

= Laid Back ( album ) =

Laid Back is the debut studio album by American singer @-@ songwriter Gregg Allman , released in October 1973 by Capricorn Records . Allman , best known as the vocalist / lyricist of the Allman Brothers Band , first began considering a solo career after internal disagreements with that group . He developed the album as a small creative outlet wherein he would assume full control , and he co @-@ produced the album alongside Johnny Sandlin . Laid Back was largely recorded in March 1973 at Capricorn Sound Studios in Macon , Georgia , with additional recording taking place at the Record Plant in New York City .

The album explores Allman 's varying influences , including rhythm and blues and soul music . It consists of several cover songs , originals , and a traditional hymn , and contains performances from a host of musicians , most notably Scott Boyer and Tommy Talton on guitars , Bill Stewart on drums , and Charlie Hayward on bass guitar . The album was created while Allman also worked on Brothers and Sisters , the fourth Allman Brothers album . The album title was a studio term Allman coined for relaxing a song 's tempo , while its cover was painted by Abdul Mati Klarwein .

Upon its release , Laid Back received positive reviews from music critics , and it peaked at number 13 on Billboard 's Top LPs & Tape chart . To support the album , Allman embarked on an ambitious tour , consisting of a full band and an entire string orchestra . Two singles were released to promote the record , with lead single " Midnight Rider " becoming a top 20 hit in the U.S. and Canada . It was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) in 1974 for shipping 500 @, @ 000 copies in the U.S. , making it one of Allman 's best @-@ selling albums .

= = Background = =

Gregg Allman first began exploring music during his teen years in Daytona Beach , Florida . He and his brother , Duane Allman , founded their first band , the Allman Joys , in the mid @-@ 1960s . That group evolved into the Hour Glass , which recorded two albums for Liberty Records between 1967 and 1968 . Subsequently , the duo founded the Allman Brothers Band , which grew in fame in the early 1970s due to their live shows , which combined traditional electric blues , jazz @-@ style improvisation and self @-@ penned instrumentals . Their 1971 live album At Fillmore East represented a commercial and artistic breakthrough . Duane Allman was killed in a motorcycle crash later that year , but the band continued on , recording 1972 's Eat a Peach , a hybrid live / studio album that became an even greater success , shipping gold and peaking at number four on Billboard 's Top 200 Pop Albums chart .

By that summer , the group began rehearsals for what would become their fourth studio album , Brothers and Sisters . Allman brought the band the song " Queen of Hearts " , which he had worked on for , by that point , a year and a half . He was inebriated at the time , and the members would not consider the song . Later that night he returned to Capricorn Studios alone to work on his own songs . He worked for forty @-@ two hours , slept for six , and returned for a final session that wound up lasting a further twenty @-@ eight hours . " Mentally and physically exhausted , " he was unhappy with his output , and discarded the tape reels in a trash can , hoping to set them aflame . Producer Johnny Sandlin walked in and convinced Allman to start over . Together , they worked on a cover of the Jackson Browne song " These Days " , enlisting Scott Boyer to play pedal steel guitar on the track . Later in the year , he worked on several demos for the album at Criteria Studios in Miami , Florida alongside friend Deering Howe and bassist Berry Oakley ( who was killed in a motorcycle crash not long afterward ) .

= = Recording and production = =

Work stalled on Laid Back as production commenced on Brothers and Sisters , though the two were worked on roughly concurrently . Sandlin , a former Hour Glass bassist and longtime Allman friend , helped hire various session musicians to work on the album , including Boyer and Tommy Talton on guitars , Bill Stewart on drums , and Charlie Hayward on bass guitar . Allman likened the album 's

presence to a mistress , noting that the rest of the band were not thrilled . It slowed down progress on their own album , and it created tension between the group , particularly between Allman and guitarist Dickey Betts . Nevertheless , several Allman Brothers members made appearances on Laid Back , including Jaimoe , who provided congas , and Chuck Leavell , a new addition to the Brothers , who added piano . Leavell stayed in Macon after leaving Dr. John 's band , and found himself contributing to both albums . Allman felt Leavell 's style of playing fit the album perfectly : " He 'd give you exactly what you wanted , without any questions , and if he embellished on a song , he made it even better . "

