

Tommy and Maureen Nolan were Irish entertainers in post war Dublin known as 'The Sweethearts of Song'. After working one night shows in Blackpool they realised that work was plentiful in the local clubs and pubs and decided to relocate from Ireland to the Lancashire resort. The family quickly started to multiply as the now legendary Nolans production line moved into action! Coleen Patricia Nolan was born on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1965 in Blackpool making her the only English born Nolan Sister. The youngest of 8 children, she was the sixth girl.

As children came along, one by one they joined the family act. 'The Singing Nolans' were one of the most sought after acts in the North of England and a summer residency at The Brunswick Club in Blackpool followed. They recorded an LP in 1972 on the independent label Nevis self titled as 'The Singing Nolans'.

In 1974, the five daughters (Anne, Denise, Linda, Maureen and Bernie) began performing as The Nolan Sisters as their parents and two brothers (Tommy & Brian) moved aside. The family relocated again, this time to Ilford in Essex where they were offered another residency, this time at the prestigious London venue, 'The London Rooms'. Top BBC producer Stewart Morris took the girls under his wing and brought in the best musical arrangers and choreographers and in just 6 months they polished the act to the highest standard.

The Nolan Sisters were soon recognised by the industry and demand for this 'sensational singing family act' grew and their first major TV series arrived in 1974. Cliff Richard introduced them to the British public as weekly guests on his top rated weekend television show.

In 1975, the Nolan Sisters were selected by Frank Sinatra the world's biggest star, to support him on the European leg of his World tour. Coleen still wasn't officially part of the group, despite appearing on The Cliff Richard TV series on 5<sup>th</sup> Feb 1974 at just 8 years of age. Coleen's age was prohibitive and her appearances were limited to 80 shows a year. The family invited her to fly to Paris to watch them supporting Mr Sinatra but she declined!

In 1978 The Nolan Sisters first TV advertised LP "20 Giant Hits" brought their music to the masses. This 'covers' album reached no 3 in the UK charts selling over 100,000 copies on The Target label. Coleen released her first solo single 'Andy' on the same label in 1978. This was a song about Prince Andrew's status as a teen heart throb!

The group were then signed by the CBS group and released their music on the subsidiary Epic label. In December 1979 the ladies biggest hit record arrived in the form of the now cult hit "I'm in The Mood for Dancing". Coleen appeared on the promotional video with her sisters and became an official group member in 1980, when Anne departed the group following her marriage to have children.

The song reached no 3 in the British charts and no 1 in Japan, a country where they would have major success in the next few years. Coleen appeared on the cover of the self titled 'Nolan Sisters' album in 1980. The LP sold well in the UK reaching no 15 but Japan loved it and they sold even more and reached no 3 in their domestic charts. The Nolans first UK tour commenced in 1980.

Seven further singles charted in the UK between 1980 – 1982 as the quartet of Bernie, Coleen, Linda & Maureen became one of the world's most famous pop acts. They appeared on television all over the world and worked with some of the biggest stars as their fame spread and they became a global brand. Their Portrait LP was a big seller and confirmed their status as the UK's top girl group. 4 hit singles were released from this album alone. The group flew out to Japan to take part in the 1981 Tokyo Music Festival. They were triumphant with the Ben Findon and Mike Myres' composition 'Sexy Music' which was taken from the 'Making Waves' album and went on to become a smash hit for the Nolans in Japan They received a monetary award and a trophy and became only the third non American act to win the festival which began in 1972. Jermaine Jackson and Randy Crawford were others contestants in 1981. Two television 'Specials' for the BBC followed as they starred in their own TV show for the first time.

However the group's line up started to change as Anne returned in 1982 and Linda departed in 1983. Success continued but not at the same crazy heights. The Nolans left CBS in 1983 as they disagreed with the direction the band were taking. Sadly, the hit singles dried up but TV and stage work was still a staple diet for The

Nolans. Summer seasons and tours were intertwined with guest appearances on all the major television entertainment shows.

