

Crow takes Detours on road to renewal

Ken Tucker, Billboard; Reuters Published: Monday, February 04, 2008

Despite the comfort of her surroundings - a warm and tastefully decorated den dominated by a fireplace on one wall and windows that look out over her front 40 on another - Sheryl Crow is clearly not comfortable.

It's not the soon-to-be-solar-and-wind-powered house or the guest that makes her edgy - although she does allow that she'd love to be holding her young son, who instead was being put down for a nap by a nanny.

It's that after a trying three years, Crow is eager to share just what's been going on in her life and what she sees going on in the world.

A lot has happened since her fifth studio album, *Wildflower*, hit stores in September 2005. Her very public relationship

with and engagement to champion cyclist Lance Armstrong came to an end in early 2006, and soon thereafter Crow was diagnosed with breast cancer.

And just weeks before *Wildflower* was released - to mixed reviews and sales well below those of her past efforts hurricane Katrina wrought its lasting damage upon New Orleans and the surrounding area. Crow addresses that tragedy as well as the war in Iraq, politics and the environment on *Detours*, her new A&M album due Tuesday.

But the new set is not just about the past. It also represents new beginnings and the return of an old friend. In the spring of 2007, Crow became a single mother when she adopted a two-week-old baby boy, Wyatt Steven. Just months earlier, in October 2006, she had moved to a 150-acre farm 45 minutes outside of Nashville, in the rolling hills of Williamson County. After living for years in Los Angeles and then in Texas with Armstrong, Crow made the move, she said, to be closer to family. (Older sister Kathy lives in Nashville, and Crow's hometown of Kennett, Mo., is approximately 200 miles to the west.)

The new record also marks the first time she has collaborated with songwriter/producer Bill Bottrell since the two became estranged after the release of her 1993 multiplatinum debut, *Tuesday Night Music Club*. Bottrell said that when the two reunited, "it was like no time had passed. Musically, we still had the connection we always had."

It was on her farm, in a studio she built on the ground floor, that Crow, Bottrell and a small group of musicians created *Detours*. Crow and Bottrell both brought ideas to the table, but much of the album was written as it was recorded, "which is the way we always worked," Bottrell said. "We write and start demoing and the demo eventually becomes the master."

The 14-cut album is a wake-up call for Crow and for anyone listening.

"I wanted to knock on some doors and wake some people up and just say, 'What the heck are we doing?' " she said. "Where did we go? What did we become? We're like zombies in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*."

Whether the new album will enjoy the radio success that Crow had with such hits as *If It Makes You Happy*, *Soak Up the Sun* and *A Change Would Do You Good* remains to be seen. "I'd love to have a hit record (at radio). I really would, but I don't think it's realistic to believe that I will," Crow said. "Sirius, NPR, XM, that's where I'm getting played."

Q: This album was inspired by the last three years of your life, the breast cancer, your son and your breakup with Lance Armstrong, correct?

A: And also what's going on with the war and just taking it all in, trying to levitate above it to get some kind of clear view of what all of it means. I kept coming up with the idea of detours; when you're young and innocent you have this clear picture of who you are and who you want to be and you're very idealistic. Then throughout your

life you go on these journeys away from yourself, which dictate that you come back and readdress where you got off and how to get back. I've done a lot of that, for better or for worse.

For the last seven years we've been on a course away from ourselves in this country. (It's been going on) for a while, but I've never seen it be quite as full-blown as it is now. We are where we are and these things can serve to wake us up, to help us to remember who we are and that there are reasons we are where we are.

Q: Are you considered to be in remission?

A: I'm considered to be cancer-free. The first diagnosis was two years ago in February, so I've got about another year to sweat through it, and then it looks better and better and better.

Q: How did you come to work with Bill Bottrell again after all these years?

A: Just a phone call. I knew I was getting ready to start making a record and I knew I had been through a lot personally and I didn't know exactly what the record was going to be, but I wanted it to have the in-your-faceness of the first record. I'd always wondered what our creative life would be like because we had such a strong creative relationship when we made the first record. So I just called him and I said, "I'm going to propose something crazy, but how do you feel about getting together and seeing what we might do in the studio?" He said, "I've been waiting for this call for years."

Q: What do you hope people take away from Detours?

A: The older we get, we develop this incredible knack of going to sleep rather than experiencing some of the pain. That's the way we function, we create these defences. I know I've done it. I've managed to be very productive even in the worst of times. Being diagnosed with breast cancer, especially right on the tail end of a public breakup, I didn't have a choice but to really experience it and grieve it and mourn it and push through it.

"Watching where we are now, I can relate to it. All these negative things coming out at us - we've perfected being able to just turn it all off. It renders us zombies, or renders us completely paralyzed to do anything, which is a fantastic place to have your country be if you're trying to pull one over (on the citizens). I'm hoping that we're at the precipice now of really waking up.

Q: Do you feel any pressure for your new album to succeed?

A: I don't even know how you could succeed in this market. I don't know what records are selling now, with the exception of the Eagles, which was phenomenal because of how they did it. But I just want it to have some legs as far as it being heard. And I'll never know how many people are hearing it, because I don't begin to believe that everyone's going to go out and buy it.

Q: Do you enjoy being part of the marketing of a record, the part that has you appearing on The View, for example?

A: This record is going to be a different experience. It's one thing to go out there and talk about songs that are personal or that are crafted, but I feel deeply about the subjects on this record, every one of them. I want to go out and talk about this record because I want to create a dialogue. I want it to be a thought-provoking record that people can relate to and will go out and incite some sort of motivating feeling of being a part of something. Let me get on there and talk about it with Joy Behar.