

## FINDING HIDDEN COUNTRY

Contemporary country singer/songwriter Lucky Mays had been living inside of Luciano Maes for decades, waiting for his opportunity to step into the spotlight. In 2018, Maes' alter ego sprang forth and took center stage, leveraging a lifetime's accumulation of experience, both musical and technical. Within a year, Mays produced an excellent album of artful, bittersweet originals, eponymously titled and released last November, along with an eye-catching logo, a website, and the first of what will likely be many well-produced music videos.

Coming from a musical family, which

includes his uncle Pete Laumbach, the Western swing icon, Maes has always had music in his life. His mom encouraged him to write his first song at age three or so to commemorate the death of a chick. "When I wrote that song, I kind of felt better," he says. "It was a way to express myself."

The Albuquerque native and multi-instrumentalist has been expressing himself musically ever since, heading off to The Musicians Institute in California after high school. On returning to Albuquerque, he opened a recording studio, The Monastery, with his cousin Steve Maes. When the demands of a growing family required a steadier income, he parlayed his technical expertise into a career in IT and began

equipping a home studio. Through it all, he's been writing and promoting his songs, scoring films, including Steve Maes' *Caffeine and Gasoline*, and helping others produce their music.

In October 2018, when his son Luca was preparing to enter the Marines, Maes wanted to have a family get-together to send him off, but Luca did not want a party. "I said, what if I put together a band, and we could do this little show?" says Maes. Luca gave the thumbs-up. "I started looking at my catalog, the songs I'd written over the years—and there's a

bunch, hundreds of songs that I've written that haven't been released—and I started seeing this group of songs that kind of came together," says Maes. "They were very traditional, country tinged and inspired."

That's when Lucky Mays took control, recording the songs in the cozy home studio and playing most of the parts himself, with help from guitarist Bryan Davis. Mays reached out to Tim Pierce, a GRAMMY-winning session guitarist in Los Angeles and an Albuquerque native, and asked if he would recommend some musicians who might be interested in adding their talent to the project. That led to Tim McGraw's guitarist, David Levita, who agreed to collaborate on a couple of tracks. Similarly, Mays recruited renowned Nashville guitarist R.J. Ronquillo and pedal steel wizard Alex Cordell on several other tracks.

"From the dream of having something complete to actually releasing it was a year," says Mays, who acknowledges two motivations for investing so much time, money, and sweat into the project. "I think part of it was wanting to show myself that I could do it because I had all this material, and it's always been my life work," he says. "But I also felt compelled to do it to show my kids that if you really do want to do something and you have a dream, you're going to find a way to make it happen."

And happen it has. Mays has pulled together a band for live performances, including Davis (guitar), Emmanuel Catanzarita (guitar, keyboard), John Eichleay (pedal steel), Matt Kletecka (bass), and Dustin Hoag (drums), with Ashleigh and Kayleigh Maes on background vocals. He's engaged in promoting the songs to the world at large, both as an artist and as a songwriter. "I'm looking for publishing deals," he says. "I'm looking to get songs placed with other artists or to get these recordings placed in things like films and commercials." Meanwhile, he's already working on the next album.

Keep up to date on Mays' progress by visiting [luckymays.com](http://luckymays.com).

Be sure to check out *Musically Speaking*

Mel's online music journal, at [www.melminter.com](http://www.melminter.com).

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Lucky Mays does it all, from music to marketing