

Lynn Taylor & The Barflies

Biography

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Lynn Taylor has never been afraid to invest his own heartfelt emotion into the music he makes. In fact, it was that very real emotion — and his keen sense of responsibility — that found him placing his career on hold following the death of his wife Kim in 2016. It was preceded by the release of what would be his final album for nearly seven years, 2018's *Staggered*, an incredibly personal album that found him sharing his grief while trying to cope with tragic circumstances.

Taylor had become a single father with two daughters to raise, leaving him with an obligation that superseded all others.

The new album, aptly titled *Where The Heart Is* and due for release on April 7, is not a comeback album but rather an effort that finds him ready to move forward. "I'm pleased and excited about the possibilities that await," he says. "These songs were written over the past few years, and now we have the freedom and the traction to not only make new music, but also to create a statement, one that affirms the fact that I've rediscovered my passion and I'm now looking forward to rebooting my career. I wasn't in that position before, but I certainly am now."

Indeed, the diversity of the music and the soul-stirring sentiment bear that out. The rock-steady, assertive strains of "Carnival In Hell" recall the merriment and festivities that characterize the sights and sounds found in New Orleans, "The Crescent City." The jaunty pacing of "Home Is Where the Heart Is" asserts that home isn't always a physical place but is more a state of the mind... and the heart. The ragtag ragtime rhythm and upbeat outro testify to that state of clear and quiet contentment. On the other hand, the easy, affable tone given "When I Think About You"



aligns with Taylor's feel for pop precepts while sharing that distance and divide doesn't diminish the longing that lingers in their stead.

Ultimately, it's the contemplative caress, tender tone, meditative mindset, and soothing sentiment that embrace "Feel Love Again" that sum up Taylor's feelings that love can be fully renewed even when least expected.

Produced and engineered by Dave Coleman, *Where The Heart Is* features, Coleman on guitar and organ, Jennifer Halendar on fiddle and vocals, Parker Hawkins playing bass, singing and sharing co-production credits, Reid Cummings on drums, longtime co-writer Larry O'Brien on piano and banjo, the late Tom Mason on slide guitar and trombone, Graham Gray on backing vocals, Taylor's daughters, Piper Daly-Taylor and Bella Daly-Taylor, singing backing vocals on "Country Song." The album was recorded at Howard's Apartment Studio in Englewood Tennessee.

Known for his occasional raspy, emotive vocals, Taylor earned a wealth of praises from both the critics and his fellow artists following the release of *Staggered*. "Staggered closes down the bar at sunrise and brings us in close for one hell of welcome come-to-Jesus," noted singer/songwriter Kevin Gordon. Renowned

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artist Chuck Mead concurred, calling it “a sad and beautiful record.”

The pundits followed suit. Rolling Stone Magazine picked Taylor and The BarFlies among their “10 New Country Artists You Need To Watch,” while proclaiming Taylor sounds like “Jimmie Dale Gilmore and Wayne Hancock honky-tonk fused with electrified Neil Young-meets-Deer Tick alt-folk.” “With Staggered, Lynn Taylor looks his personal struggles in the eye and comes away with a cache of gut-punching songs of perseverance and hope,” Baron Lane of Twang Nation declared. Music News Nashville said Taylor “hammers it out of the ballpark,” while No Depression raved, “There’s something about Lynn Taylor’s voice that gets right under your skin. But it’s an infestation you’ll welcome if you’re a fan of real country music.”

Naturally then, fans of Lynn Taylor and the BarFlies have come to expect those plaudits. Taylor creates poignant melodies that capture the essence of life’s ups and downs, while evoking the shared circumstance of that journey from a decidedly personal perspective.

“The songs provide me with a vehicle to express those emotions,” he reflects. “At the same time, I hope they express thoughts and feelings that others can relate to as well.”

Over the course of his four previous albums — Cardboard Box (2005, co-produced by Taylor and Thomm Jutz), BarFly (2010 produced by Paul Burch), Hollow Man (2015, self-produced) and the aforementioned Staggered (2018, produced by Coleman) — Taylor has invested his music with sentiments and sensibilities borne from actual life experience. The son of a Baptist preacher (“not a nut job evangelical, but a thoughtful theologian,” Taylor quickly adds), he grew up in the church. “When I was 15, my Sunday school teacher gave me a stack of Dylan records and that’s where it started for me



musically,” he reflects. “After Dylan, I discovered Neil Young, John Prine, Tom Waits, Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt, and Michael Hurley, and that put me on the road to writing my own songs. I wrote a shit ton of crap, but I kept on working at it.”

