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 $A new album by the singer-song writer \ Lucinda \ Williams \ is \ coming \ in \ June, \ and \ she \ has \ written \ a \ memoir, "Don't \ Tell \ Anybody \ the \ Secrets \ I \ Told \ You."$

Lucinda Williams Shares Tales and Fears



The singer writes about her father, her insecurities and poets on motorcycles.

By PENELOPE GREEN

poets on miotorcycles.

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NASHVILLE —"Bless your heart!"
Lucinda Williams delivered the Southern benediction in her distinctive drawl. She has a memoir coming out soon, and Ms. Williams, the cleibrated singer-songwriter who has been compared to Raymond Carver for the actuly of her work, was not too sure about this particular literary endeaver. So when a visitor complimented out of the control of the contro

drenched in raw grit and soul and vulnerability."

Steve Earle, Ms. Williams's occasional collaborator and old friend, described if this way over Zoom: "Have you ever been if a far South when the gardenias start to bloom? There's a moment when the scent just permeates everything and there's a viscosity to it and it's substantial and that's what her voice has always reminded me of. There's an automatic atmosphere. Chet Baker was like that. Merie Haggard. The mood happens as soon as they open their mouths."

mouths."

Ms. Williams, 70, and her husband, Tom Overby, who is also her manager and collaborator, live in a white clapboard bungalow with a peaked roof, gingerbread trim and a neat square of lawn. They moved to East Nashville from Los Angeles in February 2020, after which came a series of blows: the tornadoes that tore through the city in early March, flatening neighborhoods and shearing off part of their roof; the coronavirus pandemie, which shut things down a week later; the Covid death of her dearfriend John Prine; and the stroke, which bludgeoned her in November.

The house was sparsely furnished with a pair of velvety solss, metal shelves and storage containers spiling over with books, containers spiling over with books, or the strong with the containers of the spiling over with the containers of the spiling over with books. On the kitchen island, a bright yellow yease was filled with yellow button flowers. The gray walls were bare, save for a white board that proclaimed; "LuS Schedule, Today is the first day of the rest of your life."

"I have a bit of brain fog from the stroke, "Ms. Williams said, nodding at the board, "dates and days and such, bu! I think I always had that."

Mr. Overby, a loquaclous man with bushy Ms. Williams, 70, and her husband, Tom

ways had that."
Mr. Overby, a loquacious man with bushy gray hair, rolled his eyes in assent. He's the memory in the marriage, she added.
In "Don't Tell Anybody the Secrets I Told

You," Ms. Williams writes of her decades playing for tips and spaghetti dinners and the perfidy of the record companies that didn't know how to characterize her roots-to the perfidy of the record companies that didn't know how to characterize her roots-to do with this," she said she was told over and over again. "It's too country for rock and too rock for country." It was somehow fitting that a British independent label, Rough Trade Records, signed her for her 1988 album, "Lucinda Williams."

She writes of the Hollywood director hired to make a video for "Right in Time," the languid baild about a woman's desire from the "Car Wheels" album. As she remon the "Car Wheels" album. As she remone the she was to the she will be shorted was in the bathroom. When she found his idea for the video corny, she see thin impacting. She goes on totell the story of the six-year odyseey to get the album made — the setbacks caused by vacillating record company executives and her dogged commitment to her own and her

Williams said. Othering around people with money and nice teeth or whatever."

She managed to make it to the Grammy ceremony in 1999, when "Car Wheels on a Gravel Road" was honored as the year's called, she found herself walking away from the stage. Mr. Earle, who was up for the same award, yelled out to her, as she told it: "Luil You're going the wrong way!" I was horrified. God. Thanks, Steve!"

"Lucind as one of the great geniuses of popular music, so how could she have struggled?" Ann Powers, a music critici for NPR, said. "A lot of it is personal and a lot of it is structural. The dynamic of how to corral a bunch of guys was complicated; it still is, but even more so then when women were relatively sparse in rock in Toll circles."

