on an EP some years back, *Chesseburgers & Gasoline*. In 2016, the duo put out *Bonfire to Ash*, another personal journey about life on the road.



Playing the keys and bringing her lyrics to life was the insanely talented Kostia Efimov. Kostia, The K-Man, The Russian Bear, has been an American treasure since he arrived in Milwaukee in the late 1980s.

John Wheeler is a beast on the bass, John Calarco takes up residence in the pocket on drums and Stas Venglevski does things on an accordion that amaze everyone. Credit goes to Dave Adler, Randy Sabien and Lev Feriants for contributing their considerable talent.

With this album, Carmen is growing into her role as a story teller, going way beyond that of a singer. But a singer she most certainly is with a voice as clear as Waterford Crystal. It is powerful but can be soft and vulnerable as the need arises.

You can purchase this album (and you really should) at Carmen’s shows. She plays regularly on the second and fourth Wednesdays with Kostia and on one Friday a month with her Carmen Sutra Orchestra (a 4-tet) that adds Wheeler on Bass and Tony Ayala on Congas and percussion.

**In addition, Carmen plays at the Story Hill Firehouse, the St. Kate Art Hotel, The Art of Joy in Cedarburg and many more venues in our area.**

**Check out her website: <https://carmenickerson.com> for more info on where to see her perform and buy her music.**



### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**CP, Christopher Peppas, is a Journalist, Jazz Vocalist and Conga Player in the Greater Milwaukee Area and Correspondent at Large for the *Jazz Unlimited Newsletter* and a Field Editor for *Our Wisconsin Magazine*.**

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