

BEN TAYLOR
(BIO)

Say you're a gifted young artist--someone like BEN TAYLOR, for instance.

You've written a pile of great songs. You've got a way with melody and a mastery of the understated lyric.

You've got a voice that lingers in the air--tuneful, expressive, the kind of voice that makes its impact with the smallest turn of a whispered phrase.

Under normal circumstances, you've got all it takes to make an impression. Some might say you're even a candidate for stardom.

But BEN TAYLOR's circumstance is far from normal. His parents--father James Taylor, mother Carly Simon--are giants of popular music. And with that lineage come the expectations that make ANOTHER RUN AROUND THE SUN a milestone as well as a masterwork.

Of course, there was never any pressure from his family to match their achievements--no pressure, that is, except from BEN himself. He's always kept his standards high--how could he not? And when his sound began to evolve, and invariably it showed signs of influence from those who were closest to him, he found himself at a crossroads that most artists never have to visit.

His choice was whether to deny his birthright, to pack up his music and take it somewhere else for reasons that have nothing to do with the music itself.

Or he could stake his claim on the family land, sing and play the way he wanted to, and against all odds stand as an artist with unique qualities of his own.

It took a while, but with ANOTHER RUN AROUND THE SUN BEN makes that choice--the right choice.

Listening to his album is like slipping into a brand new shirt that feels as comfortable as one you've worn with pleasure before. As you button up and shrug it into place, though, you notice the differences. That

combination of the familiar with the new is the key to appreciating BEN TAYLOR.

"The truth is, the songs I write really are similar to my dad's," he admits. "That's no surprise: I grew up mostly playing his music on guitar, and he was the songwriter who influenced me the most, especially on the musical side, while my mom taught me how to write lyrics."

For years, especially on his earliest projects, BEN resisted this legacy; results were mixed, his first good songs flashing like flares against an unsettled sky. With ANOTHER RUN AROUND THE SUN his method changed. Despite the title, it's not about running; it's about stopping, accepting, and coming up with something that, for the first time, tells where he stands as well as how he got there.

"This album is a natural progression of who I am and what I've been through," he explains. "I wanted to make a record that I could tour by myself if I had to--something I could live with night after night. That's how I feel about ANOTHER RUN, because it's honest. There wasn't a whole lot of me in some of my earlier recordings, but this one is entirely me. It's the most self-accepting thing I've ever done."

Self-acceptance was always a musical, never a personal, issue. Raised on Martha's Vineyard, BEN enjoyed a childhood as "phenomenal in the most absurd ways. Instead of going to high school, I got independent credit for doing correspondence work. So I was always on a trip, working on the Colorado River or in the Grand Canyon or on a farm in New Mexico, and writing essays about what I'd learned. It was a pretty cool way to get an education."

"And it was phenomenally musical," he continues. "I toured a lot with my father, watching him onstage every night, or wondering where he had gone when he locked himself in a tiny room for months upon months until he came out with works of genius. He never played his new music for us until he felt it was impeccable. My mom was at the opposite end of the spectrum: She was always playing her rough mixes because she wanted our input. No matter what time of the night it was, she'd wake everybody in the house to hear whatever song it was that she couldn't get out of her head."

There were other presences too--the uncles and aunts whose music was also a part of America's songbook. "Kate offered incredible sympathy and tenderness. Livingston would come to the house for

Christmas dinner and, no matter what we were doing, play us a 45-minute concert. And Alex was by far the coolest. He taught me how to make smoke bombs out of duct tape and black powder when I was a little kid. I guess he was a little too clever for life, and so he outraced it."

In other words, as BEN puts it, "pretty much everybody who was within a biscuit's toss was doing music"...except for BEN. "For the longest time I just played quietly to myself at home or sometimes for my mom's friends when they would come by," he says. "And I was far too intimidated to even try to write until a buddy of mine put me up for a month in this little house he had on an island in the Caribbean, just to give it a shot."

The plane hadn't even landed by the time BEN had finished his first song; that song, "Surround Me," can be heard on ANOTHER RUN. More followed, played into a tape recorder or scribbled on scraps of paper. By the time he'd returned to Martha's Vineyard BEN knew that he had something to offer.

His inclination was to write well-crafted tunes with strong melodies and intimate, introspective lyrics, just as you hear on ANOTHER RUN. But it took him a while to get there. Signed to the Sony Work Group, BEN released his first album, GREEN DRAGON, NAME A FOX, in 2002. During those sessions he struck up a productive relationship with producers Kevin Bacon and Jonathan Quarmby, whose work on Finley Quaye's Maverick a Strike he'd found especially impressive. Even so, the results of their collaboration left BEN feeling less than satisfied.

"I was trying to make something totally different from anything a Taylor had recorded before," he explains. "Ultimately, that meant I was not putting my best foot forward, and we lost the focus we should have kept on the songs themselves. Certainly, I don't blame anyone but myself for that."

The next album, FAMOUS AMONG THE BARNES (released on TAYLOR and Ciancia's own Iris label) was recorded among the high Colorado evergreens in a barn converted into a studio. Positive reviews greeted its arrival, with the single "Day After Day" earning significant air time in a variety of markets, including England on Radio 2.

Yet even this was but a further step toward ANOTHER RUN AROUND THE SUN, which he would record in London, with Bacon and Quarmby back at the console. "It was a pleasure to work with them again," BEN

says. "On top of being way more competent than anybody else I've met in this business, they are the most elegant gentlemen on the planet. And though we generally stayed pretty true to the arrangements I had created for each song, in some cases they drew it closer to where it needed to be. My immediate reaction was to protective and defensive, but then I'd step away, go down to the pub at the end of the street, have a pint, come back, and everything would be all right."

Between the pints and the songs and the musicians--a mix of friends and family, veterans from sessions with parents and newcomers with history yet to be made--ANOTHER RUN took shape. The earthy dobro and jazzy brushwork on "You Must Have Fallen," the airy liftoff and ascent of "Think a Man Would Know," the autumnal cello woven through the seminal eloquence of "Surround Me"--each song reflects an image of BEN TAYLOR at his moment of arrival.

Before and after these London sessions, BEN stepped up his performing schedule. Highlights over the past three years include appearances on *The Today Show*, *The Tonight Show*, *The CBS Morning Show*, *Last Call with Carson Daly*, and *Howard Stern*. He shared the bill at last year's *Christmas at Rockefeller Center* extravaganza with Sheryl Crow, Michelle Branch, Kelly Clarkson, Josh Groban, Barry Manilow, and other headliners. He's performed on Fox's *Teen Choice Awards* and Bravo's *Songwriters Hall of Fame Awards*, among other specials. He's even made his acting debut, with a recurring role on NBC's *American Dreams*, as Cal, a struggling singer/songwriter who gets involved with Beth Mason (played by Rachel Boston).

There's more recording on the calendar too, though BEN isn't yet clear on what theme he'll bring to the next album. "I just know it's not going to be hip-hop or folk," he jokes.

One thing is clear: Thanks to ANOTHER RUN AROUND THE SUN every note he writes, sings, and plays from this point will be pure TAYLOR...pure *BEN TAYLOR*. And no matter where you come from, it can't get better than that.

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