There were a few detours along the way. He took a teaching job in Japan and traveled around the world, before he and his wife eventually moved to Nashville. Even then, he found a few detours. While selling jewelry on Second Avenue that the couple had purchased in Southeast Asia, he started a band called Felix Wiley. They found some regional success opening for Drive By Truckers, John Hartford, and BR-549 and opening for Todd Snider’s “What The Folk” concert.

Nevertheless, once he started a family, the band began taking second place in terms of priority. His opportunities to play music for the next six or seven years were limited to playing the mandolin for his kids. Eventually he teamed up with an old friend, Sergio Webb, and started playing in public. He subsequently recorded his first two albums and then formed his band the BarFlies and eventually created the music that became Staggered.

And now, with Where The Heart Is, Taylor’s heart — as well as his expertise, experience and enthusiasm — is definitely immersed in the music. Lynn Taylor is back, and more than ready to not only make up for lost time, but to take advantage of all the time that lies before him.

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Where the Heart Is.... song by song

“Carnival In Hell”

“New Orleans is my favorite city in the U. S. The soul, the sounds, the grit, the taste, the air — I love it all. It’s the true Music City! I’ve lived in central and south Louisiana, and I have family from the top to the bottom of that state. And yet, I’ve spent a lot of time in New Orleans. I know I could never live in that incredible city, because if I did, I’m afraid I wouldn’t be long for this world.

“In the late ’90’s, I read a book by Greil Marcus called ‘Invisible Republic.’ It explores the seedy and sometimes violent underbelly of Southern Americana. It was the inspiration for ‘Carnival in Hell,’ but I wrote the song with New Orleans in mind. It’s 25 years old now, and I’m only now just recording it. I was just waiting for the right time, I guess. It’s a quintessential BarFlies song, and it features our dear friend Tom Mason on slide guitar. He’s the glue that tune together and we are forever grateful that he played his part. We lost Tom a couple of months ago to cancer. He was an incredible musician. A beautiful soul, a ray of light, an artist’s artist with an impish grin. He was loved by so many and will always be missed.”

“Home Is Where the Heart Is”

“Losing love is a motherfucker. It happens to everyone who dares to love. It’s part of the essence of what love actually embodies. I’ve lost it, but not through divorce. A lot of my friends’ marriages ended with the signing of a document in a lawyer’s office. As a result, I had a particular couple in mind when this song was born, but it could have been about a lot of couples I know. Moving forward after losing love is daunting. We’re raised to believe in fairytales and mythology such as the idea of being happily ever after. When I was writing the song, I was thinking about the cliché that I turned into the title. Home is a word we use daily. I left my wallet at home, I’m going home for lunch, I had to put a new roof on my home... We refer to it as a physical place. And yet, the older I’ve become, the more I’ve come to believe that ‘home’ has less to do with brick and mortar and more to do with the heart.”

“Who Says No To Love”

“About six years ago, I fell deeply in love. It was not with someone that didn’t present some obstacles in terms of space and time. And yet, it was real and undeniable.... A force set in motion which wasn’t going to simply fade away. When it was still secretive, I was telling a friend about it, and I could see the skepticism on his face. I said something like “Seriously man, who is gonna say no to love?” I wrote the chorus after that and it just kinda hung around in my head.

“A couple of years later, I was watching my daughters struggle with the confusion and isolation caused by the pandemic. All the concerns about life, love and the future were paralyzing. This song was borne from those two experiences.”

“Donna Lee”

“My buddy Larry O’Brien texted me one time and said, ‘Let’s write a song about Donna Lee.’ He was referencing the mistress of some jazz legend — I wanna say it was Charlie Parker —but I didn’t know that at the time. I’m a landscaper by trade and was working at a client’s house out in Leipers Fork. It was built around a log cabin dating back to 1852 and three sides of the property are lined in ancient stack stone walls leading down to the Harpeth River. My crew and I were mending the wall when I wrote the lyrics to this song in my head. I guess being surrounded by all that rich history somehow provoked me to write a murder ballad. I took it to Larry the next day and he laughed and informed me that that wasn’t at all what he had in mind. And yet he liked the creepy story I’d come up with so he helped tweak the lyrics and write some creepy music for it. I loved it and his piano playing takes the song in a different direction from the other songs on this record.”

