



## Patty Larkin - bio

Revised July 2013

### PATTY LARKIN

Patty Larkin redefines the boundaries of folk-urban pop music with her inventive guitar wizardry and uncompromising vocals and lyrics. Acoustic Guitar hails her “soundscape experiments” while Rolling Stone praises her “evocative and sonic shading.” She has been described as “riveting” (*Chicago Tribune*), “hypnotic” (*Entertainment Weekly*) and a “drop-dead brilliant” performer (*Performing Songwriter*).

### STILL GREEN

“Still Green,” Patty Larkin’s 13<sup>th</sup> album, plays out in Technicolor sound images, a kaleidoscope of sun and sea that travels from the fluorescent-lit hallways of grief to the warm pull of love, family and nature. This collection of new songs chronicles Patty’s search for relief, respite and solace during a time when she lost both of her parents, and witnessed a sister suffer a serious health issue.

The album begins with “The Best of Intentions,” a song Larkin started before all of these life-altering events, and completed after them. The song is a bellwether for the record, that raises questions of belief and redemption, and leaves them unanswered for the listener. *The man in the hallway is cleaning up grief/While travelers chase after time like a thief/With oversized bags, they wait for relief in the dawn/But The Best of Intentions all get up and leave before long.* “It’s not a quick answer for me,” Larkin says. “I was raised Catholic but once you start to ask yourself what you believe in, things get interesting real fast. What I want to walk away with and what I want to leave the listener with is a sense of hope.”

### THE WRITING

While on tour, Patty was sent a book of Kay Ryan poems. What struck Larkin about the work was how lyrical and song-like the poems were. One morning in a hotel, she read and reread “Green Behind The Ears.” Without thinking, she began to play the guitar and sing the words, resulting in the hypnotic gem on “Still Green.” The honesty and longing of the lyric is reflected in the delicate kalimba sounds and muted guitar work. The chorus opens up all the feelings of the sweetness and frailty that life has to offer. It is a beautiful marriage of music and words. *For it is hard to be green/and take your turn as flesh/ So much freshness to unlearn* Ryan writes, and Larkin sings.

During this period Patty sought refuge in the Outer Banks of Cape Cod’s National Seashore in a weathered primitive one-room dune shack. She brought along an acoustic guitar that she had rescued from the town dump. The large bodied blues guitar evoked the writing of “Down Through The Wood” and “It Could Be Worse”, the first of which makes reference to an oft quoted phrase by naturalist John Muir: “Throw some tea and bread in an old sack and jump over the back fence.” If “Down Through the Wood” celebrates the gift of time, “It Could Be Worse” describes what happens next: *Oh, we’re here again/Where conversation ends/Wondering why we’ve been/Without each other.*

In the middle of nowhere, Patty began to find her breath again. From “The Best of Intentions” to the last strains of “Because of This,” she comes full circle leaving the listener with a sense of hope, strength, and joy.

## RECORDING

When the recording process began, Larkin had nearly 40 songs to choose from. “Hearing the songs again I could hear the emotion in my voice, and in some of them, the anger,” Patty says. “They were hard to listen to. Harder to learn and sing.” She began to record in her studio on the Cape, weeding out what didn’t fit, honing the rest. With basic vocal and guitar tracks in hand, Patty joined co-producer, Mike Denneen (Aimee Mann, Howie Day), at Q Division in Boston. “I brought up my old 1930’s National Steel, 1860’s Martin nylon string, baritone and electric guitars, mandolins, a looping device and gizmos. Mike got me playing the studio’s grand piano, the Wurlitzer and a cranked up Hammond B-3. What I like about working alone is that there’s no embarrassment involved in trying something. I could do anything.”

Patty was joined by upright bassist Joe McMahon, a jazz player with a passion for roots, rock and Dusty Springfield and drummer Dave Brophy, a player who is steeped in the Blues and Roots, pop and hip hop. Cellist and Berklee College of Music professor Catherine Bent added lyrical cello lines to tracks. “I think that the musicians totally ‘got me’. They understood where I was going with this, and met me there. That’s a rare state of grace and I am grateful.

Larkin’s longtime friends, songwriters Jonatha Brooke, Merrie Amsterburg and Birdsong At Morning added ethereal vocal harmonies and Merrie’s husband, Pete, added electric guitar solo on “It Could Be Worse.”

## IN THE END

“Still Green” is a fresh approach to sound and life by a legendary singer/songwriter who is continually turning the stone over. One cannot always change what happens to us in life, but can still discover what grounds us and what connects us to the natural world and those who remain in it. In the end, it is indeed, “Because of This.”

## PATTY’S ROOTS

Patty Larkin grew up in a musical and artistic family in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Descended from a long line of Irish American singers and tale tellers, her mother was a painter, her sisters both musicians. She learned at a young age to appreciate the beauty of the arts. She began classical piano studies at age 7, and became swept up in the sounds of pop and folk in the 60s, teaching herself the guitar and experimenting with songwriting in high school. An English major, Larkin sang throughout her high school and college career, starting out in coffeehouses in Oregon and San Francisco. Upon graduation from the University of Oregon, she moved to Boston and devoted herself to music, busking on the streets of Cambridge and studying jazz guitar at Berklee College of Music and with Boston area jazz guitarists.

## AWARDS

Patty is the recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of Music from Berklee College of Music, where she is now an **Artist in Residence**. Patty has earned an eleven Boston Music Awards and has been honored by Boston's Mayor Thomas Menino with "**Patty Larkin Appreciation Day**" in recognition of her philanthropic Contributions to non-profit organizations.

## FILMS ● TELEVISION ● COVERS

**Evolution** (Film/Dreamworks) "Regrooving the Dream"

**Random Hearts** (Film/Columbia Pictures) "Good Thing"

**Sliding Doors** (Film/Miramax) "Coming Up For Air" "Tenderness on the Block"

**Grand Champion** (**Blue Sky Media**) "Might As Well Dance"

**Men in Trees** (TV) "Wolf At The Door"

**Homicide** (TV) "Open Arms"

**Cher** (Music) "Good Ting"

**Holly Cole** (Music) "I Told Him That My Dog Wouldn't Run"

## PREVIOUS RELEASE "25"

*Patty's previous release, 25, celebrated a quarter century of music making with a 25 song career retrospective reworked with voice and guitar and 25 friends, among them Grammy winners: Rosanne Cash, Suzanne Vega, Shawn Colvin, Janis Ian, and a veritable who's who of singer songwriters: Bruce Cockburn, Martin Sexton, Dar Williams, Greg Brown, Mary Chapin Carpenter, and others.*