

Tim Easton

Break Your Mother's Heart

AutoBio



What the ears will soon have here is my second release for New West Records and instead of having a journalist, publicist, or record company friend write the bio, I figured I would give you the goods myself. After all, I should know best about what went on during the making of this record and what was inside my head when I wrote the songs.

I grew up in the state of Ohio. It's one of those states where the residents often leave to explore parts unknown. You won't find that with Kentuckians, say, or especially people from Maine, but you will find wandering Ohioans wherever you go in this world. I lit out for some time on the road, just singing in the streets from New York City to Krakow. It's nothing to really brag about, just lots of good times and hard times all wrapped up into enough memories to last any writer. Mostly, I tried to learn how to catch people's attention with songs and stories.

When I came back to the States, after a few years of traveling here and there, I joined Columbus, Ohio's HAYNES BOYS and we made a rock and roll record called "Guardian Angel." It was a mixture of mid-west Beatles and blues combined with the story type songs of my flat-picking hero Doc Watson. We toured, we broke down, and we pretty much went nowhere fast while having a real good time doing it. As it is with most bands, different members have different plans about the future and the pasture so in '97 I decided to self-release a solo record I made called **SPECIAL 20**. This led to a publishing deal with EMI that in turn brought me out to LA where I met Cameron Strang of New West Records. Together with Cam, Peter Jespersen and the New West crew, we put out **THE TRUTH ABOUT US** in 2001. Later that same year, we re-released **SPECIAL 20**. And now, almost two years, some hundred thousand miles, and over 300 gigs later we bring you **BREAK YOUR MOTHER'S HEART**.

Basic tracks were recorded in four days using the excellent sound capturing skills of John Hanlon (Neil Young, Beach Boys, Grandaddy). John and I decided to co-produce this record and we put together a backing band of local heavies that would best serve the songs. On drums we were pretty damn happy to have the expertise of Mr. Jim Keltner. Filling out the rhythm section on electric bass we had Hutch Hutchinson from Bonnie Rait's band. On piano and Hammond organ we had Jai Winding, an alumnus of the Jackson Browne camp.

Not one computer was used during the recording of this album. Zero, none. A computer sat darkly in the corner of Cherokee Studios control room with a post-it on the screen that said "see you next year, maybe." We made this record mostly live with my guitar and vocals being tracked in the same room as the band. We were going for more feel than sugar. More mood than strict order. Making

records is mostly about experimentation and spontaneity for me, but there are no accidents here either. This one plays just like it lays.

I added some double tracked vocals and harmony parts where I thought it was needed and also some mandolin, keyboards, and percussion. But I was careful not to over think the process. As Jim Keltner said, "don't get all fussy with it, just go in there and play." Other musicians were invited to add a part or two including Greg Leisz on Dobro for the song "Amor Azul" and Mike Campbell of the Heartbreakers who added a 12-string electric guitar part to "Black Hearted Ways" before I even got out of bed one day.

Mixing and mastering were also wrapped up out west after which I put most of my belongings in a Joshua Tree storage place and resumed the itinerant folk singer lifestyle - something I have more or less embraced. I had an apartment in LA for the last two years but I spent less than a third of that time actually in the state of California. I was fortunate enough to have been on some great tours opening for John Hiatt, Mark Eitzel, Alejandro Escovedo, Cowboy Junkies, and The Flatlanders. I must have driven through Des Moines twenty-five times. Maybe this year I will actually play a show there instead of just filling up the tank.

As this record is being prepared for release, I will mostly be hanging out in my new temporary hometown of Athens, GA. "Why Athens?" you may ask. I just want to spend more time in one place for a change, and this town has way more musicians than politicians. Plus, I wanted to be close to The Tree That Owns Itself. I'm looking forward to playing these songs on the road in 2003. Whether or not I'll be out there as a solo act or with a band is still up in the air. It'll probably be a little of both, as usual.

Either way, take care and keep in touch.
I probably go on at about nine o'clock. Hope to see you there.

Tim

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Tim's song by song breakdown:

POOR, POOR LA

A busy and thorough beginning to this record that also contains the chorus from which the album title comes. I took a trip down to Oaxaca, Mexico where I wrote this and a few others for *BREAK YOUR MOTHER'S HEART*. While there I was reading long time LA resident Eldridge Cleaver's book *Soul On Ice* from which some prison chant lyrics were borrowed for the tune. I was picking out some old Merle Travis chords and then started to strum them faster and in a Joni Mitchell style when I came up with this kind of lovesick ode to LA. In case you are wondering whom I might be attacking here, I should add that as with most cases when a songwriter gets angry, he is usually angry with himself. So, this song is about me ... and LA. Truth be told, I kind of love L.A. but Randy Newman already wrote that song.

BLACKHEARTED WAYS

You can take the boy out of the mid-west, but you can't take the mid-west bar band sound out of the boy. I hope to sing this one at the White House as the changing of the guard takes place.

JOHN GILMARTIN

The first of two songs included on this record that were written by J.P. Olsen (not to be confused with a P.J. Olsson). I've said it before, but the fact is that J.P. is simply an undiscovered treasure of great American songwriting. I'm making it one of my missions in life to promote his excellent work. He lives in Brooklyn and on occasion can be seen fronting the band BURNBARREL where he is busy blowing minds with his simple and beautiful songs.

THE HANGING TREE

One of those breakdown tunes with the acoustic guitar and melody following each other around and around until it takes you to the place from where the sentiment came from: the bottom. Chris Burney (THE SUN) played upright bass on this one. The backwards tambourine at the beginning was something I had done on the 4-track version and just missed so much at each passing during playback. It's quite different to have to flip over a reel of two-inch tape, however, and since it was about 4 a.m. on the last day of tracking I'm lucky John Hanlon didn't string me up after the session.

HUMMINGBIRD

Two chords and a song about bird that is here and gone before you understand its beauty.

LEXINGTON JAIL

The wild card tune and probably the oldest of all the songs. I wanted to track it first because I thought an easy train blues would be a good way to warm up the band. After take one was a train that picked up way too much speed coming round the mountain, Keltner advised me to "sit down and play it like a bluesman would."

AMOR AZUL

I went to a photography exhibit in Oaxaca, Mexico. At the back was a big punch bowl full of a mysterious blue liquid. When they told me what it was called, I simply excused myself to write this song on the stoop outside the gallery. A mangy street dog sat and watched me as the whole thing basically came out in as much time as it takes to sing it.

WATCHING THE LIGHTNING

I was eating breakfast on the roof of a hotel in Seattle the day my last record came out when a friend called to tell me some bad news.

MAN THAT YOU NEED

This is the only track on the record that I played and sang everything on. More of a chant than a song maybe, but it was a lot of fun to do. There's nothing like a creaky old pump organ that's missing a few keys to set a mood.

TRUE WAYS

A little encore for you that Chris Burney and I ripped out in one take. J.P. Olsen wrote this and it reminds me of some kind of "Elvis Costello vs. Nashville" song. "The first cut isn't the deepest, it's only the first." How true.