

Aaron Goodvin // *Lucky Stars*

It's no small thing when a notorious straight shooter like Aaron Goodvin says, without exaggeration, that his new EP *Lucky Stars* contains "the best stuff I have come up with since... ever. I write a lot of songs. A lot of songs. And these are my best seven."

This from the Alberta-bred, Nashville-based country music star whose previous two albums have, in no particular order, topped the charts, produced a number one single and several top 10s, scored multiple CCMA and JUNO Award wins and nominations — notably winning 2018 CCMA Songwriter of the Year — and earned an invitation (accepted) to tour with Rascal Flatts.

Oh yes, and yielded the bona fide anthem "Lonely Drum," a global juggernaut that continues to pull ecstatic fans into its orbit, most recently influential American radio host Bobby Bones, who championed the track on his nationally syndicated show.

And now, there's the exhilarating *Lucky Stars*. Produced by Grammy Award-nominated Matt McClure (see also Goodvin's 2019 smash album *V*) and featuring Goodvin alongside an esteemed lineup of collaborators, the new EP is that rarest of things: familiar yet completely new. And very, very ambitious.

Consider lead single, the epic, almost ridiculously catchy "Boy Like Me," a surging corker of a track that dares to survey the years-from-now future of a relationship from the perspective of a giddy, knock-kneed first meeting. The song has already scorched the country charts.

"Before the pandemic hit, we were hitting our stride with the live shows and I basically wrote a bunch of songs that would be fun to sing along to and really captured where I was in my life," Goodvin says. "I basically wrote a bunch of songs like 'Boy Like Me' but I couldn't outdo 'Boy Like Me,'" he chuckles, "so I stopped there."

Well, not quite. Follow-up single, the gleaming, towering ballad "Lucky Stars," also crackles with the kind of musical electricity that occurs when ace players coalesce around a heartfelt piece propelled by gratitude, a recurring theme on the EP, the first of a planned pair.

"Like a lot of touring musicians, when COVID hit, I had to take stock," Goodvin allows. "I was all set to play live and suddenly it was, 'Well what am I going to do now?' It's at times when gratitude isn't so obvious that you need to reach for it. So, I'd look around and think, 'I'm married, living in Nashville in a beautiful house, I have a couple of beautiful dogs... for a kid from northern Alberta, I'm doing alright.'"

Also in the plus column, the pandemic allowed Goodvin to preview material for fans, which led to the inclusion of the incandescent and wildly cinematic "About Mexico," a song that expands Goodvin's sonic repertoire exponentially while showcasing the range of his singing voice, which seems ambivalent about gravity.

Elevated by gentle steel, cooing harmonies, and picturesque lyrics, "About Mexico" could be used by a keen-eared director as a treatment for a film about a couple of crazy-in-loves skipping the border with no agenda but savouring life, and each other, beneath a "sangria moon."

“Never in my career have I written something that I felt you could *see* as well as that one,” Goodvin confirms of the instant-classic song. “It was intended to go on the last record, but it just didn’t fit. I started playing it for my fan club during the pandemic and everybody just loved it. It was evident I had to cut it.”

He continues: “I wrote that song with Marcus Hummon and Bart Butler, who produced my first record. Bart grew up just outside San Antonio. Whenever we would get together, Bart would start talking about Mexico and I always thought, ‘That just seems like a song.’ It went from there, and it really is magical.”

Like gratitude, magic seems to crop up around Goodvin a lot these days, and not just in relation to *Lucky Stars*. In addition to verifying that Goodvin is the only country dude on the planet who writes about chardonnay and not whiskey, the buoyant beforementioned “Lonely Drum” is, in his words, “the gift that keeps giving.

“It’s unbelievable. I talk about that song every day. It was a huge hit for me in Canada and it’s getting radio airplay now in the U.S. The Bobby Bones feature was syndicated to 170 stations. That’s just what that song does. It feels a lot bigger than me, that’s for sure.”

Similarly, Goodvin’s creative partnership with producer McClure has come full circle. The pair met when producer Butler — who’d helmed Goodvin’s debut — was unavailable to do the sessions for *V*.

“When Matt came in, we did a good job with the time we had. But this is *our* record, me and Matt’s which we had talked about since making *V*. Originally, we were going to make a full record, but we decided to make two EPs instead to avoid having release gaps like I’d had with my previous records. Matt is a brilliant guy who really gets me.”

Due date on that next EP is TBD, mainly because Goodvin is champing at the bit to play in support of *Lucky Stars*. Anyone who has experienced the electrifying Goodvin and his band live knows full well that our man’s songs, though superb on record, shine brightest on stage.

“I am ready to go the minute we get the green light. Performance is such a huge part of what I do; it’s the reason I write songs. I will be a much happier individual when I get to play for people,” Goodvin laughs. “Besides, I have promised my dogs Telly and Olive dog food for life! And there’s only one way to guarantee it.”

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