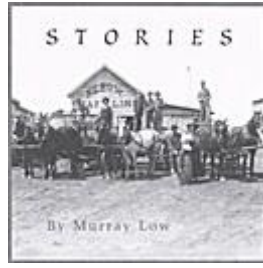


Mp3 Murray Low - Stories



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A story teller. His simple melodies and powerful prose take the listener on a wonderful journey. The music is honest and disarming. His sound is unique, a mix of country, folk, blues with a hint of a celtic heritage.

11 MP3 Songs FOLK: Modern Folk, COUNTRY: Country Folk Details: Murray Low: Stories If you like your music straight from the heart-both lyrically and melodically-Murray Low's "Stories" may be just what you're looking for. A clean folk sound reminiscent of Gordon Lightfoot-with a touch of Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson sprinkled in-provides the perfect setting for Low's highly personal, yet unnervingly universal, lyrics. "Stories" will draw you in: you'll hang on every word of these songs, ranging in subject from love to loss to triumph to grief-and when the CD finishes (much too soon) you'll come away feeling touched by its honesty and uplifted by its optimism. Laura Brown interviews Murray Low Murray, I've known you professionally for years, as a professor at Columbia Business School, but I never knew you were a songwriter. When did this start? Why did you decide to make a record? Well, I'd been writing songs for about a year and had been playing them for friends. I had a big birthday coming and I wanted to do something to mark the occasion. I thought about buying a Hummer, but that's not really my style. So I decided instead to make a record! I went out and bought a really nice guitar and decided to spend the time and the money in the recording studio. I have to tell you this, and I hope you won't be insulted, but I was really surprised by the quality of the music on the CD. I figured it was a vanity project and might not be much good. But frankly this is great music-the songwriting is very moving, and every aspect of the production is professional, including your performance. I had no idea. Is this your first experience with songwriting? Yes and no. I was interested in music as a teenager, and when I was about 17 I wrote some songs-they were pretty amateurish-and I took them to a local producer who listened and said "keep trying, boy." So I've just started again now. So it sounds like your involvement in music goes way back. Well,

there had always been a guitar in the house when I was growing up. But my first serious instrument was the saxophone. As a teenager I had considered becoming a professional jazz sax player and studied it fairly seriously before realizing that I was a very good amateur but a lousy professional and that the difference between a very good amateur and a lousy professional is huge. I decided that probably wasn't the best thing for me. But music's always been a part of my life. I've always had a guitar and played that socially and for fun. Then a couple years ago a musician friend and I were asked to sing at a wedding. He wrote a song that we performed, and that experience really got me started working on ideas. Did there come a time when you began to think of yourself as a songwriter? Well I actually haven't thought about it. But now that you ask the question, I guess I am. After all, I write songs! How did you hook up with the musicians who accompany you on the CD? I knew Dianne and Dave Gunnip, who sing on the record and perform at The Old Long Ridge Tavern near my home, and one day I mentioned to them that I wanted to make a record. So they introduced me to Michael Mugrage, who is a songwriter who's been in the music business for 30-plus years, published lots of songs and had lots of songs recorded by well-known artists. Michael produced the record, and I think he did a great job. He hooked me up with the other musicians who play on the CD, but did nothing to cover up the original sound. What you hear is me. Do you now have professional aspirations as a musician, or does it remain a personal project for you? I think my ambition is to be able to continue to write and record. It's a wonderful creative process to go from a simple idea to a fully produced song to a fully produced album. So I'd love to have the opportunity to do it again. I'm working on some ideas for a new record with a slightly different character, and I'd like to get it out there and if people like it, great. I'm mostly curious, really, about the extent to which it can resonate with people. And now that this first record is finished, I want to do some live performances. It's one thing to play in a band-a lot of "amateurs" do that on the side-but it's quite another to write your own songs and record your own CD. The songs on the CD are personal and apparently autobiographical. Did you have any hesitation about undertaking such a personal project? Were you concerned about what people would think? Yeah, I thought about it, and I still think about it. But I'm a pretty open person and I think that some people will listen to the songs and really connect with them. It has happened. So, do I worry about putting it out there? Well, I wrestle a bit with making such private feelings public. But when you think about it, what is the risk really? If someone doesn't like it they won't listen to it. On the other hand, I know there are people who are moved by the songs. The stuff I write about ---- everybody goes through it. For me, to