In 1984 the Nolans signed for Towerbell and another TV advertised covers album 'Girls Just Wanna have fun' was released spawning a UK tour and enough sales to earn Silver and Gold discs. In early 1990 the group were approached by Universal Panasonic in Japan with a view to releasing several albums for the Japanese market. Several albums were released. "Playback Part 2" 'Rock & Rolling Idol', 'Tidal Wave' 'It's True What They Say', 'Lost Lonely Beaches', 'Colorful', 'The Hottest Place On Earth', 'Please Don't', 'Valentine Pops In Japan', 'Celebration Royal Wedding' and 'Christmas Pops In Japan'. As well as repackaged CD's of '20 Giant Hits' and 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun'.

Family began to take precedent over their careers as Coleen, Anne and Maureen all had children. Coleen's first son Shane (junior) was born on 02<sup>nd</sup> December 1988. Coleen's partner was comedian Shane Richie who had supported The Nolans on tour. They married in 1990 and in 1994 Coleen decided to quit show business to concentrate on the family home. Her second son Jake arrived on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1992 and with Shane's career also hitting new heights they were financially secure and she didn't want the hassle of touring anymore. With The Nolans major successes now a memory, the work was understandably no longer as appealing as it once was. Bernie also felt the same and left the group in 1995.

Maureen & Anne vowed to keep The Nolans going and initially brought in two dancers to replace Coleen & Bernie before replacing them with Anne's eldest daughter Amy and her friend Julia Duckworth. In the year 2000 Anne was diagnosed with breast cancer whilst the group were appearing in summer season at Blackpool's Grand theatre throughout the week. Every Sunday they appeared in Skegness but Anne decided to miss those long trips and Coleen returned briefly to The Nolans to allow Anne to rest up.

Coleen's marriage to Shane had ended in 1997 and they were divorced in 1999. The Nolans remained a popular act working the clubs and theatres until 2005 when the group disbanded. It should be noted that Maureen had been a permanent fixture for 31 years.

Coleen had struggled with her marriage break up and appeared on 'Celebrity Heartbreaks' – a chat show hosted by Trisha Goddard. This led to a guest appearance on ITV's popular lunch time ladies only panel programme 'Live Talk' the fore runner to 'Loose Women'. Coleen returned to Blackpool with her career and marriage in ruins and she kept out of the spotlight until she was given the opportunity to join the Loose Women panel on a permanent basis. Coleen's career was back on track and she became one of the programmes stalwarts and gained a reputation for being one of the most popular, funniest and often outspoken members of the team.

In 2001 Coleen and Twiggy Lawson replaced Richard Madeley and Judy Finnegan as the main presenters of ITV's long established magazine programme 'This Morning'. Lawson was sacked as viewers adjusted to the new presenters. Coleen was joined by John Leslie as her 1 year deal remained in place and ratings improved once again. However upon Fern Britton's return from maternity leave, Coleen was used to bring 'special features' to the show and decided it was no longer the role she wanted.

Coleen and her guitarist boyfriend Ray Fensome met in 2000 in a Blackpool bar, introduced by Anne's daughter Amy and a year later they produced a daughter, Ciara on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2001.

Coleen appeared on BBC's Never Mind the Buzzcocks in 2002 and was also on Mathew Wright's show 'The Wright Stuff' for Channel 5 in 2002 and 2003 and the BBC Christmas special 'We are Family' in 2003, a show about musical families which included The Nolans, The Osmonds and The Jacksons.

Coleen was signed up by Neil Howarth at Urban Associates and they quickly spotted new career opportunities for her and her career began to hit the same dizzy peaks she'd enjoyed as a member of The Nolans in the early 1980's. Coleen's confidence grew daily and her popularity began to reach new heights and it wasn't long before she became the undisputed Queen of ITV daytime television. Coleen also became a fixture on the cover of the most popular ladies weekly magazines and was it was rare that she was not seen on the news shelves. Her picture seemed to be everywhere! Coleen also had a weekly Agony Aunt column in 'Woman' magazine.

