

Merilyn said of the main theme of the album, "While it's important to remember things that have gone and passed, we've got to keep carrying on and making new memories, not just reminiscing on old ones."

Merilyn's life, since COVID, has been marked by personal loss and adjustment; most significantly she lost her longtime partner, Michael, in August three years ago after many years of illness.

"We'd been together for 26 years, and it was a huge adjustment because I'd relied on him and he was my rock for so many years," Merilyn said.

Then, after some time, when she thought she'd found her 'knight in shining armour' in another relationship, it ended suddenly.

This emotional turmoil influenced her songwriting, resulting in tracks including *Diamonds And Dust* and *I Wish*.

Making Memories was very nearly titled *Diamonds And Dust*, but it wasn't the feel that Merilyn was after.

"After I'd written all the rest of the songs, I decided I wanted the album to be positive, not something that was a negative vibe," she said.

The other loss that also prompted a song was the death of guitarist-graphic artist-producer Glenn Hannah who Merilyn worked with on her previous album, *Bring It Back*.

Things Ain't Always What They Seem was written as a tribute to Glen, who passed on Merilyn's birthday.

"It hit me hard because he was such an easy guy to work with and his work was flawless," she said.

"Our headspace and creative vision for *Bring It Back* was the same."

Making Memories also covers kindness, new beginnings and happiness.

The first single, *Kinder*, has resonated with listeners and came from Merilyn's observations of global and national issues, particularly the increasing rate of homelessness in Australia.

"There's a silent, dark cloud over our country," she said.

"There are so many homeless people, especially families and women over 50. My plea to people is to be kinder to each other."

We love our dogs in country music and Merilyn has included *My White Shadow*, a tribute to her 12-year-old Japanese Spitz, Gizmo.

"I wanted to write a song for the joy that he brings me, his loyalty, and because, through all the toughest of times, he's been the one I've leaned on, got joy out of, and received unconditional love from."

And, just as our canine friends remind us to live in the moment, a trip to Japan last year, also encouraged Merilyn to enjoy what was surrounding her, inspiring *Days Like This*.

"Walking through the avenues of cherry blossoms made me happy to be alive, and I wanted to remind listeners that, despite everything going on in the world, it's good to let yourself be in the moment," she said.

BY BEC GRACIE



Albums are often described as a looking glass into an artist's life, and **MERILYN STEELE's** latest offering, *Making Memories*, has the whole gamut of emotions and life experiences wrapped up in 10 tracks.

Making Memories, with its light and shade, is an album to be embraced as a whole from track one to ten, as Merilyn takes listeners through the journey that has been the past decade in her life, ending on a fun note with *Position Vacant (P.S. Must Love Dogs)* as a signal that she is moving on and ready to embrace love again.

"The message is for listeners to know I'm back in my happy place," she said.

"For those who are not okay, it's fine to reach out and get help if needed. Don't trust the mask that we all put on; it doesn't help, it's just bottling up things inside which

is not healthy."

The Sydney singer-songwriter hopes to continue to spread this message to more audiences up and down the eastern states and beyond as she mixes her music career with teaching students in songwriting, vocals and guitar.

"Teaching is a chance for me to give back and pass on knowledge and experience to others who are younger," she said.

Making Memories features Michael Carpenter in the production seat and on most of the instruments, with Merilyn on all the rhythm guitars, electric and acoustic, and mandolin, for the first time.



ORVILLE PECK

STAMPEDE VOL 1

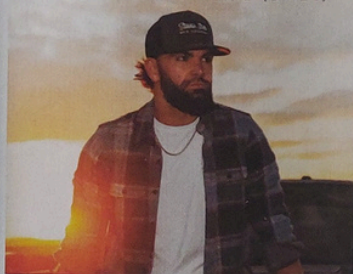
WARNER MUSIC

Daniel Pitout, known as Orville Peck, is a South African country musician based in the United States and Canada – a gay performer who wears a mask. He has released two albums and two EPS, and now he has given us his new offering, a duets album with the cream of the crop guest star line up including Willie Nelson, Sir Elton John, Noah Cyrus Midland, Allison Russel, Nathaniel Rateliff and Bu Cuaron. Some of the highlights of this record are *Cowboys Are Frequently Fond Of Cowboys* with Willie and a great version of Sir Elton's Classic *Saturday Nights Alright For Fighting*. Orville's vocal is what you could describe as a Crooner singing Roy Orbison with a bit of perfect twang, it's a fun album with a few surprises and co-produced by Beau Bedford, Ryan Raines, Christopher Stacey and Orville himself. The album title continues the theme of Peck's releases being named after horses, *Pony* released in 2019 and *Bronco* released in 2022. Released on both CD and Vinyl.

