

“This is my most precious project,” says Lauren Daigle. “It's got fun moments, solemn moments, extrovert moments and introvert moments. And I'm just thrilled about taking my songwriting further on this record than anything I've done previously.”

While exhilarating and creatively liberating for Daigle, the two-time Grammy, seven-time Billboard Music Award, and four-time American Music Award winner, the sessions that resulted in her third, self-titled album didn’t begin smoothly. “I started off timid, uncertain – I would even say insecure because of the level of players I was surrounded by,” Daigle says. “But when you surround yourself with people that are better than you, you grow so much more.” And from this growth came songs that at their core, found Daigle expressing her own creativity in a way unlike she’s done in the past.

The result? Magic. Twenty songs to be released in two parts, one in the Spring and the other this Fall. *Lauren Daigle* marks her first release since 2018’s Look Up Child – a seminal recording for the vocal powerhouse. It debuted at Number Three on the Billboard Top 200 Album chart and featured the five-time platinum smash “You Say,” which reached the Top 40 on the Hot 100 rankings and is the longest-running Number One to appear on any weekly Billboard chart. The success of the recording catapulted Daigle onto the global stage – more than a billion streams and years of sold-out U.S. tours now coupled with sold-out standing-room only performances in 14 countries on 3 continents – proof positive of Daigle’s unprecedented connection to her now global fanbase.

After a forced pandemic hiatus, both from the road and the studio, Daigle regrouped. She started taking tentative steps back into making music, working with some of the finest songwriters in the world, including Natalie Hemby, Lori McKenna, and Jason Ingram. “When I wrote with Jason, it was the first time we'd seen each other in three years,” she says. “I literally went into the bathroom, I was like ‘God, I'm begging you, please give me a song, I need something to go in there with.’ Those lyrics were some of my favorite things to come out of me, and that song, ‘Thank God I Do,’ is the first from the album. So that was the start of OK, there's some magic in this.”

The new collaborations challenged Daigle and her artistry. They reinvigorated the native Louisianian and opened a creative door that saw a transformation in her writing style. “Nashville was a place where I felt like I had to learn a new version of myself – but I don’t think that’s bad. I think it was really influential for me to learn areas of myself that may not have been explored. Surrounded by country music, I started diving into the storytelling aspect of songwriting and I fell in love with the intimacy. A sense of wonder was reinvigorated inside of me that I had been longing to tap into.”

As Daigle gathered more songs, several of her collaborators independently suggested the same producer to her – Grammy winner Mike Elizondo, who has worked with everyone from Dr. Dre to Carrie Underwood, Fiona Apple to Mary J. Blige, even co-produced the *Encanto* soundtrack with Lin-Manuel Miranda. But beyond his credits, Daigle responded to something else about Elizondo.

“Mike is so humble,” she says. “He's a dad, he loves his kids, he’s home by seven every night. Mike was just easy. And for this reason, and the way that I was gradually coming into it, I needed someone that knew how to both comfort and challenge me.”

In the studio, Elizondo had Daigle experimenting with different techniques, like speaking, rather than singing, the words to “New,” a song inspired by a friend of Hemby’s, a former addict; “The second time through,” Daigle says, “by the time I got to the second verse, something came alive that I'd never experienced in myself before.”

On songs like “Waiting,” the results were an entirely new sound. “If you could mix me up and put me into a song, this is what it would be,” she says. “I feel like I could’ve been in the era of the Beatles, and it's got that UK throwback feel to it – the way the drums are placed, the backing vocals, never going back to the chorus. It felt like, ‘Oh, this is the sound I want to be known for, I've wanted to sound like this my whole career.’ I didn't have the language for what I was trying to say and Mike fully got it.”

A turning point for *Lauren Daigle* came when Elizondo and some of the writers traveled to New Orleans to better understand the singer’s roots. Hours after they arrived, they were standing on a street corner listening to a jazz band when a car with dark-tinted windows slowly rolled up on them.

As Daigle tells it, “We saw this trumpet stick out the window and start playing in time with the band on the street. He does a solo, and then drives off. And Mike said that was the moment that the record shifted for him, the moment that he was like, ‘Okay, wait, this is a lot deeper than what I realized – there's a lot of history in her from the sounds that she grew up hearing, and we've got to explore that.’”

That heritage came out in various ways, from the brass and wind instruments on the funky “Kaleidoscope Jesus” to the relatable themes of “Saint Ferdinand” (featuring Natalie Hemby as well as Daigle’s friend and fellow New Orleanian Jon Batiste), which she describes as “the story of missing a place while moving to a new place.”

For this set of songs Daigle sought equal representation of “soul – love songs, songs about society and the human condition – and then songs of the spirit, things that are the deep groanings internally, about hope, about longing.” She’s proud of the expansion, in subject and approach, from her earlier material.

The enormous impact of “You Say” (and, really, the success that started with her 2015 platinum debut album, How Can It Be, which produced four Number One songs – “First,” “O’ Lord,” “Come Alive,” and the Grammy-nominated “Trust in You”) resulted in new pressures. “There was a lot of that background noise,” says Daigle, “that chatter like, ‘If you've done it once, you've got to do it again.’ But what it did was solidify the route to music that I hope I always stay on. For me, I've got to stay true to the process, because true authenticity proved itself the first time and I’ll never forfeit authenticity for gain.”

Daigle was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and grew up in Lafayette, singing constantly, absorbing the local zydeco, blues, and Cajun music. She loved pop stars like Celine Dion and Whitney Houston and soul icons like Aretha Franklin, Al Green, and James Brown; at her elementary school, they played “Respect” every morning before the Pledge of Allegiance.

But she didn’t take music seriously until an illness kept her out of high school for two years, and she began taking voice lessons. She planned to enter the medical field and did mission work in Brazil before starting at Louisiana State University, where she would go on to lead the choir and commit to a lifetime in music.

Meanwhile, off stage, Daigle’s The Price Fund, established in 2018, works to provide care for both children and the elderly, as well as those in need. She remains committed to investing her time and actively works to heal through various means, including music education and work with at-risk youth. To date, Daigle has distributed over $2.2 million to 37 nonprofits around the world.

With all her work, Lauren Daigle – one of the biggest, unlikeliest stars to emerge in music over the last decade – is demonstrating her growth, curiosity, and ambition. “I just love life,” she says. “I see it as such a tapestry, a kaleidoscope, and I'm trying to grab as many facets as I possibly can. And hopefully by the end of my life – when I've had 10 or 15 records or whatever – it’ll show the whole picture. That's my dream.”