On her 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday in 2005 her fiancé, Ray Fensome proposed to Coleen at a big party in Blackpool, much to her surprise. They married in November 2007 at Hazelwood Castle near Leeds with an exclusive magazine deal covering the event. Further television appearances followed at regular intervals between 2003 – 2008 with appearances on ‘Have I Been Here Before?’ (an ITV production that gave celebrities the chance to see if they had lived a past life on earth), ‘Celebrity Fit Club’ (as a judge), ‘Al Murray’s Happy Hour’, ‘The Sharon Osbourne Show’ and many more.

In 2007 Coleen and Ray cycled The Nile in Egypt, a gruelling 112 km in aid of The Alzheimers Society, a disease her mother had suffered from. The sponsored bike ride along the Nile took them past pyramids, across deserts & through the Valley of the Kings. Coleen is a big charity supporter and breast cancer is another of her chosen charities with 3 of her sisters (Bernie, Anne & Linda) all suffering from the illness.

In 2008 Coleen took her family (brother Tommy, sister Linda, and her sons Shane and Jake) to ITV’s ‘All Star Family Fortunes’ studios to compete against Irish boxer Barry McGuigan’s family. Guest spots on ‘Alan Carr’s Celebrity Ding Dong’ and ‘The Paul O’Grady Show’ followed before Coleen entered the DVD fitness market with her first release ‘A Brand New You’ in conjunction with Rosemary Conley. The year concluded with a second fitness DVD, ‘Coleen Nolan’s Disco burn’.

At the same time Coleen was the face of ‘Iceland Foods’ and was seen throughout the year advertising their frozen food products on television with Kerry Katona or her sister Bernie Nolan. Later on Coleen would promote other brands such as Park Hampers and Marisota’s clothing range in a series of TV advertisements.

On 11<sup>th</sup> January 2009 Coleen took on a monumental task appearing on the 4<sup>th</sup> series of the popular Sunday night flagship ITV production ‘Dancing On Ice’. Coleen admits she wasn’t the best skater on the show – far from it - but with a public vote each week she stayed until week 10, finishing in 4<sup>th</sup> place which just proved how popular she was with the viewing public. They loved her.

Coleen returned to presenting once again investigating the truth about eternal youth for ITV1. In the programme, Coleen explored the obsession with staying young and staving off the ageing process. In the course of her research Coleen investigated and tried some of the remedies favoured by ‘ageless women’ and ultimately has to make the decision of whether or not she would succumb to the knife herself. .... Coleen says:” Presenting *Eternal Youth* was fantastic as I found the current obsession with anti aging surgery terrifying and fascinating at the same time. As a woman in her 40s and the in the media I know all too well that the emphasis put on the way women look is immense and we get judged by our age and appearance constantly. When the question ‘Would I want to turn back time if I could?’ was posed to me, I realised it’s a subject I really needed to know more about before making any flip decisions. *Eternal Youth*, has opened my eyes, but maybe not in the way you are expecting.”

In June 2009 The Nolans announced in The Daily Mirror, a publication that Coleen writes for as an agony aunt (read by 10 million readers) that they were to reform for a massive UK tour that November. The tour marked the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their biggest hit ‘I’m in The Mood for Dancing’. Controversy followed when Anne revealed in the press her hurt at being left out of the reunion. The promoters had asked for the same quartet who had the majority of the Nolans hit records in 1980-1982. A family feud ensued whilst the sell out tour filled arena’s and theatres nationwide. On the back of the tour, The Nolans released a new album, *I’m in the Mood Again*, on 28 September 2009, which reached No 22 in the UK album charts, their highest charting album for 27 years. A live DVD was released on 9 November 2009.

In 2010 Coleen presented a new series for Sky Real Lives called ‘The Secret Guide to Women’s Health’ which covered many health issues and was a much more serious type of programme to those Coleen had presented previously.

Coleen returned to the ITV ‘This Morning’ studio’s on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2010 to present their new feature ‘The Hub’. Two years later, Coleen turned down a new contract with the programme to pursue new projects and departed on June 13<sup>th</sup> 2012.

