

Madeleine Peyroux Sought 'Truth, Justice and Love' in America. Did She Find It?

The jazz-folk singer takes a hard look at herself and the country on her new album *Let's Walk*

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Madeleine Peyroux challenged her own ignorance on the new album 'Let's Walk.'

Madeleine Peyroux doesn't have a television or a radio at her home in New York, but she still can't help feeling inundated by politically charged news, ads for hygiene products, and even the loud music from cars passing by.

"We're being bombarded by so much stuff, all the time. I can't even hide inside my own house," the jazz-folk singer tells *Rolling Stone*.

But Peyroux didn't allow all that stimuli to suppress her creativity. Rather, she let it foster it and guide her toward some challenging issues, resulting in her latest album *Let's Walk*. Her first full-length record in four years, the album amplifies the jazz stylings on which she built her career, but unlike past efforts, which included a regular dose of cover songs, from Bob Dylan to Leonard Cohen, *Let's Walk* is 100 percent Peyroux.

Peyroux co-wrote all 10 tracks with three words as her mantra: truth, justice, and love. The songwriter latched onto the phrase after hearing the activist Cornel West use it as a slogan of his 2024 presidential campaign.

“There is something very powerful about those three words, and the presentation of yourself as somebody that believes in those three words,” she says. “With this record, I don’t want to convince individual people of that for my sake, but I want to be able to say something clearly along those lines, that this is what I believe.”

Among the tentpoles of Peyroux’s beliefs is an end to violence and racism. She addresses both in the album standout “How I Wish,” a song written about the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery in 2020.

“There’s a lot of different ways to look at race in America and to look at our social situation, but I didn’t hear any of the conversations that I think deserve equal time,” she says of the song, which imagines countering “each heinous act” of American history “to which I’ve been a part” with tenderness.

Born in the U.S. but raised in Paris, Peyroux has a particularly informed view on the cultures of the U.S. and France. But she refuses to view one as superior.

“We’re all the same. Some things are worse there and some things are worse here. The quality of life is worse here, but there’s more people here. We’re more of a third world country than we realize,” she says. “We don’t know ourselves in this country. And a lot of us refuse to talk about it. I see myself as being very ignorant, or at least looking the other way, in the sense that I haven’t been engaged civically.”

In “Find True Love,” a mental and musical journey to New Orleans, Peyroux challenged herself to look inward and confront hard truths. “I promise to be open to feel joy and pain/the only way to make a life is to fail and try again,” she sings.

In a statement that accompanied *Let’s Walk*, Peyroux said the ideas in “Find True Love” allowed her to “imagine a place where I can become a better me.”

So, did she?

“I only find that place when I perform,” she admits. “It’s in the process of being in that transient moment that music brings me to, that allows me to really appreciate life. But that song is very dear to me. For months, I was singing the phrase, ‘Let’s go down to the bayou/and eat, pray, love,’ because I didn’t know what other way there could be to say that concept.”

She found it in “truth, justice and love,” and now proudly wears those words on a T-shirt when she’s walking around New York.

“A guy just stopped me in the street yesterday,” Peyroux says.

“‘Truth, justice, and love...I like that,’ he said. And I said, ‘Yeah, I do too.’”