



Phil Vassar: *Traveling Circus*

Phil Vassar's unbounded energy and limitless talent have proven him, again and again, as one of Nashville's most prolific and versatile stars. His resume boasts six #1 hits for country artists including Alan Jackson, Tim McGraw, Jo Dee Messina, and Collin Raye, and three more as an artist in his own right. He's been named the ASCAP Songwriter of the Year twice and has taken top honors from the Academy of Country Music, *Billboard* and *MusicRow*. Now releasing his sixth album, *Traveling Circus*, Vassar approaches his uniquely piano-based, rhythm and blues-infused, infectious buoyant brand of country music from the back-to-basics school of thought.

Phil bypassed traditional Music City session players and hired his road band to play on *Traveling Circus*. While the band had played on some of Phil's *Greatest Hits: Vol. 1* album, and had become his go-to guys for demo work, never before had Phil used them for a full album of original material. What's more, Phil found that his road band, who contribute so much to the frenetic creative energy of his legendary live shows, were much better equipped to capture his concert sound than hired session musicians would be. With his road band, and friends, on board, Vassar had the opportunity to really get lost in the studio. Free of ticking time clocks, Phil was able to cut several songs, 11 of which ultimately made the album.

With *Traveling Circus*, and especially the closing track "Where Have All The Pianos Gone," Phil enjoys the last laugh as Nashville's preeminent piano man. Co-written and performed with James Slater, the tune laments the lack of Billy Joels, Stevie Wonders, Elton Johns and Ray Charles's in contemporary music, reminiscing how such music "Spoke to me with soul and a melody/The rhyme and the rhythm, I'd sing along with 'em/On my back porch, I carried the torch." Vassar continues to carry the torch throughout *Traveling Circus*, his passion for piano decidedly unrestrained. And at this stage in his life and career, Phil's clearly enjoying himself.

A Craig Wiseman co-write, "A Year From Now," epitomizes Phil's present mindset. Having endured some tough life changes and eventually being able to move past things helped guide Phil's writing. Looking beyond the turmoil of a break-up to "A year from now I'll think about the best of times/And not the love we left behind every time you cross my mind," the song offers a refreshingly positive spin on the loss of a relationship.

Co-written alongside Jeffrey Steele, “Everywhere I Go” echoes that theme. “Even at the end of a relationship,” Phil reflects, “you can always see the good that’s left behind. You’ll look at your kids, and see some of your ex in them, and that’s really a special thing.” Phil’s own daughters, Haley, 10, and Presley, 5, provided the inspiration for “She’s On Her Way,” one of the album’s most poignant tracks. “I remember sitting in the waiting room while Haley was being born,” Phil says, “and this older man came up to me and said, ‘Congratulations. Your daughter is the one woman you’re going to love unconditionally for the rest of your life.’ I could hardly keep from bawling the entire time I wrote this song, because he was absolutely right. No matter what happens, she’s my daughter.”

While not tugging at the heartstrings, Vassar just wants to have a good time. Setting the mood with the funky groove of, “Save Tonight For Me,” Phil makes it clear he’s ready to get down to the business of having some fun. Whether turning lemons into “Lemonade,” forgetting all his troubles in “Tequila Town” or dealing with life’s mysteries in “Life,” Phil’s having a party and everyone’s invited. He definitely has something to celebrate. Firmly in the driver’s seat of his own career, he has perfected his signature sound while venturing into new territory as a songwriter, an artist, and producer.

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