



Hiss Golden Messenger – *Quietly Blowing It* Biography

“I went looking for peace,” says songwriter M.C. Taylor of **Hiss Golden Messenger** about his new album *Quietly Blowing It*, out March 26, 2021, on Merge Records. “It’s not exactly a record about the state of the world—or *my* world—in 2020, but more a retrospective of the past five years of my life, painted in sort of impressionistic hues. Maybe I had the presence of mind when I was writing *Quietly Blowing It* to know that this was the time to go as deep as I needed to in order to make a record like this. And I got the time required in order to do that.” He pauses and laughs ruefully. “I got way more time than I needed, actually.”

Quietly Blowing It was written and arranged by Taylor in his home studio—his 8’ x 10’ sanctuary packed floor to ceiling with books, records, and old guitars—as he watched the chaotic world spin outside his window. “Writing became a daily routine,” he explains, “and that was a ballast for me. Having spent so much time on the road over the past ten years, where writing consistently with any kind of flow can be tricky, it felt refreshing. And being in my studio, which is both isolated from and totally connected to the life of my family, felt appropriate for these songs.” Between March and June, Taylor wrote and recorded upwards of two dozen songs—in most cases playing all of the instruments himself—before winnowing the collection down and bringing them to the Hiss band. In July, the group of musicians, with Taylor in the production seat, went into Overdub Lane in Durham, NC, for a week, where they recorded *Quietly Blowing It* as an organic unit honed to a fine edge from their years together on the road. “We all needed to be making that music together,” he recalls. “We’ve all spent so many years traveling all over the world, but in that moment, it felt cathartic to be recording those particular songs with each other in our own small hometown.”

Throughout *Quietly Blowing It*, Taylor brings his keen eye to our “broken American moment”—as he first sang on Hiss Golden Messenger’s critically acclaimed, GRAMMY®-nominated *Terms of Surrender* (2019)—in ways that feel devastatingly intimate and human. Beginning with the wanderer’s lament of “Way Back in the Way Back,” with its rallying cry of “Up with the mountains, down with the system,” Taylor carries the listener on a musical journey that continually returns to themes of growing up, loss, obligation, and labor with piercing clarity, and his musical influences—including classic Southern soul and gospel, renegade country, and spiritual jazz—have never felt more genuine. Indeed, *Quietly Blowing It* is a distillation of the rolling Hiss Golden Messenger groove, from the rollicking, Allman-esque “The Great Mystifier” to the chiming falsetto soul of “It Will If We Let It,” to the smoky, shuffling title track with its bittersweet guitar assist from Nashville legend Buddy Miller. The album ends with soulful lead single “Sanctuary,” a song about trying to reconcile tragedy and joy, with references to John Prine (“Handsome Johnny had to go, child...”), economic disparity, and the redemptive quality of hope. Indeed, when he sings, “Feeling bad, feeling blue, can’t get out of my own mind; but I know how to sing about it,” it feels like the album’s spiritual thesis. Throughout *Quietly Blowing It*, Taylor reckons with the tumultuous present in wholly personal terms, encouraging listeners to do the same. “These songs always circle back to the things that I feel like I have a handle on and the things that I’m not proud of about myself. When I think of the phrase ‘quietly blowing it,’ I think of all the ways that I’ve misstepped, misused my gifts, miscommunicated. ‘Born on the level, quietly blowing it.’ That’s what’s on my mind there. Always fuckin’ up in little ways.”

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