



SOCAN

- Français
- Home
- Site Index
- Privacy Policy
- Terms of Use

Click below to listen to an AUDIO CLIP

Neko Case
Martin Léon
Jonathan Seet

search the site

LOGIN

Members
Customers

[Bookmark this page](#)

[Music Creators & Publishers](#)

[Music Users](#)

[About SOCAN](#)

[News & Events](#)

[Current news](#)

[Archived news](#)

[Events calendar](#)

[Feature Stories](#)

[President's message](#)

[Resource/Education](#)

[Contact Us](#)



[Current Issue](#)

Feature Stories

Member alert >

Neko Case: Honourary Canadian, Proud SOCAN Member
By Jim Kelly, for www.socan.ca



You can call her a siren. You can call her a Pornographer. You can even call her a Canadian (which she isn't). Neko Case doesn't mind. Just don't try to pigeonhole her with any single definition.

Case in point: though generally described as an alt-country artist, it's not a label she wears comfortably. "I think it's just country music," the singer says matter-of-factly from her home in Chicago. "It's weird country music, but it's country music."

It's not that she's prickly about the subject. She's just being forthright. She's not fond of that label – or any other. Looking over her career path, it would appear she's made an effort to avoid being pigeonholed every step along the way

Born in Alexandria, Virginia, Case spent her childhood years in various spots around North America, but considers Tacoma, Washington her hometown. Though life on the road keeps her ever the nomad, Chicago has become her home base for the past few years.

At 18, she popped up in Vancouver, and played drums in various punk bands, including Cub and most notably, Maow, for which she also occasionally sang. When she wasn't pounding the skins, Case attended classes at the Emily Carr

Institute of Art and Design, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1998. But as she gained the degree, she lost her student visa, and she was forced to leave Canada. (But not before she joined SOCAN as a landed immigrant.)

Although saddened to leave behind bandmates and friends in Vancouver, Case found her music career taking flight. Her solo debut, *The Virginian*, established the formidable voice, and her sophomore album, *Furnace Room Lullaby*, attracted mountains of critical praise. An eight-song EP, *Canadian Amp*, bridged the gap until her latest release, *Blacklisted*. The new album has been drawing some of the most ecstatic critical raves of her career, and will surely find a spot on many a critic's best-of-the-year list.

Case plays several instruments on the album, including six-string and tenor guitar (her preferred instrument due to her "really tiny hands"), drums, piano and saw. Having learned to play the guitar since her last record, Case is writing songs that explore new pathways, free from traditional templates. The songs on *Blacklisted*, while anchored in country, also swim in folk and blues, with subtler splashes of pop and rock. Some have called it a darker record, a notion Case rejects.

"I think I would say cinematic before I would say dark," she replies. "I mean, there's sadness on it, but sadness isn't the end-all-be-all of everything; sadness is the element of other things. But there's a lot of hopefulness on that record. I hope that you can hear hopefulness."

If not alt-country, what kind of a songwriter does she consider herself?

"I think I'm more of a traditional country songwriter," she says, "but as far as my musicianship goes, I'm a little on the odd side. So it kind of comes out as a combination of the two."

Case seems to enjoy being unclassifiable. In addition to her solo work, she's also one-half of the Corn Sisters, a twangy duo with Carolyn Mark, and she's on-board as a member of alt-rock group The New Pornographers, whose debut release in 2000, *Mass Romantic*, won a Juno Award for Best Alternative Album.

Even though her success has drawn her further onto the international stage, Case remains a loyal SOCAN member.

"[SOCAN] are always nice to me," she says. "I call them up, asking for stuff, and they send it right away, and they're friendly. I've never had a problem with SOCAN."

Canada has been such a large part of Case's musical path, from time to time an article will still refer to her as a Canadian.

"Even people in Chicago think I'm Canadian," she says with a chuckle. "I consider myself very much in love with Canada,

and some people treat me like an honorary Canadian, and that makes me feel awfully good, that's for sure. I spent a third of my life there. That's gotta count for something."

So it seems there are a couple of tags the artful label-dodger doesn't mind wearing: honorary Canadian and proud SOCAN member.

[Back to feature stories](#)