



BIOGRAPHY

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Fusing music, poetry and her intoxicating gift for storytelling, wildly original spoken word artist Minton Sparks releases her latest triumph, **Open Casket**. Her debut live show DVD is yet another ground breaking performance that further proves Sparks is in a category all her own. Sparks peeks over the edge into the warm spot where most would prefer sleeping relatives lie. Open Casket is a raucous, provocative, brilliant one-woman show featuring Minton alongside world-class musicians: guitarist John Jackson, blues pianist Steve Conn, guitar and mandolin virtuoso Pat Flynn and special guest, Irish singing sensation, Maura O'Connell.

Ruckus Film Company, a 25-year old Nashville-based film and television Production Company, produced Open Casket. Ruckus is best known for the Ernest commercials, movies, award-winning music videos and an Emmy-award-winning CBS television show with Jim Varney. Coke Sams of Ruckus Films came on board as director of the DVD. He became involved after a friend gave him a copy of Minton's first CD, "Middlin' Sisters".

"You truly have to see her to believe her. Minton has a wealth of material. What we tried to do in Open Casket is present an entertaining cross section of characters, their emotions and Minton's wonderful insights into their lives. Open Casket allows viewers to experience Minton Sparks at her best. The DVD gives viewers the opportunity to feel up close and personal."

-Coke Sams *Producer of Open Casket*

In 2006, Sparks unique brand of poetry and music was featured nationally on the NPR's *All Things Considered* and internationally on the BBC's *Bob Harris Show*, along with the syndicated *Woodsongs' Old Time Radio Hour*. Sparks was thrilled to open for John Prine this year. She performed at the 2006 Americana music festival MerleFest, receiving a thunderous reception. This spring she wrapped up a four part Tennessee Performing Arts Series, *Minton Sparks and Friends* featuring Jessi Colter and Rodney Crowell, and played to sold-out houses and rave reviews each night.

Sparks has performed at New York City's Bowery Ballroom, opening for Ben Folds and at the Bowery Poetry Club in Manhattan's East Village. She received rave reviews recently in Santa Barbara, California at the *Trinity Backstage Songwriter Series* and has showed her slip at Mississippi Public Broadcasting's *Thacker Mountain Radio* recorded in Oxford, Mississippi. Minton Sparks travels extensively, performing at various Universities, clubs, and music and poetry festivals sharing her brand of performance poetry and her workshops on creative writing with audiences nationwide.

Her most recent CD catalogue release was *Sin Sick*, produced by Grammy winning Gary Paczosa, (Reba McEntire, John Prine, Alison Krauss, The Dixie Chicks), and guides us into the soul's dark struggle led by Sparks' riveting spoken word and is punctuated with poignant comic relief. On this recording Sparks picks the lock on her family's hidden

stories, drawing listeners into her world with charming familiarity and heart-breaking candor, pulling each character up into her arms for a memorable dance across the stage. Her collaborators on *Sin Sick* include Nickel Creeks' mandolinist Chris Thile, veteran Bob Dylan guitarist, John Jackson, piano virtuoso, Steve Conn and bluegrass sensation, Abigail Washburn.

Sparks' CD debut on Dualtone, *Middlin' Sisters*, was "one of the finest spoken word recordings issued in America in more than ten years" [Thom Jurek allmusic.com]. On that recording she collaborated with the late, legendary Waylon Jennings, and current singer/songwriter sensation Darrell Scott. Her second CD, *This Dress*, won "Spoken Word Record of the Year" in 2004 at the *Just Plain Folk Music Awards*, and got the nod from the *Chicago Sun Times* for "Top Five Off the Beaten Path Records of 2003". *This Dress* features collaborations with artists like Keb' Mo' and Irish singer, Maura O'Connell.

Sparks graduated from the University of the South with a BA in Psychology and then from Vanderbilt University in 1991 with a Master's of Education in Human Development Counseling. Awarded the "Leonard Bernstein Fellowship" in 1998, Sparks soon began to teach poetry within the Tennessee high school system offering classes that were funded by the fellowship. Sparks serves as adjunct professor of Psychology at Tennessee State University for the past 13 years in addition to teaching several classes in Women's Psychology at Middle Tennessee State University in 1994. She resides in Nashville with her husband and two children.

For **booking**, please contact:

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