Opening the album is a version of " Midnight Rider " , which Allman first composed and recorded for the Allman Brothers Band 's second album , Idlewild South ( 1970 ) . For the new recording , Allman aimed for a " swamp " -like atmosphere , " with the image of moss hanging off the trees , alligators and fog , darkness , [ and ] witches , " he later wrote . Boyer wrote the song " All My Friends " , which Allman provides harmonies on . " I 've always loved the Everly Brothers style of harmony , but I didn 't want it to just follow the traditional 1 ? 3 ? 5 pattern , " he recalled .

The album cover was painted by Abdul Mati Klarwein , best known for creating the artwork to Miles Davis 's Bitches Brew ( 1971 ) . Allman was introduced to him through a friend . Allman did not have the time to come sit for the painting , so Klarwein worked with a photograph . In Allman 's book , My Cross to Bear he said " I loved that cover ; I thought it turned out perfect . It cost me \$ 1 @ , @ 500 back then , but today it would like \$ 50 @ , @ 000 , maybe even \$ 150 @ , @ 000 . " Allman 's girlfriend at the time ( and later wife ) Janice Blair appears on the album 's sleeve , riding a horse . The album 's title was an inside reference to a studio term Allman coined for when a song had too much energy and needed to be more relaxed , or " laid back . " He spoke more on the term in his later autobiography , My Cross to Bear :

= = Reception = =

Laid Back received glowing reviews from music critics at the time of its release . Rolling Stone reviewer Tony Glover said " Laid Back isn 't quite what you 'd expect from Gregg 's work with the Brothers Band . Instead , it 's a moody LP , often tinged with grandeur , and maybe just a little too rich and one @ - @ colored in spots . But on the whole , a moving look at another side of a finely charismatic singer / writer . " Billboard named it a " Spotlight " pick among its Top Album Picks in November 1973 , with the reviewer deeming it " a masterpiece of a set ... featuring exceptional displays of vocal and instrumental talent in many musical areas . "

The album has continued to receive positive attention in the years since its release . Allmusic stated : " Recorded in the same year as the Brothers and Sisters album , this solo debut release is a beautiful amalgam of R & B , folk , and gospel sounds , with the best singing on any of Gregg Allman 's solo releases . " In 2006 , Tom Moon of NPR reviewed the album as a part of his " Shadow Classics " series , calling it " amazing stuff , deep and intense yet nowhere near the decibel levels of his work with the [ Allman Brothers ] band . ... But he 's equally compelling ? maybe even more so ? in a quieter space , when he 's less fired up . "

= = Tour = =

To promote the album , Allman embarked on a nationwide tour with the musicians who helped record the album as his band . Long inspired by Joe Cocker 's Mad Dogs & Englishmen ( 1970 ) , Allman hired a string orchestra to accompany the group . Drawn from the New York Philharmonic , it consisted of three cellos , six violins , and seven violas . The tour lasted one month and performed exclusively in upscale theaters , which Allman requested for the best sound quality possible . He found performing with the orchestra strikingly different than singing with the Allman Brothers Band , having to adjust his normal singing volume to blend better . A live album of material from the tour was released as The Gregg Allman Tour later that year , to help recoup costs for the tour . " I was really pleased with how the tour went . Some nights were better than others , but they were all good , " Allman would later recall .

= = Track listing = =

All tracks composed by Gregg Allman ; except where indicated

" Midnight Rider " ( Allman , Robert Kim Payne ) ? 4 : 28

" Queen of Hearts " ? 6 : 17

" Please Call Home " ? 2 : 48

" Don 't Mess Up a Good Thing " ( Oliver Sain ) ? 4 : 13

" These Days " ( Jackson Browne ) ? 3 : 56

" Multi @-@ Colored Lady " ? 4 : 55

" All My Friends " ( Scott Boyer ) ? 4 : 32

" Will the Circle Be Unbroken " ( Traditional ; arranged by Allman & Johnny Sandlin ) ? 4 : 49

= = Personnel = =

Credits adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =