



Buddy Miller **Biography**

Early spring of '26, word came down the road that Buddy Miller had cleared out the kitchen to make room for a drum kit so his friends could stop by and make a country soul record with him.

Well, of course.

Alasdair MacKenzie, who has acquired some expertise in these matters, noted that “country soul” would describe his uncle's entire career. And, anyway, the creative process is a living thing, so the new album is simply titled *Buddy Miller*, and isn't hardly strictly anything...except it's exactly everything his name implies.

A man who records at home isn't necessarily a household name. Here's a quick list of artists for whom Buddy has served as guitar player, backing vocalist, band leader, songwriter, and/or producer: Shawn Colvin, Emmylou Harris, Steve Earle, Solomon Burke, Patty Griffin, the [Dixie] Chicks, the Carolina Chocolate Drops, Jim Lauderdale, Richard Thompson, Lee Ann Womack, The War and Treaty, Alison Krauss & Robert Plant...and, of course, his wife, Julie.

A number of those friends stopped by to cook up something special for what ends up being Buddy's first solo release in fifteen years. Guest vocalists include Shawn Colvin (“You Never Really Get Over It”) and Jim Lauderdale (“Strange Desire”), both of whom go back to his New York country band from the early '80s. The War and Treaty reprise a stunning version of Jesse Winchester's “Lay Down the Burden of Your Heart,” originally worked up for the Cayamo cruises. The octogenarian Dan Penn lends sly gravitas to “Don't Look Back,” Emmylou Harris (along with Larry Campbell and Teresa Williams) join on “The Inner Sanctum of God,” and Lee Ann Womack duets on “Stop Me.”

The core band includes Fred Eltringham (drums, percussion), Viktor Krauss (bass), Tim Lauer (keyboards), and Steve Fishell (pedal steel), with frequent appearances from the McCrary Sisters (vocals).

Together they have made music filled with soul — both kinds — and country. Plus a sprinkling of early rock 'n' roll, gospel, anything that comes straight from the heart.

Buddy Miller is kind and patient, like love is supposed to be, played with understated nuance.

Songs came from those same places, and Buddy will admit to having started with 50-odd possibilities, before the winnowing, which yields: an early Temptations hit, a late-period Dan Penn co-write, and a Jesse Winchester track. Plus the delightful “Till the Wheels Come Off,” which Ashley Monroe, Elizabeth Cook, Angaleena Presley, and Meg McRee wrote about Buddy and Julie. (It sounds, at least, as if a bottle or two of wine might also have been involved.) “The intention was to make a country soul record,” Buddy says, “but then I kept running into songs Julie had written that I wanted to put in.”

So, a record *with* soul, then. Written and performed with an awareness of time, and of its passing. The last of Julie Miller’s five contributions, “Masterpieces in the Sand,” ends in this couplet: “But the greatest works of man/Are just a masterpiece in the sand.”

Which brings us back to the kitchen, originally a Covid choice, an impulse to take up cooking after all those years onstage. We need constantly to be nourished. Good food, yes. And a few songs to go with it.