WARNER MUSIC
DARREN ERSKINE

DYLAN SCOTT

LIVIN' MY BEST LIFE (STILL)



DYLAN SCOTT

LIVIN MY BEST LIFE STILL

CURB RECORDS

Originally released in August 2012, *Livin My Best Life* was the second album from award winning country artist Dylan Scott, an album that went to #12 on the Billboard US top Country album chart, now fast forward to 2024, this very much loved album has now become a deluxe reissue of the record, titled *Livin' My Best Life Still*. Featuring six new songs with songwriting credits going to Tyler Hubbard, Brian Kelley, Morgan Wallen, Thomas Rhett and more. The new tracks, *Me and My Kind*, *What I'd Want Mine To Say* and *Heartbeat Of America* stand up in this deluxe edition, plus previously released *I'll Be a Bartender*, *Boys Back Home* with Dylan Marlowe and Scott's current single, *This Town's Been Too Good to Us*. Some might say this is country pop album but it sounds like a soundtrack to his Louisiana roots. Available on both CD and Vinyl, this album is a must for any Dylan Scott fan, or a perfect discovery for any new listener.

SONY MUSIC
DARREN ERSKINE



CJ STRANGER

LIVE AT DASHVILLE
SKYLINE

If you haven't heard CJ Stranger before, this seven-track live recording is a great introduction to a singer-songwriter with a deft touch for parlaying stories and ideas into interesting songs. *Coming Up For Air* is a road trip to ease into a new year after a tough time, while *Outlaw* swings into an easy free-form collection of thoughts couched in a gritty backdrop of sound. *Greed Point* starts off with a cosmic outburst that becomes a torrent of virtually spoken word snatches of his point of view. Sonically the band matches CJ's off-kilter musings and somehow it all works in an alt/country way that is drawing new fans and comparisons to the likes of Dylan, Paul Kelly and a guitar sound likened in part to Ry Cooder. Interesting and worth a listen and you could just find you're drawn in to a cryptic persona that you will find strangely appealing.

BANDCAMP
JON WOLFE



BRIAN CADD

DREAM TRAIN

AMBITION

After catching Brian Cadd's Tamworth Festival show in January, plenty of fans were looking forward to hearing his brand new 'country' album – and they shouldn't be disappointed. Caddie's real feel for country music shines through on the ten songs and the spirit of this great songwriter and performer abounds to please his more rock-oriented fans. The album opens with the first two singles, *You Know What To Say* and *The One That Got Away* before he gets to the nitty gritty with *A Loving Man* and a country re-working of the previously recorded *Hell Outta Dodge*. He touches ever so lightly on the heartstrings on tracks like *All I Need To Know* and *Deep Down Where You Love* and then gets down and autobiographically real on the country blues of *Dream Train*, with pivotal slide guitar work by Kirk Lorange. Caddie says it took him 60 years to make his first country album and co-producer Lindsay Waddington and an A-list of country pickers make it happen with a freshness that says get on board and enjoy the ride.

AMBITION 226
JON WOLFE



MERILYN STEELE

MAKING MEMORIES

INDEPENDENT

Meryl presents 10 self-penned songs that she says are reflections of a life journey and some are dark (*Things Ain't Always What They Seem*) – which is tribute to the late Glenn Hannah; heartbroken (*I Wish and Diamonds And Dust*), joyous (*Days Like This*) and humorous (*Position Vacant - P.S. Must Love Dogs*). The songs truly showcase memories made over the last few years and come out of a life lived and even locked down, as in the Covid time. The title song is upbeat and positive and a call for listeners to go out and make their own memories. The production duties were in the capable hands of Michael Carpenter at his House Studios and he and Meryl take on all the instrumental duties, making for a close working relationship that comes out in the final product. Her fourth album is sure to garner new fans and plenty of airplay from the dedicated community radio hosts who have made her a mainstay on many charts.

www.merilynsteele.com
JON WOLFE