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"I've discovered that I really needed to get beyond certain things that I was taught about happiness," says Patty Griffin. "I was taught to keep my mouth shut and be nice. I tried to follow that way of thinking for a long time. But there's a living hell in that and now I'm punching my way out of it. I'm doing it with my songs."

LIVING WITH GHOSTS , Patty's A&M debut, is about that transition, that moment of self-realization. Through ten songs of inner conflict, Griffin has captured the feelings of living in a complicated world with striking clarity and contrast. From the first choppy chords of "Moses," to the angry sob of songs like "Every Little Bit" and "Time Will Do The Talking," and ending with the gently-stroked "Not Alone," LIVING WITH GHOSTS is an emotional journey, guided only by an acoustic guitar and the beauty of Griffin's voice.

As the youngest of seven children from a struggling family, Patty Griffin thought her dream to become a singer was frivolous, even selfish. But nearly two decades later, this petite redhead with a passionately raw voice finally found the courage to walk out of the dark and onto a stage. These days, holding little more than an acoustic guitar and a repertoire of brutally truthful, haunting and heartbreaking songs that she wrote through years of personal hardship, Patty Griffin has emerged as one of the most exciting singer/songwriters of the burgeoning alternative roots scene.

Born in Old Town, Maine, just outside of Bangor ("If you live in New York, you could say it was the middle of nowhere," laughs Griffin), the singer/songwriter was the youngest of the family, tagging behind her three brothers and three sisters. Her father was a physics/chemistry teacher at a nearby high school; her mother, a descendent of a French-Canadian family that had lived in North America since the seventeenth century, stayed at home and tended to the family. As a girl, Griffin followed her mother as she did housework, listening to her sing. "My mom is an amazing singer," says Griffin. "People turn around in church and tell her so and this past summer, I found out that my grandmother's family used to sing on their porch at night, watch the sun go down and harmonize, so I guess it's in my blood."

Though Griffin's parents discouraged her from singing professionally ("They felt that so often people are disappointed," she says), she was never prevented from listening to music. Her father bought Patty her first album, the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, for her birthday. "I also loved Bruce Springsteen and Rickie Lee Jones," Griffin recalls. "They have been a huge influence, especially in their

lyrical imagery." When she was sixteen, Griffin quietly bought herself a cheap, fifty-dollar guitar and began writing. "I didn't really know I could sing. I just knew I wanted to do it."

After graduation, Griffin traveled a little, living in Florida for nearly two years. "I put away my music for a while," she admits, "but I taught myself about self-discipline down there. Physically, I cycled a lot. I really think that by setting athletic goals for myself, I learned how to apply that same strength to my goals as a musician." Griffin moved to Boston and got married but it was a time of limbo for her. Although she wrote poetry, and played her guitar, Griffin was passing the days as a waitress. Her dreams of becoming a singer had never seemed farther away.

"At the end of 1992 my husband pretty much decided he didn't want to be married any more," says Griffin, with a deep, measured breath. "I suddenly found myself thrown into a new life, in which I had to consider my options. I didn't want to be a waitress forever. I had always thought about myself as someone who could sing, but not necessarily write. But when I looked back over the work I had done, over all the years, my opinion changed. When relationships end you might start out in a free fall but you end up alive. It becomes a lot easier to tell the truth."

Armed with that knowledge, Griffin eventually began performing in clubs throughout Boston. Although shopping an over-produced demo tape, she nevertheless caught the attention of a scout for a major label who asked her to audition. Overwhelmed by her natural talent, he persuaded Griffin to rerecord a stripped-down tape with just her voice and guitar. Six months later, in 1994, she landed a deal with A&M Records and most of that same tape became her A&M debut record.

On *LIVING WITH GHOSTS*, (unconventionally recorded in a room near Boston City Hospital and a kitchen in Nashville), Griffin retains that bare-boned quality that the A&R scout found so compelling, right down to the distant sound of an ambulance that leaked onto a couple of tracks while Griffin was recording in the Boston room. But ask her to explain the meanings of songs on the album, Griffin resists, "My songs come from a place where there aren't words to explain them. It's like when you go to a museum and a guide tells you what an artist was probably thinking. It drives me crazy. I'd much rather look at a painting and feel what's going on in my body." She laughs softly, but assuredly. "It's what I've been striving for in my little quest," says the singer/songwriter, "to make a connection to other people. Hopefully, my music will move them."

Dowoad audio clips: "[Moses](#)" 1

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