

SPOTLIGHT

HAPPY DAYS Are Here Again

Rufus Wainwright sings
Judy Garland on a new
studio album

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Miranda Penn Turin

OVER THE RAINBOW
Wainwright, before his 2021
Grammy performance, Los Angeles;
(right) with Zellweger at
Capitol Studios, 2021



IF THE LATE Judy Garland needed a living ambassador to sustain her spirit on Earth, she couldn't do much better than singer-songwriter Rufus Wainwright.

The Canadian musical blue blood exalted *The Wizard of Oz* star with his 2007 album, *Rufus Does Judy at Carnegie Hall*, where he – alongside marquee guests and a 36-piece orchestra – recreated Garland's famed career-boosting 1961 concert. The soundtrack to the 2019 biopic *Judy*, which earned Renée Zellweger a Best Actress Oscar, featured a duet with Wainwright. Now he's releasing *Rufus Does Judy at Capitol Studios*, a superb, intimate recording of Garland's most famous songs, using the microphone she sang into at the famed Los Angeles venue, backed by a four-piece jazz ensemble.

Recorded during Wainwright's 2021 virtual live-streamed concert for an in-person audience of one – his pal Zellweger, who was just “hanging out” in the studio – it arrives on June 10, the 100th anniversary of Garland's birth.

“I wasn't planning on doing anything around the centenary,” says Wainwright, who turns 49 on July 22, from L.A. “But we had done this livestream, and the date crept up, so all the elements conspired. Now I have this beautiful record, which I am very proud of.”

Wainwright's “Judy Garland voyage,” as he calls it, can be traced to her signature song, “Over the Rainbow,” which Wainwright sang as a child, sometimes accompanied by his late mother, Kate McGarrigle, in the Montreal home they shared with his sister, Martha Wainwright, after McGarrigle split from their dad, musician Loudon Wainwright III.

“That song is the gift that keeps on giving,” Wainwright confirms. “On the new album, I begin it a cappella as an ode to my mother. It has always been deeply rooted in my heart.”

Wainwright is also back in the spotlight for another reason: Martha's recent memoir, *Stories I Might Regret Telling You*, where she reveals their



SING HALLELUJAH
Garland, performing
“Get Happy,” in *Summer Stock*, 1950; (below right) on stage at Carnegie Hall, 1961



otherwise adoring mother – although bisexual herself – struggled with her openly gay son's sexuality. At one point McGarrigle shipped Rufus to a tony boarding school in upstate New York, “with a strong theatre department and lots of girls,” his sister writes. “I don't think she really believed the school would change him [but] a part of her was afraid for him, believing his orientation would make his life more difficult.”

“My mother was a very conflicted woman,” offers Wainwright, who had yet to read Martha's memoir. “[She was] a genius in many ways, but was never able to express herself fully. Ironically, that worked great for songwriting, but that's not the same as dealing with stuff, which,” he howls, “I learned myself early on.”

“Kate tried the best she could. In the end, she was full of love and adored her kids. But it could get rocky at times.”



That's what happens when you have music as the centre of your world. It's very emotional.” —*Kim Hughes*

For the complete Q&A with Rufus Wainwright about his new album, go to everythingzoo.com

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