

= Rufus Wainwright ( album ) =

Rufus Wainwright is the eponymous debut studio album by Canadian @-@ American singer @-@ songwriter Rufus Wainwright , released in the United States on May 19 , 1998 through DreamWorks Records . The album was produced by Jon Brion , except " In My Arms " was produced and mixed by Pierre Marchand , and " Millbrook " and " Baby " were produced by Brion and Van Dyke Parks . Lenny Waronker was the executive producer .

Wainwright was signed to the DreamWorks label in 1996 after Waronker heard the demo tape he recorded with Marchand . Over the course of two years , Wainwright and Brion recorded 56 songs on 62 rolls of tape at a cost that exceeded \$ 700 @,@ 000 , which was then narrowed down to twelve tracks for the album . No singles were released from Rufus Wainwright , though Sophie Muller directed the music video for " April Fools " , which featured Wainwright in Los Angeles attempting to prevent the deaths of opera heroines . To support the album , Wainwright toured throughout the United States and Canada following its release .

Overall , reviews for the album were positive . Though the album failed to chart in any nations , Wainwright reached number 24 on Billboard 's Top Heatseekers chart ( which highlights sales by new and developing musical recording artists ) and Rolling Stone named Wainwright the Best New Artist of 1998 . Rufus Wainwright also earned him recognitions from the Gay & Lesbian American Music Awards , the GLAAD Media Awards and the Juno Awards . The album was released in Japan with the bonus track " A Bit of You " , and later in 2008 in LP form through the record label Plain Recordings .

= = Background = =

Wainwright , born into a musical family which included parents Loudon Wainwright III and Kate McGarrigle and sister Martha Wainwright , began touring in his early teens with his family throughout Canada , Europe and the United States . At age fourteen , his song " I 'm a Runnin ' , written for the 1988 Canadian film Tommy Tricker and the Stamp Traveller , earned him a Genie Award nomination for Best Achievement in Music ? Original Song and a Juno Award nomination in 1990 for Most Promising Male Vocalist of the Year .

Wainwright attended McGill University in Montreal to study classical composition for a short time . With his mother 's support , he began pursuing pop songwriting and learned how to play guitar . Wainwright started performing at the night club Sarajevo , and eventually recorded a demo tape with record producer Pierre Marchand , a " family friend " who had also worked with Kate and Anna and who also later produced Wainwright 's second studio album Poses . Songs were recorded at Marchand 's studio in Morin @-@ Heights , Quebec , and no edits were made to the simple live tunes . The tape impressed Wainwright 's father , who passed the songs along to producer Van Dyke Parks , who in turn presented them to DreamWorks executive Lenny Waronker . Waronker had signed McGarrigle to Warner Bros. Records in the 1970s . Describing his initial reaction to Wainwright 's music , Waronker stated : " When I was about to listen to his tape , I remember clearly I was thinking , ' Gee , if he has the mom 's musicality and smarts , and the dad 's smarts and voice , that 'd be nice . ' Then I put it on and I said , ' Oh , my God , this is stunning . ' " Wainwright acknowledged that having musicians as parents gave him a " foot in the door " , but attributed his success to hard work .

= = Development = =

Wainwright was signed to DreamWorks in 1996 . Waronker paired the singer with producer Jon Brion , and together they spent " most of 1996 and 1997 " recording 56 songs on 62 rolls of tape . Costs for the recording sessions reached between \$ 700 @,@ 000 and \$ 1 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 . Wainwright admitted that he and Brion took their time recording the album in Los Angeles , and considered the extended time a " blessing " and " luxury " , claiming that " most people have two weeks to record their first album " . According to Wainwright , Waronker " didn 't care how long it

took , as long as we were doing good work . " Waronker was pleased with the final product , and he and Wainwright agreed on the twelve tracks that made up the album .

Songs on the album were produced by Brion , except " In My Arms " was produced and mixed by Marchand and " Millbrook " and " Baby " were produced by Brion and Van Dyke Parks . Waronker served as the executive producer . Rufus Wainwright was recorded mostly in Los Angeles studios ? Ocean Way Three & Seven , Sunset Sound Factory , Sunset Sound , Media Vortex , Hook Studios , Groove Masters , Red Zone , Sony , The Palindrome Recorder , and NRG Recording Services ? although recording also took place in Marchand 's Wild Sky in Morin @-@ Heights . Parks conducted his orchestrations at Studio B in the Capitol Studios complex . Wainwright and Brion did not always get along , the latter admitting to The New York Times : " Rufus had all these beautiful songs but every time the vocals would kick in , he 'd write some complicated keyboard part so you couldn 't hear them . He wasn 't interested in listening to ideas about simplifying arrangements . " The duo also contributed the songs " Le Roi D 'Ys " and " Banks of the Wabash " ( both " contemporary " cover versions ) to the 1997 soundtrack to the film The Myth of Fingerprints . Brion later considered " Le Roi D 'Ys " , recorded in around six hours , to be one of his favorite tracks by Wainwright .

