

# Lucinda Williams

## ‘I’m Going to Lose Some Fans With This Album, but to Hell With It’

■ By Chris Willman

**LUCINDA WILLIAMS** AND the blues go back 40 years to her second release, 1980’s “Happy Woman Blues,” but it took until 2020 for her to truly embrace the style in an electrified, garage-y kind of way. Her new album, “Good Souls Better Angels,” is as raw and hard-rocking a studio effort as she’s made, thanks to the fact that she cut it on the quick with her touring band and co-producers Ray Kennedy, a guiding light behind her 1998 classic “Car Wheels on a Gravel Road,” and Tom Overby, her husband and manager. Williams spoke with *Variety* from her new home in Nashville, the city to which she recently returned after decades in Los Angeles.

**STRIPPED-DOWN SOUND**

Lucinda Williams’ “Good Souls Better Angels” has a raw, hard-rocking vibe.



**This feels like your hardest-edged, bluesiest album. Do you feel that way about it?** Yeah, this is really kind of the album I’ve always wanted to make. I love the grungy sound of the blues thing. With a lot of the songs I’d be playing a 1950s guitar going to a 1950s amp. I wanted to bring some people in to do some harmony and add this and that, but everybody said, “We should just leave it like it is.” It gives it that certain garage-rock sound.

**Did you have any doubts about putting the album out now?** Somebody I was talking to said this is exactly the right time to put this album out, because of the pandemic and because of the [troubled] nature of the songs. “Man Without a Soul” was the first song people heard off the album, and everybody’s reaction was like, “This is exactly how I felt. Thank you, this really helped.” People are asking me things like, “Well, how did you know?” like it feels prophetic.

**Connecting “Man Without a Soul” with Trump isn’t a stretch.** I guess, but it’s really just kind of about that type of person. In fact, Tom was like, “Don’t tell everybody it’s about Trump!” And I go, “I’m not — everybody’s telling me!” [Laughs.] Then he goes, “Well, it doesn’t have to be about Trump. It could be about Mitch McConnell too.” It’s kind of like: Pick one. When we posted that song to Facebook along with an article that came out in *The New York Times* called “Has Anyone Found Trump’s Soul?,” all these hate comments came up. “I was a fan of hers before, but not anymore.” I guess I’m going to lose some fans with this album, but to hell with it.

**“Wakin’ Up” is about domestic abuse. Had you wanted to write about that for a while?** It was about this relationship that I was in that I’d actually touched on in a couple of earlier songs, “Jailhouse Tears” and “Buttercup,” which were more humorous. But I needed to get this song out of my system — there was obviously some anger. It’s hard to admit that you were stupid enough to get involved with somebody like that. This guy was like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. I, like a lot of other people, used to think, “Oh, it’s a certain kind of woman who gets stuck in something like that.” But no — I’m smart, I’m aware and it happened to me. My bass player goes, “Lu, be prepared to talk about this if you put it on the album.” But it needs to be out there. 🚫

**THINGS YOU DIDN’T KNOW ABOUT LUCINDA WILLIAMS**

**AGE:** 67 **BIRTHPLACE:** Lake Charles, La. **BRANCHING OUT:** Recently released a nine-minute song for the closing credits of Netflix thriller “Lost Girls” **IN MOURNING:** She’s grieving the death of Hal Willner, who produced her 2007 album “West,” and with whom she’d recently reunited to cut a track for his still-unreleased T. Rex tribute collection