**NATALIE D-NAPOLEON**

**YOU WANTED TO BE THE SHORE BUT INSTEAD YOU WERE THE SEA**



The front porch of a historic Californian cottage was the perfect setting for Natalie D-Napoleon to sit down and write her new album - *You Wanted To Be The Shore But Instead You Were The Sea*.

As a singer-songwriter entrenched in the traditions of folk and Americana music, Natalie knew how well a porch can serve one’s muse. So, having spent the past decade living and performing in the United States, the front porch of her home in the Santa Barbara barrio served as a creative sanctuary for her to contemplate the passing world.

“I sat there and wrote and wrote and wrote,” explained Natalie. “Sometimes people stopped and listened to me playing, mainly parents with kids. Guys walked up and asked what guitar I was playing. But mostly folks ignored me and kept walking. I really liked watching the world go by, offering up song ideas, while I plugged away on my instrument and sang.”

Not only did the experience give the singer-songwriter the time and space to write, the outward view served as the perfect muse.

“All my life I've written ‘personal’ songs.” Natalie continues. “I’ve poured my emotional life into music, yet I discovered after a while it burnt me out. It wasn't always a well that was nourishing, but one that began to drain me emotionally. As the songs began to flow, a theme emerge - I was telling stories of women that hadn’t been told before. Women have long been the muse in songwriting - the obsession or the bitch or whore. It’s been a very one-dimensional view and rarely have our complexities been portrayed. I wanted to celebrate that complexity.”

“Second Time Around” is a song about the wisdom that comes with starting over and “No Longer Mine” enthusiastically celebrates the resulting liberty from ending a relationship while “Wildflowers” is a timeless take on a rustic front porch song.

“The songs did not come without work,” Natalie is quick to add. “But this time I decided to feed the songbird within me. I gave her water and seeds as you do to any living creature you want to keep coming back to visit.”

It wasn’t always easy going. A song-writing session in Taos, New Mexico with American folk icons Eliza Gilkyson and Mary Gauthier ended in tears when the latter pushed Natalie to her creative and emotional breaking point.

“Mary suggested a song I played wasn’t personal enough and that I was skirting around telling the story,” she recalled. “I broke down as 25 years of grief and disappointment came to the surface. That night I howled as loud as the coyotes outside our cabin in the New Mexico desert until the early morning. That night I was finished with songwriting,

“But the next morning I picked myself and went back to the workshop. I had dedicated too much of my life to the craft of songwriting for me to give up now. That day I wrote "Mother of Exiles" - a song inspired by Emma Lazarus’ poem at the foot of the Statue of Liberty celebrating America’s embrace of immigrants - immigrants just like me.”

Through that experience Natalie found a poignant poetry in adversity which she channelled into her writing.

“Thunder Rumor” is a haunting exploration of one of the most dangerous time in many women’s life – the time when they decide to break free from an abusive relationship, “Reasons” explores the emotional rollercoaster of losing an unborn child, and the album’s title track, “You Wanted to Be the Shore but Instead You Were the Sea,” is an exploration of childhood trauma and its lifelong scars it can leave.

When Natalie’s songbook was full, she turned her thoughts to recording. A lot had changed since her 2012 release, *Leaving Me Dry* in a lavish Santa Barbara studio with an all-star cast. Her long-time sidekick Kenny Edwards (who for decades was Linda Ronstadt’s leading man) had passed away while David Piltch was back on the road with kd lang.

Natalie and her pianist Dan Phillips soon found a musical ally in producer and bassist James Connolly. Jim hatched a plan to record the songs using a single microphone in a one-hundred-year-old wooden chapel nestled in the hills behind Santa Barbara. The aim was simple - to capture the beauty and spontaneity of a song’s performance when it’s fresh and new.

“Jim and I worked on arrangements,” Natalie explained. “He suggested changing a lyric from a statement to a question which transformed an entire song. We co-opted Lucinda Williams’ long-time sidekick, Doug Pettibone, to play guitar, pedal steel and mandolin and all the pieces of this puzzle we call an album began to miraculously fall into place. We went into the room with faith and trust in each other and damn the music gods delivered.”

*You Wanted to be the Shore But Instead You Were the Sea* is Natalie D-Napoleon’s surrender to music – a place where it’s okay to be vulnerable and courageous, fierce and kind, and to stand your ground yet still be forgiving all at the same time.

***For more information, images and music, or to arrange and an interview with Natalie, please contact Stuart Coupe - coupe@laughingoutlaw.com.au***

