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MC SONGWRITER PROFILE

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Lauren Wood



Essential Artistry from a Celebrated Songwriter

With the inviting intimacy of her burnished voice, noted singer/songwriter Lauren Wood introduces a new collection of songs titled *Love, Death & Customer Service*. "For this record I didn't listen to anything," she says. "I just went within. I said, 'I'm not going to try and fit — I'm just going to do it.'"

Wood, originally from Pittsburgh, has excelled in numerous media. Originally signed to Warner Bros. Records as a part of the band Chunky, Novi & Ernie, she remained with the label as a solo artist in what she recalls as "the really incredible heyday. The budgets were huge. We were flying people in from all over the world to play and sing. No one ever stopped me from any of my artistic urges. And they didn't take my publishing."

Nowadays, records are made in more modest quarters, and Wood has adapted to the times. Her space-age pad in Laurel Canyon houses a studio where much of her latest album was tracked with key players including drummer/producer Peter Bunetta, keyboardist Billy Payne, bassist Larry Tuttle and guitarist Larry Treadwell. Longtime friends like Lindsay Tomasic, Freebo, Stephen Bishop, *The Tonight Show's* Vicki Randle and Wood's cousin, viola virtuoso Novi Novog, all contributed to the sonic festivities.

Wood says the inspiration for her signature vocal style came from when she was a kid, singing in the basement late at night so as not to wake the family. "I try to add a poignancy that you read in between the lines. I want my records to sound like I'm whispering in your ear — the air, and the breathing, my little inward secrets."

The first track on *Love, Death and Customer Service*, "Contradictions," introduces the song cycle. A cover of the Zombies' "Time of the Season" imparts an autumnal aura in contrast with the gorgeous "Cora's Theme," co-written by Wood with composer Randy Edelman for *The Last of the Mohicans*. Wood's lighter side emerges on "Come and Live With Me." Conceived and recorded during the collapse of a 13-year relationship and completed with the inauguration of a new one, loss of family and loved ones shaped Wood's art. "Walk Toward the Light" is an epic celebration of the cycles of life and death, while the customer service of which she speaks is a pointed metaphor for the icy depersonalization of society at large.

In the world of contemporary songwriting, Wood — other than her rare collaborations with Lindsay Tomasic, Jenny Yates or Allee Willis — rarely co-writes. "I just sit there dumfounded. 'You expect me to write something at this particular moment?' I like to write accidentally. If somebody sits me down for a reason, I get pressured. It has to sneak up on me. If it doesn't, I get nothing."

Wood has had cuts with artists like Cher and Gladys Knight and her own Top 10 hit, a duet with Michael McDonald. As a vocalist she sang network themes for *Just Shoot Me* and commercials for Nike, Budweiser and Nintendo. She has penned songs for feature films such as *Police Academy* and the daytime drama *Days of Our Lives*. In between Wood has appeared on television shows, voiced characters for animation and even founded a greeting card company, "Cat Tricks," featuring pictures of her felines.

Of course no story about Lauren Wood could be complete without a mention of "Fallen," featured on the *Pretty Woman* soundtrack — a record that sold a jaw-dropping 18 million copies. "We used to go on eco-tours to Third World countries. On the boat, when I'd sing 'Falling,' dolphins would start jumping out of the water. They must hear something in my voice that tells them I'm an animal lover." People like the song as well. "I can't go to a wedding or a bar mitzvah that the band doesn't play it. I've gotten tons of e-mails from people who were fighting an illness, and 'Fallen' has gotten them through." Wood also confides that she loves hearing the song when she's perusing the aisles of the supermarket, or better yet, the discount clothier, Ross Dress For Less. "Ka-ching! I can buy another t-shirt!"

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