On 27<sup>th</sup> February 2011 Coleen returned to 'Dancing on Ice' standing in as the show's main female presenter after regular hostess Holly Willoughby was taken ill. Coleen had a close affinity with the show not only as a contestant but also as one of the co-presenters (with Ben Shephard) of Dancing On Ice Friday – a preview show throughout 2011.

Whilst still appearing on 'The Hub', a major change in Coleen's career came on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2011. After a decade on the programme, Coleen made her final bow on 'Loose Women', the programme that had brought her to the attention of the masses.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> August 2012 Coleen surprised many by entering the 'Celebrity Big Brother House'. On the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2012 Coleen emerged as the last woman standing and the runner up to winner Julian Clary as the tenth series ended.

In 2012 Coleen returned to pantomime at Liverpool's Empire theatre, something she had done 21 years before at Redhill but not since. Coleen played the Fairy Godmother in the sell out production. The show ran from December 14<sup>th</sup> 2012 – 6<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

Away from Coleen's music and television career she made the decision to write and signed a 5 book deal. On 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009 Coleen's best selling autobiography 'Upfront and Personal' was published and spent 16 weeks at No1 in the bestsellers chart.

Coleen then wrote her first novel 'Envy' – a book about high glamour television catfights and off stage back stabbing ala Dallas and Dynasty! This chart topper was quickly followed by the sizzling follow-up named 'Denial'. The same characters return and this time, it's murder. The *Girl Talk* presenters are out of work and out for revenge on the man who publicly humiliated them and destroyed their careers. So when James Almond, the ruthless controller of Channel 6, is murdered, suspicion falls on all five women. Coleen quickly had another hit on her hands, proving her creative talents as a writer.

Coleen Nolan's Beauty Secrets was released in 2010 followed by Mum to Mum, a book described as full of the laughter, tears and tiredness of motherhood. Coleen Nolan's Mum to Mum is a touching combination of anecdotes and advice that will help mothers realise that they are not alone in their problems! Dealing with many common issues that can arise during motherhood, this excellent hardback offers practical advice on dealing with concerns such as bullying, bereavement and divorce. However, there is a lighter side, as Nolan shares heart-warming stories from her own life with kids and emphasises the joy of bringing up children.

In June 2011 another best selling chart topper was born as the four Nolan sisters who reunited in 2009 released an autobiography called 'Survivors: Our Story'. The description of the book read "One of our most popular female groups bare their souls for the first time in a powerful memoir. Four sisters, four very different characters. But they have always been there for each other, through the hard times as well as the good. Now they describe growing up performing from as young as two, what it was like when fame suddenly hit and how it caused rifts in their close-knit family. Linda opens up about her devastation when her beloved husband died just as she was coping with breast cancer. Bernie tells how she suffered through the heartbreak of losing her unborn child and recently faced her own cancer battle, Coleen talks about her marriages and reveals new secrets, and Maureen describes her sadness at the devastating family feud that saw her much loved older sisters fall out with her, Linda, Bernie, and Coleen. And they share the joy of getting back on stage for their thirtieth anniversary tour—four survivors who found that age doesn't matter when it comes to having a great time “.

The very sad death of her sister Bernie from cancer in July 2013 hit the Nolans like a sledgehammer. It's easy to hide under the sheets when something so devastating occurs. The alternative is to fight back and throw yourself into your work... and whilst still remembering Bernie, Coleen is now ready to embark on another new project. It's amazing how much she has crammed into her life already but there's still so much more to look forward too for this talented lady.

© Pete Molloy – 14<sup>th</sup> September 2013. (Email - nolansisters@aol.com)

# Discography

## The Singing Nolans

Year	Format	Title	UK Charts	Label
	Single	"Blackpool"	—	
1972	EP	<i>Silent Night</i> ( <a href="#">EP</a> )	—	Nevis
	Album	<i>The Singing Nolans</i>	—	

