



Tristan Mackay

'Wire & Wood'

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FORMER BUSKER TRISTAN MACKAY FOLLOWS #1 DEBUT WITH NEW ALBUM IN APRIL

On April 13th 2015, British Blues Award nominated songsmith Tristan Mackay will release his new album 'Wire & Wood' on Battered Hat Records.

Already receiving airplay support from BBC Radio 2, Wire & Wood is the follow-up to Mackay's 2012 debut album 'Out Along The Wire', which went straight to #1 on the iTunes blues chart in the UK and Australia, where it remained for several weeks and received four and five star reviews, with Mackay frequently compared to Jeff Buckley, Mark Knopfler and John Mayer.

Mackay's big break first arrived in 2010, when he was discovered busking by Grammy award-winning producer Martin Levan (John Martyn, Andrew Lloyd Webber), who invited Mackay to his studio to record some demos. This led to the pair collaborating to produce 'Out Along the Wire' with a team of outstanding musicians, including Pete Van Hooke (Mike and the Mechanics, Van Morrison) and friend John Garden (Scissor Sisters), as well as a cameo organ performance from Paul Carrack.

Tristan's story received attention from the UK media, including a full page feature in The Evening Standard and The Sun, plus numerous national television and radio interviews and performances for BBC Radio 2 ITV News and Channel 5 News, amongst many others.

However, Mackay admits there were times he doubted he'd ever release a second album, "Not long after the release of Out Along The Wire I was broke and had to go busking again. A few of the people I used to see regularly gave me that 'sad face' look, clearly thinking that my career was already over - and I was agreeing with them."

However, the critical acclaim Mackay received for Out Along The Wire soon led to a flurry of offers for him to tour as both a headline artist and as support for artists such as Beth Hart, Rumer, The Proclaimers, Billy Bragg, Nerina Pallot, Robben Ford, Eric Johnson and Jo Shaw Taylor. Mackay says, "I'd gained new fans night after night on tour all over the country and I quickly sold over fifteen thousand albums!"

This exposure enabled Mackay to launch a successful crowdfunding campaign for the recording of Wire & Wood, raising over £12,000 from his fans in two weeks. With Martin Levan producing once again, Mackay's acoustic-based new album 'Wire & Wood' features the same great band with the addition of organ cameos from Ricky Peterson (John Mayer, Prince) and Don Airey (Black Sabbath).

Tristan says of his new album, "Wire & Wood is pared right back to the roots of my music. I hoped to capture the atmosphere of the best gig I could perform, drawing on all the live experiences I have had over the last few years. I have learned so much about where my strengths lie from those shows, and this is an intimate, emotionally raw and honest portrayal of my songs."

Born in Tiverton, Devon and educated in Wellington, Somerset, Mackay first picked up a guitar at the age of fourteen after hearing the Eric Clapton 'Unplugged' album. This started his lifelong love for blues guitar music and the storytelling songs of Dylan, Young and Springsteen.

In 2001 Mackay moved to Yorkshire to study at Leeds University. During his student days he would busk to pay the bills and it was to this pursuit he returned after leaving university in 2007 to promote his music. Mackay built-up a strong local following in Leeds, and the release of two self-produced E.P.s in 2008 - 'Tales From A Bedroom Orchestra' and 'Live From The Lounge' - led to regular appearances on local news programmes, press and radio, where he was hailed as 'The Next Big Thing out of Yorkshire'.

Looking to the year ahead, Tristan says, "Since my debut album I have experienced the highs and lows of the music industry. I have toured and jammed with my heroes and played in venues I only ever dreamed of in the same week as busking the high street. Against all odds I got my music out there. I hope this album allows me to continue that journey, and I can't wait for people to hear it!"

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A track-by-track guide to 'Wire & Wood', by Tristan Mackay.

1. You Win Again

Why does a song always need to be 3:30? I was inspired many years ago by the great song 'Till the morning comes' by Neil Young to believe sometimes a song can say all it needs to in a minute or two. We used a lot of these 'vignettes' on the first album, and I really love writing them. This song sets up the tone of the album as well as some of its recurring themes.

2. I'll Be Yours Tonight

This was initially written as an acoustic shuffle on guitar, but as soon as we started working on it in the studio I just loved the combination of the Rhodes piano and drums. Ricky Peterson's organ playing is magical on this track for me too, swirling around the rest of the band. The song touches on themes that run through the record: powerlessness, regret, love. It also contains the first of the guitar solos on the album, which in a departure from the sound of my debut, are all played on acoustic guitars.

3. If I Told You

A song that was written back in 2007 and appeared on my first ever home produced EP 'Tales From a Bedroom Orchestra.' For this album I revisited and reworked it. The chord sequence and guitar approach was inspired by Fleetwood Mac's cover of 'Need Your Love So Bad.' 'If I Told You' is the last gasp effort to convince someone you've lost to come back to you. It is a confessional and honest song, and I hope it has stood the test of time.

4. Wire and Wood

This song was the foundation stone for the sound of the whole album - woody, real and 'live'. I had been performing this at shows for some time, and knew exactly how I wanted it to sound when put together in the studio. I didn't have the best time during my adolescence; family life was turbulent and frightening as my parents had a very acrimonious divorce and my step father struggled with alcoholism. My guitar became my salvation and my voice during that time - as I say in the song 'my sword, and my mirror too'.

5. The Wine & Me

This song is so special to me, and it's another that I recorded in my bedroom in 2007 for my first EP. I had been writing songs for fun since I was thirteen, and then in my early twenties I heard Ray Lamontagne's 'Trouble' album, and the quality of the songwriting just blew me away. For the first time I realised how I wanted to really write music, with raw emotion and honesty, telling a story. That album helped me find the discipline to work a song until it was really all it could be. The Wine & Me, I think, was the first truly good song I ever wrote, and a demo I recorded for it went on to be used in the first season of the TV show 'Skins', which felt like my first break.

6. A Kind of Blue

This song was written backstage while I was touring with Beth Hart. Something of its conception in my mind comes from her unique take on blues music. In my mind it is being played in a bluesy late night bar - an upright bass, guitars, smoke and whiskey.

7. Black Sheep

Black Sheep is a song about generations, and what we give and inherit from and to each other. Originally it was a way of reconciling my feelings about my parents during a tricky time in our family life, but as the song has lived with me, and since the birth of my own daughter Layla it has come to represent a much more general feeling about nature and nurture. It is probably my most affecting song at live shows, and we recorded guitar and vocals completely live in one take on one mic to try and capture that vibe.

8. Two of a Kind

I have always loved artists who take traditional forms such as the blues and weave them into contemporary songs. Randy Newman would be a good example - you feel like his some of his songs have been around forever, there is a familiarity to the form that allows you to relax and focus on the lyrics. Two of a Kind is written in that vein, a story about two people who perhaps should have grown old together, but haven't, over my favourite kind of 'unplugged' arrangement.

9. This is Old Heart

The final song that has survived from my original EP, This Old Heart owes a lot to the year I spent listening to not much but Neil Young. It is positioned at the end of the album, as it ties up its themes, many of which focus on human flaws and failings, but has a positive outlook. I hope that it has a redemptive and uplifting effect.

10. Lullaby for Layla

Layla, my first daughter, was born during the recording of this record. It is dedicated to her, and I hope it is fitting that it is her first song that signs off the album. It is the album's goodbye, and I hope, offers a sense of my early aspirations for parenthood and my family's future.