

LAURA PURSELL

A BIOGRAPHICAL PORTRAIT

"I could never have written these songs 10 or 15 years ago. These songs come from a perspective of loss, regret and illumination...the loss of time, and of people, and the realization that our memories form who we are, even as we evolve every day." (Laura Pursell on ***Somewhere In This Room***)

Laura Pursell is one of those singers/songwriters who fully utilizes her arsenal of personal experiences to inform her lyrics. She's fearless when it comes to baring her all. And her current project, ***SOMEWHERE IN THIS ROOM***, reflects this in that it is a very personal and candid aural exploration of romantic relationships – both good and otherwise.

From the beginning, Laura's voice – at turns wonderfully smooth or intense and emphatic – invites the listener into her personal interior landscape, another world where one is gently buoyed upon waves of peace and calm. Yet, she's almost an accidental vocalist who didn't begin to take her musical gifts seriously as a singer and lyricist until she moved to Los Angeles in 1991 after graduating from the University of Tennessee, in Knoxville where she majored in advertising. After deciding it wasn't in her heart or destiny to pursue a career as a copywriter, Laura decided to pull up stakes and relocate to Los Angeles.

When Laura arrived in the 'City of Angels', her initial goal was to embark upon a career as an actress. She studied under the tutelage of renowned acting teacher and drama coach Milton Kateselas at the Beverly Hills Playhouse and with Georgia Phillips at Orange County's South Coast Rep. She went on to appear in the feature film "The Landlady," which starred Talia Shire as well as on a television soap opera, on the boards of local theatres in and around the Los Angeles metro area, and in the Weird Al Yankovic video which spoofed a popular song first made famous by the Crash Test Dummies ("Mmmmmm Mmmmmm").

Still somehow music won out. It had always been present in her childhood home in Nashville, Tennessee, a city best known as the seat of country music, largely because of the influence and presence of her father, Bill Pursell, the famed composer and arranger of the 1963 hit single, "Our Winter Love." At the height of his career, Pursell worked as one of Nashville's core sidemen, and he's played with some notable music icons including Patsy Cline, Johnny Cash, Marty Robbins and Bob Dylan, among others. "I remember how excited my sister and I were when Art Garfunkel was at our house to rehearse for a country club appearance he was making. We thought that was really cool," remembers Laura. "Concert artists regularly showed up at our home, people like Andre Watts and

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Pulitzer Prize-winning pianist/composer Morton Gould, not that I knew what to say to any of them!"

Once she decided that she wanted to focus her energies on creating music and singing, Laura took songwriting classes, learned how to play the guitar, and began to explore her range and abilities as a lyricist. "I grew up listening to the 'pop' music of the 1980's and I overdosed on classical music as a kid which was always playing in our house," says Laura. She notes that in addition to her father's influence, her own vocal style has been informed by "Top 40" music, iconic "pop" music of the '80's from bands such as Journey, Chicago, and Styx, and vocalists Melissa Manchester, Maria Muldaur, and even Madonna. "I've got eclectic tastes. I like 'trad jazz,' some folk music, and pop music. Most of all, though, I enjoy listening to and singing songs which tell a story. I like melodies that are 'sing-able'," says Laura.

The music of Ella, Sarah, Anita O'Day, and Nat "King" Cole (a longtime favorite) inspired Laura to record *It Had To Be Swing* (1999), an independently-released collection of jazz standards followed by *Unkissed* (2000) which showcased Laura blending country music with a "pop" sensibility, and *That's What Christmas Used To Be* (2000).

In 2005, Laura was fortunate enough to meet musician/composer Andrew Bonime via the website MusiciansJunction.com, a kind of eHarmony™ for songwriters and musicians. Their first communications were exchanged via email. "He wrote me and said he had composed a body of music, and he was looking for a lyricist. I thought the music Andy had written was terrific. I found the melodies strong and definitely memorable. The very first song I wrote lyrics for was 'Somewhere in This Room.' Andy loved the title, and together we fine-tuned it," says Laura.

It was Andy's melodic "intelligence" and a shared desire to create what the two collaborators call "sophisticated and romantic music that resonates." Laura adds: "I truly enjoyed collaborating with someone who really felt it was the song that mattered most. The song had to 'say' something and it needed to be insightful. Others I've worked with in the past were all about the groove, and the emphasis wasn't on the lyrics. Working with Andy meant that I always had something to take home at the end of the day. We literally finished a song nearly every time we went into his studio. Our relationship is productive because we really do complement each other."

Over a period of a year, Laura and Andy worked on a total of 12 songs, 10 of which appear on ***SOMEWHERE IN THIS ROOM***, the first release on Cloudshine Music, the independent label founded by Bonime, and on which he also serves as the project's Executive Producer. Bill Pursell contributes to the project as well. He is credited with arranging, conducting, and playing the piano on the two tracks which introduce and close out the album.

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The lyrical material, which was created by Laura, was taken from personal relationship experiences as well as from the voluminous written material in her diaries, a practice she has maintained since she was 8-years-old and which she continues to do even now. Though the title track and first single, "*Somewhere In This Room*," was inspired by a lost set of house keys, it also metaphorically suggests the loss of love and the absence of warmth and comfort that love provided. With *Not Much To Lose*, Laura sings about a relationship that ends with a whimper as opposed to one of those relationships that ends with broken plates, stolen CD's and embittered phone messages. "I came up with the lyrics for this track while driving through the Palm Desert one Sunday morning after a gig, so it is informed by that feeling of nothingness, expansiveness and a sense of remove," offers Laura.

All in all, Laura has used the opportunity of creating lyrics for ***SOMEWHERE IN THIS ROOM*** to explore her past – both literally and figuratively, and to embark upon a new path. In the end, Laura "mined" the experiences of her life journey which have given her the chance to re-examine her life.

"The great thing about writing a song is that you can take a memory and examine it from a distance and ask yourself questions like 'What did that mean?' or 'Why was I with that person?' or 'What is the lesson here?' ... all the answers to those questions formed the basis for these lyrics, and I've found through writing them I'm much more capable of empathy and forgiveness than I ever realized I was. I guess perspective does that."

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