

Karla Bonoff Offers New Perspective On Hits She Wrote For Others  
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**AUSTIN, Texas** — Karla Bonoff, who spent three decades penning hits for Linda Ronstadt, Bonnie Raitt and Wynonna, as well as writing music for the films "Footloose," "About Last Night" and "Eight Seconds," is better known for her words than her own performances. But the crowd packed into Austin's Cactus Cafe recognized her right away, cheering even as she walked through the packed seating area to reach the venue's small stage Thursday night.

Joined by longtime musical cohort Kenny Edwards on second guitar and harmony, Bonoff opened with the uptempo search for love, "How Long," and followed with "Home," a song that Raitt recorded on her Sweet Forgiveness album and that country star Holly Dunn included on her Across the Rio Grande album.

"Kenny and I were living in this little house in California making no money writing music," Bonoff said, "and we decided to send this demo to Bonnie Raitt. She liked it," the singer continued, "so we went out and bought some food!"

### **Time Warp**

"This next song is also off my first album, which came out a couple of months ago," Bonoff said with tongue in cheek to the audience, who laughed when she added, "I said that somewhere recently, and there was this dead silence. I thought, 'These people obviously don't have a clue — but hey, if it's a "new" record, maybe they'll go out and look for it.'"

"The quasi-inside joke was that Bonoff's self-titled debut album came out on vinyl — back in 1977. Since then she's released four solo albums and even had a top-40 hit as a performer, with 1982's "Personally," which, ironically, Bonoff didn't write. Her most recent release is a 16-track compilation disc, All of My Life: The Best of Karla Bonoff, on Columbia Legacy. But the song she was referring to this night is "If He's Ever Near." which Ronstadt also has recorded. Edwards, a former member of Ronstadt's Stone Ponys, switched to electric bass to support this song.

Bonoff traded her acoustic guitar for electric keyboard for the next several tunes, including the meditative "Way of the Heart" and the title cut from her 1988 disc, New World. Picking up the guitar again, she rocked out on "In Trouble Again," and then returned to the keys for a passionate version of her classic, often-covered "Isn't It Always Love."

## "Well, If It's Linda Ronstadt Calling ...



Bonoff next told the story of being called in the middle of the night by Ronstadt (who's recorded many of Bonoff's songs over the last three decades). Ronstadt was in the studio recording a duet album with Aaron Neville. Bonoff suggested "All of My Life," which she had put on her own New World album, and didn't expect to hear more. But the next night, Ronstadt called her back and asked her to come to the studio to teach her and Neville the song — which then became a

major hit for them, rising to #11 on Billboard's Hot 100 chart — and also won a Grammy. Bonoff's simpler rendition of the song offered a revealing, behind-the-scenes look.

To close her set, the songwriter followed with "Someone To Lay Down Beside Me." which has become an enduring hit for Ronstadt. "I never get tired of singing the song; it just has a life of its own," the 47-year-old singer said of the tune she penned when she was in her early twenties.

The crowd didn't want to let Bonoff go, calling her back for a double encore. "I really like hearing you yell out my songs," Bonoff said, smiling, as the audience shouted out suggestions of their favorites, "but I'm going to play what I want!"

With that, she and Edwards launched into a driving two-guitar romp on "Tell Me Why," a country hit for Wynonna. "It was kinda depressing when she told me her mom had turned her on to my music, though," Bonoff remarked to chuckles from the crowd as she adjusted her guitar for her final song of the evening. "This one goes way back, to when I was first taking guitar lessons as a teenager in California, from this wonderful gentleman who used to be part of the Weavers, Frank Hamilton. He taught me a lot of great songs, and this is one of them. It's one of my favorite songs of all time," Bonoff said, bringing her evening to a close with the gentle folk ballad "The Water Is Wide."