

## The Damon Castillo Band *Laurel Lane* Biography

To the Damon Castillo Band, Laurel Lane is more than a studio on a street near some old train tracks in the hills of San Luis Obispo, California. It is home. Strewn with vintage amps, guitars, keyboards, and recording equipment acquired piece-meal over the last five years, it is the hearth that has beckoned, soothed, and housed the band through life's ups and downs. Like the place that has been described as everything from a boxing ring, to a church, to a hideout, their most recent album, *Laurel Lane*, is an emotional autobiography that contains a band's history within its walls.

It was clear from the beginning that their path is not an ordinary one. Combining the talents of Kristian Ducharme on keys, and Larry Kim on saxophone, Joe Duran on bass, and Abraham Robles on drums, with Damon's prolific songwriting, vocals, and guitar chops, the band creates a sound that is a statement among this day of manufactured music. Each member is a musician with a diverse past playing jazz, funk, rock, and soul. Their prowess comes through on every note, dynamically punctuating Damon's soulful lyrics, at times mournful, and often larger than life.

Damon describes their process of making their unique sound as "distilling" it down. "The guys and I don't care about genres or style lines...It's nothing that I consciously maneuver; I just try to make it feel right." More than anything, the record is a throw-back to the old days, when artists played their own music in a studio and created songs that were enjoyable not only for their passion, but also for their honesty.

Yet if the talent is the body of the work, it is the story of the band that is the soul. Rife with strife, but unapologetically optimistic, the 13 tracks are a narrative of life with all the grey areas of love and emotion in between. *I Know You Know* is a dialogue with the band's friend and founding bassist, Matt Taylor, who passed away from cancer in 2002. *Close Call* describes another brush with death when their tour van flipped five times on the freeway while on tour. Damon retells the event and how such instances carve their way into his art:

*The scene was littered with glass and band equipment, so we went to work salvaging our gear as the paramedics arrived. That's when I had one of those life-defining moments. I found my vocal microphone out in the middle of the freeway, and I knew right then that music was what I was supposed to be doing. The mic still works; I sing on it every show.*

*Claim to Fame* illustrates that realization beautifully, celebrating success already obtained simply by being true to yourself and your music. This included the opportunity to forge new relationships with some amazing musicians who have special appearances on the record, such as Sheila E., Rami Jaffe (Wallflowers, Foo Fighters), Lee Thornburg (Tower of Power, Supertramp), Lon Price (Elvis Presley, Alan Toussaint, Ziggy Marley) and Sean Hurley (Alicia Keys, John Mayer). In addition, working with Grammy Award-winning producer Ross Hogarth proved that despite all of the creative forks in the road, their chosen path did indeed lead to an extraordinary place.

The Damon Castillo Band is currently working on their follow up to *Laurel Lane* right now, and expect to release it in early 2012!