Rufus Wainwright was released on May 19 , 1998 through DreamWorks . Following the album 's release , which earned him mostly positive reviews , Wainwright contributed to The McGarrigle Hour , a 1998 album by Kate & Anna McGarrigle featuring family members Loudon and Martha along with singers Emmylou Harris and Linda Ronstadt . In December 1998 , Wainwright appeared in a Gap commercial in which he performed Frank Loesser 's 1947 song " What Are You Doing New Year 's Eve ? " In 1999 , he was one of several featured artists promoted by Best Buy as part of a campaign to promote young talent . The album was re @-@ issued in 2008 in LP form through the record label Plain Recordings .

= = Songs = =

The " neo @-@ operatic " opening track " Foolish Love " , arranged by Van Dyke Parks , was described by Allmusic contributor Matthew Greenwald as a " lush , orchestral @-@ soaked ballad , with incredible strings " . He asserted that Wainwright 's lyrics took the form of a letter to himself , defining his goals and " sense of purpose " . The song " Danny Boy " , with its " fabulous wordplay that stays literate and easy to understand at the time " , contains " subtle " horn lines and sampled percussion . The song alludes to Wainwright 's homosexuality , which Greenwald considered a " brave move " . According to biography author Kirk Lake , " Danny Boy " is a companion piece to " Foolish Love " and together they represent the start and end of a relationship between a gay man and a straight man . Danny , the straight " drug @-@ addled " title figure with whom Wainwright had a three @-@ year relationship , is the subject of both songs in addition to others on the album ; he appears in the album 's collage artwork . Wainwright sings of being so blinded by love that he fails to notice the " ship with eight sails " threatening to come around the bend , a reference to Bertolt Brecht 's 1928 musical The Threepenny Opera .

The chorus in " April Fools " begins with an " unusually upbeat attitude " and was considered by Greenwald to be the most accessible track on the album . The song showcased Jim Keltner 's drum performance as well as Wainwright 's piano playing . Driven by Wainwright 's guitar playing , " In My Arms " was described by Greenwald as a " forlorn " , Spanish @-@ influenced ballad that sounded as though it " could have been recorded in France in the 1920s " . The song " Millbrook " is an ode to his boarding school compatriots . Wainwright has admitted to being " upset and drunk " when recording the final take . " Baby " , which has been considered one of the most melancholic songs on the album , contains " oddly placed " and " slightly quirky " major seventh chords . Greenwald called the lyrics " a stream @-@ of @-@ consciousness pleasure , relating the confusing and intoxicating emotions of young love . "

" Beauty Mark " is an ode to Wainwright 's mother , the title referring to the mole above her lip . The song is one of the few up @-@ tempo tracks on the album and contains multiple keyboard overdubs by Brion . Chris Yurkiw of the Montreal Mirror considered the track to be the most moving love song

on the album , with an " overt and open @-@ hearted " reference to his homosexuality : " I may not be so manly , but still I know you love me . " Wainwright 's Summer Stage performance of " Beauty Mark " appears on his 2005 DVD All I Want . In " Barcelona " , Wainwright recalls a love affair that took place in the city of the same name . The song is loosely about AIDS and contains the Italian language lyric " Fuggi , regal fantasima " , taken from Giuseppe Verdi 's opera Macbeth . According to Wainwright , the line appears in a scene when " Macbeth is going mad and sees the ghost , and in [ Wainwright 's ] mind the ghost was AIDS . " " Matinee Idol " is about the rise and fall of an entertainment figure , inspired by the death of actor River Phoenix . According to Greenwald , the musical song has a " 1920s , cabaret musical feel " . " Damned Ladies " is a slow ballad about the " beloved yet doomed ladies of opera " . Wainwright said the following of " Damned Ladies " , which contains references to nine opera heroines : " In the song , I lament how these women are constantly dying brutal deaths , which I can see coming but cannot stop . It gets me every time . " Greenwald described " Sally Ann " as 1920s love ballad of " lost love and emotional regret " . The melody in " Imaginary Love " , the album 's closing track , contains sixth and major seventh chords .

= = Promotion = =

Wainwright acknowledged that his debut album was " not a single driven album " ; no singles were released from Rufus Wainwright . To promote the album , a music video was produced for the song " April Fools " . Directed by Sophie Muller , the video features Wainwright in Los Angeles " amidst a clique of classic opera characters " such as Madame Butterfly , attempting to prevent each of them from committing suicide . However , in each instance he arrives too late . The video also contains cameo appearances by No Doubt 's Gwen Stefani , a friend of Muller 's , and Hole bassist Melissa Auf der Maur , a high school acquaintance and former roommate of Wainwright 's . Part of the video was filmed in Stefani 's house .

