



On the Town

Local Dining, Arts & Entertainment

B SECTION

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Brian Michael Tracy releases country album

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Brian Michael Tracy, poet and founder of Idyllwild Storytellers, has a country album, "Drinking My Tomorrows," set to release Feb. 14. Tracy wrote all the songs with the exception of "Drinking My Tomorrows" and "Last Lonely Train" where he collaborated with local and Idyllwild Arts Academy faculty member Don Reed.

The album came together organically, working with a number of locals including Reed, Barnaby Finch, Kenneth Gibson, Kasaan Hammon, Charlie Woodburn and even the Town Crier's own Jenny Kirchner, who did the album cover photography.

Julie Carpenter is from Joshua Tree. Marty Rifkin has toured and played with Bruce Springsteen. He also produced Tracy's poetry and music CDs.

"I have had a lifelong love affair with all kinds of music," Tracy said.

The album came together during and between the COVID lockdowns.

"The timing was quite interesting. I was writing songs and met Kasaan [Hammon] at a songwriter workshop and we got to know each other," Tracy explained. "I got to know Don [Reed], too. Idyllwild is such a great music community. I wasn't really writing country per se, but I watched the Ken Burns documentary 'Country Music,' which is 14 hours long.

"That was an inspiration for sure and I wrote country-oriented songs from September 2019 to April/May of 2020. I knew Ken Gibson's stuff and he performed at Storytellers. I knew some of his catalogue and we bumped into each other in town. When they lifted the lockdown, around May, I reached out to Kenny and sent him a scratch demo and asked if he'd be interested in producing the album. He was very complimentary, and we started in June, the summer solstice, and finished mixing and mastering at the winter solstice, Dec. 21."

A lot was done in the window between the lockdowns and a lot was done remotely.

Being a poet first, writing his first poem at the age of 10 or 11, he had put poetry aside until his children were in high school. Due to graduate school at Harvard University's School of Design, work and family, poetry had fallen into the background.

To Tracy, poetry was "just a dream deferred, not abandoned, just deferred."

Tracy decided about five years ago that he wanted to write songs and the music just took over.

Hammon was present during the phone interview with Tracy. When asked about the difference between writing poetry and music, Hammon said, "There is a big difference between poetry and lyrics. There are similarities and that is why Brian understands lyric writing. Poets condense down and lyrics are similar but more conversational, like what you would tell your friend."



Brian Michael Tracy releases his first country album Feb. 14.

PHOTO BY JENNY KIRCHNER

"I think that is a good answer, but I have said I always felt that a good poem had some sort of internal music to it, not rhyme, but could be read without stumbling and with an ease," Tracy added.

To sample some of the songs on the album and find out more about Tracy, visit www.brianmichaeltracy.com.