

## LAURA CANTRELL

"This project feels like a step forward for me," Cantrell notes. "But at the same time, I feel like I'm going back to my roots, making music purely for myself. Delving into these songs allowed me to feel my way through the music and rediscover my instincts."

*Trains and Boats and Planes* features Cantrell's first new recordings in three years, ending a temporary hiatus during which her attentions were focused on raising her new daughter. The new, all-covers collection – available exclusively as a digital release -- adds a vibrant new chapter to the artist's distinctive, deeply personal body of work, which has artfully merged her lifelong affinity for American country and folk traditions with an unmistakably contemporary sensibility. The result is timelessly resonant music that's both personal and thoroughly original.

The British daily *The Independent* called Cantrell "arguably the most vital new country voice in decades," while *The New York Times* praised "the kind of cosmic wistfulness that the best country and folk music can conjure when it dreams of the past." *The Wall Street Journal* described her as "sweet and steady, sneaking up on you with a light touch and a sustained passion." London's *Sunday Times* noted, "She picks great songs to sing, and her clear, understated voice proves the perfect vehicle to convey the emotion-drenched lyrics." *Rolling Stone* called Cantrell "a modern woman with an old-timey heart, with a voice pitched somewhere between the bluesy realism of Lucinda Williams and the vintage femininity of Kitty Wells."

*Trains and Boats and Planes* explores the time-honored theme of travel, meditating movingly on the heartache of separation and loss. Cantrell delivers deeply-felt interpretations of a diverse set of tunes, including her bittersweet reading of the Burt Bacharach/Hal David-penned title track, along with poignant interpretations of Merle Haggard's "Silver Wings" and Roger Miller's "Train of Life," a wry take on John Hartford's "Howard Hughes Blues," a mournful reworking of New Order's "Love Vigilantes" (also included on the soundtrack album of the documentary film *Body of War*, alongside the likes of Bruce Springsteen, Neil Young and Eddie Vedder), and an evocative arrangement of the Gordon Lightfoot epic "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald."

After the May 2006 birth of her daughter, Cantrell found herself making the adjustment to motherhood, and missing the itinerant lifestyle that had become a large part of her musical life since the 2000 release of her debut album *Not the Tremblin' Kind*. Away from the road, she took solace in her band, playing low-key local gigs where they'd work out new versions of travel-themed numbers that expressed her melancholy mood. Those songs would become the foundation of *Trains and Boats and Planes*.

Cantrell recorded *Trains and Boats and Planes* in a series of loose, informal sessions at guitarist Mark Spencer's Brooklyn studio *Tape Kitchen*. The tracks feature Cantrell's live combo, including Spencer on guitar and his former *Blood Oranges* bandmate Jimmy Ryan on mandolin, plus bassist Jeremy Chatzky (whose resume includes work with Bruce Springsteen and Ronnie Spector) and drummer Steve Goulding (of *Mekons/Waco Brothers/Graham Parker* and the *Rumour* fame). The new tracks also feature contributions from noted multi-instrumentalist Ted Reichman on accordion, and rising jazz-pop artist Jenny Scheinman on violin and harmony vocals.

"Recording this EP was very affirming, and it was a real pleasure making this music," Cantrell states. "I love these songs, and though some are a bit melancholy, that was part of the process. The songs allowed me to explore the emotional spaces created by some big changes in my life that had left me unsure of my bearings. And I'd always wanted an excuse to record a Bacharach tune."

The musical depth and emotional engagement of *Trains and Boats and Planes* will be familiar to anyone acquainted with Cantrell's prior work. The New York-based Nashville native's richly expressive musical vision draws upon a deep well of musical and personal experience. Growing up in the country music capitol, she was immersed in the music early in life, and furthered her musical education as a tour guide at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. After relocating to New York to attend Columbia University, she began singing in dorm rooms and coffeehouses, performing with groups like Bricks, led by future Superchunk/Merge Records kingpin Mac Macaughan.

After college, Cantrell moved to the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, where she befriended John Flansburgh of They Might Be Giants, who recruited her to sing on "The Guitar" on the band's *Apollo 18* album, as well as appearing in the video for the song. In 1996, Flansburgh produced and released an EP of her original compositions through his "Hello CD of the Month Club" subscription service.

While she was developing her own musical vision, Cantrell was also gaining considerable notoriety playing other people's records as a radio DJ. After a stint on Columbia University's WKCR, she moved to the legendary New Jersey freeform station WFMU. During its 13-year run on WFMU, Cantrell's Saturday-afternoon country show *The Radio Thrift Shop* became an institution in the New York area—and won an international audience, thanks to online streaming.

Balancing her budding performing career with her radio pursuits and her day job at a Wall Street investment firm, Cantrell released her debut album *Not the Tremblin' Kind* in 2000 on husband Jeremy Tepper's tiny Diesel Only label. The album showcased her original songwriting, as well as her uncanny knack for unearthing obscure vintage country gems and material by contemporary writers. Despite its low-key release, *Not the Tremblin' Kind* won an unexpected level of national attention, earning countless press raves including a four-star review in *Rolling Stone*.

One of Cantrell's early admirers was Teenage Fanclub/BMX Bandits member Francis Macdonald, who released *Not the Tremblin' Kind* in Britain on his Glasgow-based indie Shoeshine label. Cantrell soon became a sensation in the U.K., where she received considerable press and airplay and toured extensively. Her British fans included legendary BBC DJ John Peel, who described *Not the Tremblin' Kind* as "my favorite record of the last ten years and possibly my life," and who would have Cantrell record no less than five prestigious "Peel Sessions."

Cantrell's 2002 sophomore release *When the Roses Bloom Again* earned even more attention, with the artist making high-profile appearances on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* and the *Grand Ole Opry*, as well as being featured on NPR's *All Things Considered*, *Weekend Edition*, *World Café* and *Mountain Stage*, and profiled in *The New York Times*' Arts and Leisure section and *Oprah Winfrey's O* magazine. She won another high-profile fan in Elvis Costello, who stated, "If Kitty Wells made *Rubber Soul*, it would sound like Laura Cantrell," and who brought Cantrell along as his opening act on 17 dates of his 2002 U.S. tour.

Cantrell moved to the Matador label for 2005's *Humming by the Flowered Vine*, which featured contributions from producer J.D. Foster and members of Calexico and Ollabelle as well as her regular band. The album was greeted by fans and critics as her most mature and accomplished musical statement yet, and its release was accompanied by her most extensive roadwork to date, including appearances on Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion* and KCRW's *Morning Becomes Electric*.

Having added parenthood to her extensive resume, Laura Cantrell has her sights set on her musical future, with *Trains and Boats and Planes* pointing the way. "I look at this project as a bridge from the familiarity of my past to what lies ahead," she states. "I'm still working on crossing that span, but with renewed enthusiasm for what's on the other side."