## The Nolans (Known as The Nolan Sisters 1974-1979)

### Singles

Year	Title	Peak UK chart	Peak Japan chart	Peak Ireland chart	Peak Australia chart	UK sales	Japan sales	Label
1974	"But I Do"	-	- (1981)	NR	NR			EMI
1975	"Make a Little Sunshine Shine"	-	- (1981)	NR	NR			
	"Rain"	-	NR	NR	NR			
1976	"Thanks for Calling"	-	NR	NR	NR			Target
	"When You Are a King"	-	NR	NR	NR			
1977	"Love Transformation"	-	NR	NR	NR			
	"Love Bandit"	-	NR	NR	NR			
1978	"Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue"	-	NR	NR	NR			
	"Harry, My Honolulu Lover"	-	NR	-	-			
1979	"Spirit, Body and Soul"	34	NR	-	-			
	"I'm In the Mood for Dancing"	3	1 (1980)	2	43 (1981)	500,000+	673,850	
	"Don't Make Waves"	12	NR	5	-			
1980	"Gotta Pull Myself Together"	9	9	8	3 (1981)	250,000+	302,460	
	"Who's Gonna Rock You"	12	21 (1981)	14	-		87,650	Epic
	"Attention to Me"	9	NR	5	94	250,000+		
1981	"Sexy Music"	NR	7	NR	NR		270,160	
	"Chemistry"	15	23	11	51		77,160	
	"Don't Love Me Too Hard"	14	61 (1981)	17	-		18,480	
1982	"Crashing Down"	-	86	-	-		2,660	
	"Dragonfly"	-	-	-	-			
1983	"Dressed to Kill"	-	NR	-	-			
1985	"Goodbye Nothin' to Say"	-	-	-	-			Towerbell
1986	"Let's Spend the Night Together"	-	-	-	-			Spartan
1989	"I'm In the Mood for Dancin' 89 (re-recording)"	99	-	-	-			BCM
1991	"Rock and Rolling Idol"	NR	-	NR	NR			Teichiku

	"Take Me All"	NR	-	NR	NR	
	"Tidal Wave"	NR	-	NR	NR	
1992	"Mother Earth"	NR	-	NR	NR	
1995	"I'm In the Mood for Dancing (re-recording)"	51	-	-	-	Living Beat

NR = not released in that country. Dash indicates did not chart in that country.

## Albums

Year	Title	UK chart peak	Japan chart peak	UK sales	Japan sales	Label
1978	<i>20 Giant Hits</i>	3	38 (1981)	100,000+	17,370	Target
1979	<i>Nolan Sisters</i>	15	3	100,000+	156,020	
	<i>The Nolan Sisters (10-inch edition w/ 6 tracks)</i>	NR	12		56,190	
1980	<i>Making Waves</i>	11	1	100,000+	550,800	
	<i>Sexy Music</i> (compilation LP)	NR	2		541,930	
1981	<i>All About The Nolans</i> (2-LP box set)	NR	30		58,290	Epic
	<i>Don't Love Me Too Hard</i> (earlier release of <i>Portrait</i> for Japanese market)	NR	47		41,230	
1982	<i>Portrait</i>	7	NR	100,000+		
	<i>Altogether</i>	52	-	60,000+		
1983	<i>Harmony</i> (compilation LP)	-	-	-		Everest/Premier
1984	<i>Girls Just Wanna Have Fun</i>	39	-	60,000+		Towerbell
1986	<i>Tenderly</i>	-	-	-		Spartan
	<i>Playback Part 2</i>	NR	77		12,000	
1991	<i>Tidal Wave</i>	NR	99		3,000	
	<i>Rock and Rolling Idol</i>	NR	88		15,000	
1992	<i>Graduation</i> (The Nolans & Friends)	NR	-			
	<i>Hottest Place On Earth</i>	NR	-			Teichiku
	<i>Lost Lonely Beaches</i>	NR	-			
	<i>New Music Pops In Japan</i> (The Nolans & Friends)	NR	-			
1997	<i>New Best Hits and More</i> (includes 5 new tracks)	NR	-			
2006	<i>The Singles Collection</i> (includes bonus DVD)	NR	88			
2009	<i>In the Mood Again</i>	22	-			Universal

NR = not released in that country. Dash indicates did not chart in that country.