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“When I Think About You”

“I’ve been in a long distance relationship for several years now. It’s had its obvious challenges but it’s been worth it. It’s the sunshine in my life and in many ways it has saved me. This song wrote itself early on in the relationship. It’s simple and true. I was channeling Marshall Crenshaw when I wrote it, and when we recorded it, Dave Coleman was channeling the British band called the La’s. His guitar part makes the song for me. It’s a happy song, and honestly, it’s my favorite track on the record.”

“This is another old song that never found its way onto a record. I wrote it in my late 20s when I didn’t know shit about the subject. I had an idea and I wrote the lyrics, but I couldn’t seem to find a way to deliver them. Now in my mid 50s I’m watching my parents, and the parents of many people close to me, struggle with aging and the wear and tear it has on the mind. I played it for Dave Coleman, who engineered the record and coproduced it with Parker Hawkins, and he suggested we approach it like a Crazy Horse song. When we recorded it, Parker and Reid Cummings had never heard the song before. I played them a verse and chorus and told them it’s a long-ass song and we should get it rolling and I’ll cue them when its coming to an end. With Dave on guitar, we cut this song in one take. I’m so happy that it’s finally found its place on a record.”

“Feel Love Again”

“When my first child was born and I held her in my arms for the first time, I felt like my heart would explode. All the love I had known in this world instantly doubled. I had never quite felt like that before. When we were expecting our second child four years later, I told my wife that I was scared. I was scared that I wouldn’t be able to love our new baby as much as I did our first. But to my amazement, when I held our second child for the first time, I felt the same outpouring of emotion. I learned then just how much capacity our hearts have for love.”

“I lost my wife to cancer over 8 years ago. She was the love of my life. I was devastated and heartbroken and I felt for certain that I could never love again. Most people don’t find true love once, so how could I expect to find it twice? But I did find it again in a smart, strong, beautiful woman, and as I write this, we’re engaged to be married. She is the love of the rest of my life — further proof that the heart possesses an amazing capacity for love.”

“Country Song”

Larry O’Brien and I started writing this song nearly a decade ago. We had two verses and a chorus, but we couldn’t seem to figure out how the story would end. I would occasionally bring it out and play what we had written around the house. I must’ve done that more than I realized, because a couple of years ago, I was playing it when my youngest daughter Bella said she thought it was curious that the song was incomplete. She said she felt like she’d heard it her whole life. I explained how Larry and I had written what she heard, but we just didn’t know where the story was going. Then before I knew it, she was helping me write the conclusion. Voila, Bella is a songwriter! There’s homage to John Prine’s ‘Unwed Fathers’ in there, but ultimately it’s a song about women losing reproductive rights. This song is extra special to me because of Bella’s cowrite, and because she and her older sister, Piper, sing the harmonies on the recording!! Ah, the family band may be in our future...”

“648 Miles (Between Me and You)”

“This is a song that Larry and I had the lyrics for for quite a while, but we couldn’t quite find the right music to fit. It tells the story of the trials and tribulations of a long distance relationship, but in the end, it’s about the triumph of love over the obstacle presented by distance. It’s not exactly factual — there are actually 678 miles between my door and my fiancée’s house — but that number had too many syllables for the song. After Larry picked up his banjo, Larry determined the musical direction and turned it into a really fun travel song. Well done Larry!”

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“The Muse”

“Jennifer Halenar and I have been making music together for a number of years. She’s a wonderful singer and fiddle player and an all-around fantastic human. We have talked about writing a song together for quite some time, and this is our first tune we completed together. I wrote the lyrics and she wrote the music and I love how they blend together! It has a dream-like melody with mystical lyrics. It reminds me of something from Dylan’s Desire album. Jennifer and I share music as our muse, and I hope to write many more songs with her in the future.”

“Time To Change”

“Change is a difficult thing for me. I usually have to be pressed into doing it. Don’t get me wrong — I believe change can be a good thing. I’m just a slow mover when it comes to accepting it. A couple of years ago, I noticed I had slipped into a rut or two, and something needed to give. At that time I had been playing this slide banjo tune for a hundred years with no lyrics, so I decided to take a stab at adding some words. It’s the opposite of how I normally write, but I enjoyed the process and it became a therapeutic experience.

“The story of this record started in New Orleans and it ends there too. I love how the band played on this particular song. The rhythm section, guitar and fiddle work feels swampy and that brings me great joy. Having Tom Mason add his drunken trombone was the icing on the cake. With many changes on the horizon, “Time To Change” feels like the right song to cap this record.”

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