

# Two memorable musicians of the Midwest

By Cindy Mich  
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It is always a huge honor when artists accredit their success to set locations in which they have lived. Remaining loyal to one's roots reveals character.

Wisconsinites are fortunate to have fostered some hugely humble and highly honored musical performers. Although the mass majority derive from highly populated places, a few originated from more of the outskirts. We will be spotlighting two soloists who made their mark on musical history. Betty Everett, who climbed up the charts with her infamous "Shoop Shoop" song, and James David Christie, an award-winning organist and music teacher. You will learn of their start and successes and find that their accomplishments are sizable and significant. Most importantly, they helped make Wisconsin recognizable as rich in artistic culture.

Everett started singing and playing the piano at age nine. Her closest family and friends indicated that she was more of a quiet individual who sang solely from her heart. Every tune spoke with such strong emotion.

It is important to note that Betty's roots did not begin in Wisconsin, but rather ended in the beautiful town of Beloit. In



**Betty Everett's most recognizable and remarkably successful song was 1964's "The Shoop Shoop Song." (Photo submitted by Cindy Mich)**

1939, she was born in Greenwood, Miss., then spent a cluster of her childhood moving through a menagerie of states. Her major move was to Chicago in 1957, where she met musical director Calvin Carter at the Hideaway Club.

Carter would sign her to the independent label Vee Jay Records in 1963. She proceeded to produce some successful recordings while on their roster. Her second song was "You're No Good," which almost finished in the top 50 on the U.S. charts. Songs such as the aforementioned, along with "I Can't Hear You" and "Getting Mighty Crowded," ended up

being covered by other successful singers. These include Linda Ronstadt, Dusty Springfield and The Turtles.

Everett's most recognizable and remarkably successful song was "The Shoop Shoop Song" in 1964. The living legend herself, Cher, would eventually perform this cover across the country. The song's original release spiked up the charts to #1 on the Cashbox R&B Chart, and #6 on the Billboard Hot 100.

Sadly, Vee Jay ended up closing its doors, prompting Everett to produce with other labels. These works would do remotely well, but seemed to fall short a bit as com-

pared to earlier in her career.

The last composition created by Betty came in 1980 and then she moved to live with her sister in South Beloit. This time of her life found her involved with the Rhythm and Blues Foundation, which would happen to induct her into their hall of fame in 1996. Some of her other achievements included raising and rearing a child and grandchild, and receiving BMI's Pop and R&B Award in 1964. She passed on Aug. 19, 2001, at the age of 61. To hear her works, search Amazon and YouTube.

James David Christie was born in 1952, with Wisconsin cited as his original birthplace. One of the more magnificent elements of his extensive career is his cross-country travel, recording and performing with a plethora of orchestras. He started studying under the tutelage of Byron Blackmore in his hometown. Christie's education would extend out to both Oberlin and New England Conservatory of Music. He presently holds both a bachelor and master's degree in Music. Later on in life, he received an honorary doctor of fine arts degree from The New England School of Law. Further, he has performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra for 39 years.

As well as beholding a brilliant background in musical studies, Christie served as faculty at some of the finest institutions. Past proprietors of his include MIT, Boston University and Harvard University. Turning toward his hours in the recording studios, he has provided products for RCA, Decca, GM and Bridge Records. He has an ability to move an audience with music.

Christie holds steadfast to the thought of giving back to both his community and its citizens. Of all his time traveled, he still stays true to his teaching. He is a person wanting to pass along his gifts to new and nurtured students. At present, James serves as a chair and college profes-

sor at Oberlin. He also offers his organist skills to students as the Distinguished Artist in Residence at the College of the Holy Cross.

He has been the recipient of plenty of prestigious prizes, including being the first American to win the International Organ Competition in Burges, Belgium. A testament to his superior teaching skills lies in the fact that prior and present students have been first-prize winners in international contests in Dublin, Paris and Berlin.

To conclude, Wisconsin is rich in rewards as far as the sounds of song. We may be midwestern, but we rank as high as Manhattan in terms of musical talent.



**One of the more magnificent elements of James David Christie's extensive career is his cross-country travel, recording and performing with a plethora of orchestras. (Photo submitted by Cindy Mich)**

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