really touch someone is a huge payoff, and it's worth the small risk of feeling a little exposed. And I don't worry at all about people being critical of it artistically. I do it for myself. It makes me think back to my decision not to try to become a professional sax player-I didn't want to lose the joy of music by trying to make a career of it. I still don't. So if someone doesn't like my music, that's fine, I'm not playing it for them. I don't feel vulnerable about that at all. In terms of it being personal, most of the songs are autobiographical in some sense. However they are not all literally true. For example, the song "Useless War." I didn't have a brother who died in Vietnam. But I did know people who died there...so the message remains the same. Even though it's not "true" in a literal sense, it's a very powerful anti-war song. Yes. I feel that song is very disarming because it starts with a very childlike melody and images and ends with some very graphic images. I figure maybe if someone hears that song and decides not to go to war because of it, that's a positive outcome. So that's the idealist in me. I was inspired to write the song when I was at the Veterans' Wall, which gets mentioned in the song. And from the Veterans' Wall you can look over virtually at the White House, and I thought why doesn't the President come over here and look at this before he sends people over there? I just can't believe that we're in this stupid war. Your songs about relationships really ring true. Was it difficult delving into this material? No, it was more cathartic I'd say. Many of these songs provided a vehicle for working through various circumstances regarding relationships. My view now is that there is no such thing as a bad relationship-it can always be the inspiration for a new song! There's a sadness to your music. Are you a sad person? No. Well, I'm certainly sad at times, but I'm not a sad person. It's OK if the music is sad, but I hope it's not depressing. I think if you met me in another context, you would find me very upbeat and optimistic by nature. My professional career is all about helping entrepreneurs launch new businesses. That takes energy and excitement. But sometimes life throws you a curve and you have to find a way to handle it. You know the saying, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. So maybe some of these songs are my way of working through a few of life's curves. Actually, I really think these are all songs about hope and optimism. There's a very intriguing photograph on the cover of the CD. Could you tell me about it? That photograph was taken in 1913. The little guy sitting on the barrel is my grandfather. The subject of the song "Wee Willie," right? That song tells quite a story. That's right. The woman beside him is my grandmother and there's a little baby-that's my aunt, the oldest of all the kids. My father is probably just born. The building says "Elbow." The Saskatchewan River comes out of the Rocky Mountains and crosses the Canadian prairie,

and about halfway across it turns 90 degrees. So they called the town "Elbow." My grandfather's first business was a dray business. He wrote a book about his life, which was truly an epic story, as the song relates. I love his spirit. I don't think we make people like that anymore. For a long time I had wanted to write a book about him, but frankly the song format is really more suited to my time constraints right now. I'm very busy with other things. I'm fortunate to have a job that allows for creativity, but I don't have a lot of space for artistic expression. For years I had wanted to write a novel, but you need long spaces of solid time for that. A song is different. You can write a song in 10 minutes, and think about it when you're in the car, picking up the laundry, and so on. I find that once I start, I can't get a song out of my head until I get it down and get it finished. How many songs have you written? How did you choose the ones that went onto this CD? I write pretty fast and probably have a couple dozen songs by now. I sat down with Mike and played him all the music that was finished at that time and asked him to choose the group that he thought would make the best album. So we went back and forth and agreed on a set of songs. Then there is also a kind of a timeline, a personal sequence to the story, and that influenced my decision about which songs to include and where to put them. Say more about that. The first and third songs are about my wife who died. And later songs are about subsequent girlfriends, so there is a kind of journey involved, in terms of loss and grieving and new relationships, and the ups and downs of relationships. And your son comes on the scene fairly early on the album. Yeah, there are a couple of songs about my son. The women in my life come and go, but my son's always there! You mentioned there had always been a guitar in the house when you were growing up. Is there a musical tradition in you family? We were four boys, and we all played instruments. My mother played the piano and my father is musical though he never mastered any one instrument through most of his life. But he's now 90, and when he was 80 years old he found two of my saxophones that I had stored at his house and picked them up and started playing. And now at 90 he's part of a band that tours and plays old folks' homes, and he's in a symphony as well. And he never started playing til he was 80. He's the bandleader and has over 5.000 sheets of music. I wrote a song about him for his 90th birthday. It's not on the current CD. It's called "The Ballad of William R." It's a kind of companion piece to "Wee Willie": the epic story of William R, the 90-year-old sax player. There's a real variety of musical styles on the album, and I think that that's one of its strengths. I was wondering who you would consider your musical influences? That's very interesting, and one of the most fun things for me has been to share the CD with someone and have them say "oh you sound just like..." and they'll

come back with a name, sometimes someone I've never even heard of. It's been flattering. I can think of a bunch of people I have some similarity to. But I also think that for better or for worse it's sort of a unique sound. But growing up, I would say the Canadian folk singer Gordon Lightfoot... Yes, I would have said Gordon Lightfoot right away. Yeah, so that's one. I'm a big fan of Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson. Also, James Taylor has probably influenced my style, but the genre is really storytelling... Hence the name of the album, "Stories." Hence the name of the album, right. There are other Canadians-Ian and Sylvia, and Stan Rogers. And another person who influenced me has been Leonard Cohen. And all of them I think are really storytellers. Leonard Cohen may be more of a poet, but the point is his lyrics matter. One thing that struck me about the album is that though much of the content is personal, it's not self-indulgent, which is always a risk with a non-commercial project. That was one of my greatest fears in sharing this music. With the feedback that I've received, though, I feel reassured about that. To some extent the music has to be self indulgent, because it focuses on personal things, on things I'm emotional and passionate about. But my attitude is that you deal with it, and move on. Take a lesson from Wee Willie. He didn't have any time for self pity! What's been the response to the CD so far? People have been very impressed, except my 11 year-old son who rolls his eyes because he's heard the songs too many times. He actually helped me with some of the lyrics; we'd be working on lyrics while driving in the car, and he'd make suggestions about what might rhyme. But he's been supportive. And he likes the songs about him. Some people have reacted very strongly to the music. They find the lyrics very disarming and heartfelt. I think this is why I've decided to make it available. So what now? Now that the record is finished I plan to start playing out. I'm looking for the right venues and excited about being able to make eye contact with my listeners. In my day job I'm in front of the public a lot. It shouldn't be any harder just because I'm holding a guitar. And I'm starting work on a new record. I've got most of the material written already, but this time I want to perform it live before going into the studio. And I'm experimenting with some new sounds. The worst thing about most singer-songwriters is that they keep writing the same song over and over again. How boring is that?

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