**I GOT A STORY**

What’s the Story?

October 21st 2020-10-21

I began thinking about making a new album, my seventh, in 2018 after I went to The Farwest Folk Alliance in Los Angeles. I’m an independent artist. I never know where the money is going to come from. I just start taking baby steps in a definite direction and see what unfolds.

 Folk Alliance conferences are magic. Playing my songs in hotel rooms decked out with fairy lights, bodies sprawling on beds listening intently. Hallways overflowing with musicians - double basses, trumpets, guitars, young people, older people. Conversations into the late wee hours. I forgot what it felt like to be tumbling around in a pile of musicians and music lovers. I saw how excited people were when I started singing, their eyes lighting up with pleasure and surprise, and I felt something inside me shift. I started to get excited.

Back in Canberra, I hatched a plan to record in NYC with producer Tim Bright. Tim is a producer and composer I have collaborated with twice before. My debut album and my middle album. He played guitar on my first studio demo in NYC.

I started writing songs regularly by joining 2 online song-writing communities. I got up at 6am, three days a week to write. There were song prompts. Both communities worked differently. In one of them, the song prompt would be a word like …’pickling’, (And yes, one of the songs on my album was written from that prompt) and in the other there would be a list of 10 words and the guideline was to use at least five words in the song.

It was a very different song-writing process for me. To be so …disciplined and consistent. To show up to the blank screen with a guitar in my hand or to sit at my little piano and write a song on a schedule. I ended up with over 40 songs by the time it came to choose the songs to record.

Applying for an artsACT grant was a big leap for me. Most of my music creating life was spent in the USA where they don’t have such things. Other artists encouraged me to apply and I did. I was awarded the grant, which partially funded the recording process, went to New York in September 2019 and recorded between US tour dates. It was a mad idea. I have never recorded an album to such a tight time line… usually the recording part for me spills over anywhere from 9 months - 2 years. And the writing happens over an even longer time frame.

Tim is a native NY’er. He knows everyone! He started putting feelers out to see who would be around and available. We wanted Jesse Murphy for bass and Ben Perowsky on drums. We made it work between our combined crazy schedules. They are both adventurous musicians and lovely people.

Ben cut his teeth playing drums as a kid with Dizzy Gillespie and Rickie Lee Jones. Over time he's worked with Joan as Policewoman, Belle and Sebastian, John Zorn, Lou Reed, Tegan and Sara, Martha and Rufus Wainwright.

Jesse Murphy has worked with Joe Jackson, David Byrne, Regina Carter, Natalie Merchant, Diana Krall and Norah Jones.

We recorded Ben and Jesse in Woodstock NY over an intense three days, then took the tracks back to Tim’s basement studio in Brooklyn, to complete the project. I crisscrossed the country over two months. We worked a week here, a week there.

Now, it’s 2020, a year of fire, smoke, hail, floods and Covid 19. The world has morphed into a vastly different place, taking all schemes, dreams, and plans and crushing them firmly under the boot of uncertainty.

My almost 103 year old father died in Brisbane, in the middle of QLD’s lockdown in September. I experienced the frustration of fighting for weeks to get permission to cross the border for end of life compassionate visits and finally getting an exemption to spend 2 weeks in a quarantine hotel, where I would leave only to spend time with him. He died 24 hours before the exemption was given. I was refused permission to cross the border to attend his funeral. Strange times indeed.

Yet, here I am, with a collection of 10 new songs…  “in this little city, in this big country, ‘in the middle of the ocean, at the bottom of the world’

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