



Larry Gatlin & The Gatlin Brothers

The Pilgrimage

Bio/Album

Profile

There have been many great voices in country music and one golden one: Larry Gatlin. His bell-like tones and soul-stirring vibrato are works of art in themselves, quite apart from the lyrics they illuminate. Of course, Gatlin is equally distinguished as a songwriter. Of the 42 songs he charted between 1973 and 1990, including 17 Top 10s and the Grammy-winning “Broken Lady,” he single-handedly wrote every one, an achievement unmatched by any other artist in popular music. His smash “All The Gold In California” stands as a country crossover classic.

Now, after a 16-year absence from the Nashville recording and songwriting scene, Gatlin and his harmony-singing brothers, Rudy and Steve, are back with a new album, *The Pilgrimage*, on Curb Records. It will be released in early 2009. Its title is a nod to Gatlin’s first album, *The Pilgrim*, which debuted in 1974.

There are other parallels between the two works. Johnny Cash wrote enthusiastic liner notes for *The Pilgrim*, while his son, John Carter Cash, did the same for *The Pilgrimage*. The younger Cash also produced updated versions of two songs from *The Pilgrim* that his father specifically praised in his notes, “Penny Annie” and “Sweet Becky Walker.” Kris Kristofferson and Rita Coolidge sang harmony on the original “Sweet Becky Walker.” Gatlin’s daughter, Kristin, named in honor of Kristofferson, provides harmony for the newly recorded version.

Given Gatlin’s track record, it’s evident why every cut on *The Pilgrimage* is a carefully polished gem. “Johnny Cash Is Dead (And His House Burned Down)” is a rip-roaring hosanna to the Man in Black. “Black Gold,” a co-write with Leslie Satcher, is a moving homage to Gatlin’s oil-field worker father. “Say Nashville (Wadda Ya Say)” is a fence-mending peace offering to the town Gatlin now acknowledges as his “home away from home.”

Fans will recognize the Larry Gatlin they first fell in love with in such love-and-parting epics as “Somebody Like Lucy,” “Come Back To Texas,” “Steady As She Goes,” “If I Ever See Utah Again,” “It’s Not Your World You’re Painting Blue” and “The Trouble With A Love Song.” As always, the lyrics are exquisitely sculpted and the melodies emotionally transporting.

Terry Choate, a key member of the Capitol Records team that launched Garth Brooks, produced most of the songs for *The Pilgrimage*, including an absolutely killer duet between Gatlin and Lari White of Gatlin's 1978 hit, "I've Done Enough Dyin' Today." Satcher and Doug Johnson, who produced hits for Steve Holy, Doug Stone and Hank Williams Jr., contributed additional tracks.

Admitting that his "feelings were hurt" by the shifting tastes in country music during the early 1990s, Gatlin moved from Nashville to Austin in 1992, declaring that he and his brothers would no longer tour or concentrate on recording. That same year he won the lead role in the Broadway production of *The Will Rogers Follies* and earned critical hurrahs throughout the play's nine-month run.

In the meantime, Gatlin and his brothers lent their name to a musical theater in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and agreed to perform there for 25 weeks each year. That arrangement would have allowed Gatlin to continue acting and to spend family time in Austin. He soon discovered, however, that the theater deal would work only if the Gatlins performed there virtually year-around. The decision to do that cost Gatlin two starring Broadway roles, but it kept him and his brothers in the musical spotlight for the next five years.

When the Myrtle Beach phase ended, the Gatlins took their show to the entertainment complex in Branson, Missouri. They also went on the road occasionally for special concert appearances. Ultimately, Gatlin decided to return to the city where he'd had his greatest musical triumphs—Nashville.

"It took me being 16 years away to realize how much I loved that place," Gatlin muses. He credits Mike Curb, the music-loving and entrepreneurial owner of Curb Records, with seeing the potential of a newly energized Larry Gatlin & The Gatlin Brothers. "We are *supposed* to be doing this," Gatlin contends. "I really believe it's our time...our season."

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