

TAKE A BOW

GREG LASWELL

BIOGRAPHY

BY NIC HARCOURT



Take a Bow both closes and opens another chapter in the California native's life as a songwriter and a man, with songs of loss and hope recorded in a cabin in Arizona. It's an album that shows a deep understanding of where he's been personally and unlike a lot of songwriters he's also able to poke a little fun at himself. Laying himself on the line and taking chances both musically and lyrically, it's a collection that deserves attention and wide recognition. I sat down with Greg over coffee to dig a little deeper...

NIC You just moved to Brooklyn, why move now and why Brooklyn?

GREG First time I went there was five years ago, it is the only city I am always sad to leave, something just clicked, something in the air.

NIC Define that.

GREG I can't. That's what's cool about it.

NIC You took a break from your own songs with last year's *Covers* EP, was that a palate cleanser for you?

GREG It really was actually, it kind of allowed me to dig into music again. I kinda went through a dry spell there for a while with my own writing and so I ended up using a lot of the textures I used on that project on the new album... An icebreaker so to speak

NIC Nonetheless, you've been a busy man these past five years as a songwriter and many of those songs seem to be about an ex who left you devastated. Dude, are you a love addict?

GREG Yes, I don't know why I keep getting back up and doing it again, but I do and with great ease ironically. I don't understand it entirely.

NIC Is it writing songs that purges you and leaves you open to something new?

GREG Sometimes I feel like I shoot myself in the foot just so that I can write a song about it. I feel like one begets the other. I've gone through two great heartbreaks in my life and said I'd never do it again, but I do.

NIC I've spoken to many songwriters through the years who say that their record label A&R guys salivate when they hear of a relationship gone bust, how does the art mix with commerce for you?

GREG It hasn't really been present with the label I work with but my manager likes the dark songs. There's actually a few happy songs on this record. A good friend of mine said that my family and friends will be glad, especially about "You, Now" but it's on the same album as one of the saddest songs I've ever written, "Goodbye". I was terrified to write a song called "Goodbye" because as an artist, it's dangerous territory; it's a cliché in and of itself. It took me a while to get around to writing it and I waited a while until I couldn't help not to. Saying goodbye is more difficult than the actual break up.

NIC When you look at this collection of songs compared with those on your first album *Through Toledo*, how do you see your evolution as a person and progression as a songwriter?

GREG It's always difficult for me to talk about progression. On this record, I talked about where I had been as opposed to *Through Toledo* where I was writing about it as I was going through it. I was still scrambling with that first record to see who I was, now I'm pretty sure about where I want to be and who I am.

NIC How about the process this time, you produced and arranged the tracks yourself?

GREG I did that with the first record and Brandon Walters helped on the second record. With this one, I moved my studio to a cabin in Mountainaire just south of Flagstaff in Arizona, a little town with one restaurant and one convenience store. I wish I could say I went there to find myself creatively, it sounds much cooler but the truth is I wanted to go somewhere pretty. This time I was living and breathing it all day long. With my other two records regular life would intervene, this time it was just me and my dog. It was actually a little maddening; I got a little lonely, but in a good way. It's like a jog, when you begin it's a little difficult but by the time you're reaching the end it feels pretty good.

NIC How did the mixing process affect the finished tracks?

GREG Greg Collins mixed the record and I knew that going into the project and it allowed me to throw the kitchen sink at it by recording lots of tracks for each song and allowing him to deal with it in the mix.

NIC Did you sit in on the mixes?

GREG No, if I was there I would end up wanting to do it myself. And Collins is just a better mixer, plain and simple.

NIC You've been very successful with song placements in film and television, what kind of impact do you see from that?

GREG The impact is huge and I'm really grateful. It is rare that I go to a show without several people coming up to me afterwards saying, "I first heard your music on..."

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NIC Take us through the songs on *Take a Bow*, reveal as much or as little as you like...

“TAKE EVERYTHING”

This is a fun song, one of the first times in my songs I’m poking fun at someone being dishonest. I kinda got a kick out of it. It’s a really tongue in cheek kind of song. I feel unaffected emotionally by the circumstances that led up to it. I picked up a four string Tenor guitar, and this was the first song that I wrote with it. The guitar wrote the song for me.

“MY FIGHT (FOR YOU)”

One of the first one’s I started on, I kinda threw it out and then came back to it at the end. I had one of my biggest struggles finishing this song. I kept trying to turn it into something it wasn’t. It’s a song about having no choice about how someone else affects you. It’s a frustrating notion.

“LIE TO ME”

This was an instrumental originally. In fact, an intro to another song and it ended up being the first song I finished. It’s about that time in a relationship that you’re kind of using someone to get through a difficult time, but the good kind where you’re using each other, where two lonely people use each other to get through. Sometimes lying is understood, it’s hard to explain... Those kinds of relationships serve a purpose.

“COME CLEAN”

This is the first time in a song where I’m pissed off. It felt good. I was also listening to a lot of hard rock during that time, like Slipknot for instance, and I think a little of that snuck in.

“AROUND THE BEND”

It’s an old song that I left off the last record because it wasn’t finished. It felt like it belonged on this record. It’s about that one moment in time before you admit to yourself that it’s completely over.

“TAKE A BOW”

I wrote this song to myself. I look back on what I’ve been through and there’s a part of me that’s grateful and proud of myself for getting through it. Also it’s for my friends who told me it would get better one day and I didn’t believe them, but they were right.

“IN FRONT OF ME”

It’s about falling in love with one of your best friends. Sometimes what you’re looking for is right in front of you.

“YOU, NOW”

It’s simple, it’s about missing someone, it’s not about missing someone you broke up with, it’s about missing a friend.

“MARQUEE”

I think it’s the oldest song on the record, it was started about seven years ago and was a little idea that was floating around. It’s about feeling really let down. It’s a bit of pity party, it’s a mystery, it’s about almost being OK with being let down and getting to a place where you’re comfortable with it, being depressed or sad, it’s not good.

“OFF I GO”

This is about taking that last chance on a relationship, on love, even though part of you is pretty convinced it’s gonna fail, but choosing to step out anyway. Falling in love can be quite masochistic. I feel I have no control over it, it’s like running headfirst towards a brick wall, because I think a few of the bricks are loose and maybe. I’ll break through. It’s funny, I thought this record was actually a happy record but now that I’m talking about it, it’s actually not.

“LET IT RIDE”

It’s about drinking. There’s something really romantic about drinking when you’re heartbroken. It’s your best friend for a little while then it starts telling you things that aren’t true—like, you’re getting better. It has a way of slowing things down. It serves a purpose for a while but then it turns on you.

“GOODBYE”

I think I’m most proud of this song, it culminates the entire record. There’s something very freeing and liberating about the time after it’s done. It’s like moving, you dread everything leading up to it...like cleaning up and throwing things out and it’s miserable until you’re in your new place, then it’s wonderful.