It can be hard for bandleders like Ms. Williams to be the only woman in the room. Ms. Raitt called it the problem of 'women's voices,' which "hits the mom button" for many men. Ms. Toll circles."

Ms. Raitt called it the groblem of 'women's voices,' which "hits the mom button" for many men. Such and the stage of the production of the productio

In any case, in addition to earning a Grammy, "Car Wheels" hit the Billboard charts, a first for Ms. Williams, and went charts, a first for Ms. Williams, and went with the Billboard charts, a first for Ms. Williams, and went with grant of the record producer Joe Boyd called It. "the Blonde on Blonde' of the 1990s," referring to Bob Dylan's canonical record.

As Ms. Williams's fame grew, so did the dedication of her fans. She writes of the woman who began masturbating at a show in New Orleans and kept at it even as she was removed by security. (When Ms. Williams and her band heard the story after their set, they were fascinated, as she recalled: "Was she wearing pants? How did it work?") There was the couple that sent her extended the sobriety to Ms. Williams, had one of her songs tattoode in its entirety on his back. Then there are those who have sent her letters saying how much they appreciate "Sweet Old World," her mournful lament for someone who died by suicide.

Ms. Williams was born in Lake Charles, La, and grew up in New Orleans, Mexico and Chile, with stopovers in towns in Mission of a Month of the Charles of the Mission of a Month of the Charles of the Mission of a Month of the Charles of the Mission of a Month of the Charles of the Mission of a Month of the Mission of a Month of the Mission of a Month of the Mission of Mis

heard "Car Wheels," which paints a picture of tense domesticity and a peripatetic family life. Her mother, Lucille, a thwarted planist, was also the child of a minister, and she shall be the cated with alcohol. Lucinda and her siblings were raised mostly by their father and stepmother, his former student and the family's babysitter. (Awkward at first, Ms. Williams notes in the book.)

Theirs was a bothemian academic household, imprinted by the politics of the era. Mr. Williams was the host of a bibulous literary salond, imprinted by the politics of the era. Mr. Williams was the host of a bibulous literary salond that included Charles Eukowski, the salond the control of the

not yet know." the audience roared with laughter.

There is some dispute about who proposed to whom. Ms. Williams claimed it was Mr. Overly, in hier recollection, he turned to her during a tour and asked if she wanted to go shopping for diamonds ad. "We were on the bus and out of nowhere yea, So when are you taking me shopping for diamonds?"

Ms. Williams: "I did?"

Mf. Overly you likel it."

Mf. Overly organized a trip to a jewelry store owned by friends in Omaha, but Ms.



Top, Lucinda Williams outside her house in Tennessee. Right, Ms. Williams performing with her friend Steve Earle at Town Hall in New York in 2007. Below, Ms. Williams onstage at the Palomin Club in Los Angeles.

slower gait but a voice largely unaffected.



Williams was so nervous she couldn't get off the bus until just before the store closed. When she saw the array of rings, she panicked. They tried again the following year, and again she was flummoxed. Years later, they bought rings in Los Angeles — and Ms. Williams promptly lost them, her husband said. "Misplaced them," she said, correcting him. The couple may not be the best jewelly collaborators, but they have worked nicely in the studio on Ms. Williams sew album, "Stories From a Rock "r Roll Heart," out in June. As they did in their homage to John Prine, which they wrote after he died of Covid. Ms. Williams performed it last year at tribute to him. It tells the story of a night long ago when Ms. Williams and Mr. Prine thought they might write a son goegher. They spent many jolly hours careering from the studio own to the task.

John and me were going to get together.

John and me were going to get together And write a song one time Got about as far as the midtown bar And ordered up a bottle of wine What could go wrong, working on a

Then we got to talking, not looking at the

time
Telling stories about folks we know
Had another bottle of wine
We were having fun
What could go wrong?