Wainwright performed " Beauty Mark " on Today , the American morning news and talk show . He also taped an episode of MTV 's television program 120 Minutes to promote the album , which aired on March 28 , 1999 . An advertisement in Billboard promoting the album also referred to appearances on CBS News Sunday Morning , Late Night with Conan O 'Brien , Late Show with David Letterman , and Sessions at West 54th .

In the year prior to the album 's release , Wainwright opened for artists such as Barenaked Ladies and Sean Lennon . On March 1 , 1999 , Wainwright began his first tour as a headlining act in Hoboken , New Jersey . During that month , Wainwright toured throughout New England and the mid @-@ Atlantic states , Ontario ( Ottawa and Toronto ) , Quebec ( Montreal ) , the Southern United States ( Nashville and Atlanta ) , and midwestern United States ( Cincinnati , Chicago , and Pontiac ) . Wainwright continued to tour throughout the month of April before heading to Europe . Stops were mostly along the West Coast , including four in California , Portland , Oregon , and Seattle . Three concerts were also held in Canada , including Vancouver , Edmonton , and Calgary .

= = Critical reception = =

Overall , reception of the album was positive . Speaking of second @-@ generation artists emerging around the same time , Allmusic 's Jason Ankeny wrote that Wainwright " deserves to be heard regardless of his family tree " . Furthermore , Ankeny complimented the musician for his songwriting abilities and his " knack for elegantly rolling piano melodies and poignantly romantic lyrics " . Music journalist Robert Christgau characterized Wainwright as a " mind @-@ boggling original " whose talent is " too big to let pass " . One NME reviewer called the album " floridly impersonal and " grandiosely arranged " , but also criticized Wainwright for being " too overwrought and naff " . Greenwald complimented Martha 's backing vocals in the song " In My Arms " , as well as Parks ' " positively sterling " string arrangement in " Millbrook " . Furthermore , he praised the vocal duet between Rufus and Martha in " Sally Ann " , claiming that a similar sibling performance had not been heard since The Everly Brothers . The album 's cabaret elements and 1970s singer

@-@ songwriter style drew comparisons to Cole Porter and Joni Mitchell . Josh Kun of Salon.com wrote that Wainwright poetically incorporated " foolish love and fantasy love , healing love and destructive love and love that makes you want to lose your sense of self just so you can find it again . " Kun asserted that the songs were " built on a similar set of angled melodies and hairpin turns of phrase " , and that each " succeeds as its own distinctly intimate portrait of emotion and desire " .

Ann Powers , music critic for The New York Times , included the album at number five on her list of the Top 10 albums of 1998 . The album was also included in The Village Voice 's 1998 Pazz & Jop Critics Poll , which combined ballots from 496 critics . Rufus Wainwright was nominated four times by the Gay & Lesbian American Music Awards , an organization that provided the foundation for the recognition of the excellence of LGBT artists . Wainwright received the award for Best New Artist , the album was nominated for Album of the Year , and " April Fools " was nominated for Video of the Year and Best Pop Recording . The GLAAD Media Awards , created by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation ( GLAAD ) to recognize and honor the mainstream media for their fair and accurate representations of the LGBT community , presented Wainwright with the award for Outstanding Music Album . At the Juno Awards of 1999 , Rufus Wainwright earned Wainwright the Juno Award for Best Alternative Album .

= = Commercial reception = =

Album sales were limited ? by March 1999 only 35 @,@ 000 copies had been sold . In 2001 , Michael Giltz of The Advocate wrote that Wainwright 's biggest sales boost came from the Gap advertisement rather than radio play . Despite low sales , Wainwright reached number 24 on Billboard 's Top Heatseekers chart , and Rolling Stone named him 1998 's Best New Artist . The January 19 , 1999 CMJ New Music Report showed that Rufus Wainwright spent nine weeks on CMJ Radio 200 reaching a peak position of number 52 , five weeks on CMJ Code Radio reaching a peak position of number 42 , as well as nine weeks on CMJ Triple A reaching a peak position of number 9 .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written by Wainwright .

" Foolish Love " ? 5 : 46

" Danny Boy " ? 6 : 12

" April Fools " ? 5 : 00

" In My Arms " ? 4 : 08

" Millbrook " ? 2 : 11

" Baby " ? 5 : 13

" Beauty Mark " ? 2 : 14

" Barcelona " ? 6 : 53

" Matinee Idol " ? 3 : 08

" Damned Ladies " ? 4 : 07

" Sally Ann " ? 5 : 01

" Imaginary Love " ? 3 : 28

Bonus track

" A Bit of You " ? 5 : 00 ( Japan )

Track listing adapted from Allmusic .

= = Personnel = =

Credits adapted from Allmusic and the album liner notes .