

= Release the Stars =

Release the Stars is the fifth studio album by Canadian @-@ American singer @-@ songwriter Rufus Wainwright , released through Geffen Records on May 15 , 2007 . Pet Shop Boys ' Neil Tennant was the executive producer and the album was mixed by producers Marius de Vries and Andy Bradfield . Wainwright 's most commercially successful album to date , Release the Stars charted in 13 countries , reaching Top 10 positions in Denmark , Norway , and the United Kingdom , and was certified gold in Canada and the UK . The album generated three singles : " Going to a Town " , which peaked at number 54 on the UK Singles Chart , " Rules and Regulations " , and " Tiergarten " .

Wainwright originally planned to create a more simple piano and voice album , but began leaning towards more lush sounds once the recording process started . Guests on Release the Stars include Richard Thompson , longtime friend and fellow singer @-@ songwriter Teddy Thompson , family members Martha Wainwright and Kate McGarrigle , Neil Tennant , Joan Wasser , and actress Siân Phillips . The world tour supporting the album lasted from May 2007 to February 2008 , and included tour stops in North America , Europe , Asia and Australia . For Release the Stars , Wainwright received two nominations for the Juno Awards of 2008 , including Adult Alternative Album of the Year and Songwriter of the Year , and won the Outstanding Music Artist award at the 19th GLAAD Media Awards .

= = Conception and development = =

" Initially , this was simply going to be an album of piano and voice " , Wainwright stated in a May 2007 interview with The Independent 's Nick Duerden . That was , however , until he visited Berlin , which influenced the album 's lush sound . Wainwright declared , " Basically , a huge wave of German Romanticism descended on the recording process , and almost drowned me . " Wainwright cited two reasons for the change in direction and the heightened dramatic flare : the cancer diagnosis received by his mother (folk musician Kate McGarrigle) during the album 's genesis , which he found " fueled his creative intensity in some kind of displaced attempt to get her well " , and the New York Metropolitan Opera 's commissioning Wainwright to write an opera , making Release the Stars a way of training for such a large project . Revealing the overall theme in January 2007 , Wainwright declared the album was about opening up and following impulses . " Whether it 's the environment , politics or religious warfare " , Wainwright stated in an interview with The Japan Times , " it 's time to get out there and be a part of the solution , whatever that is . "

For his " incredible take on what popular music means in today 's world " , Wainwright recruited Neil Tennant to advise him , act as executive producer of the album , and assist with the editing process . Parts of the album were recorded at Second Story and Legacy in New York City , Brooklyn Recording in Brooklyn , Saal 4 in Berlin , and Strongroom and Angel Studios in London . Wainwright had his sister Martha Wainwright , half @-@ sister Lucy Wainwright Roche , and mother Kate McGarrigle appear on the album , along with father and son musicians Richard Thompson and Teddy Thompson . Marius de Vries , who produced both of Wainwright 's previous albums (Want One and Want Two) , worked on the album , as did longtime band members Jeff Hill , Jack Petruzelli , and Matt Johnson .

= = Singles = =

" Going to a Town " was released as a single in digital format on April 3 , 2007 , in the United States . The track was later released via digital distribution in the UK on May 7 , including " Low Grade Happiness " as a B @-@ side on iTunes . " Going to a Town " entered the UK Singles Chart on May 19 , 2007 , at number 68 . The following week (May 26) , the track reached its highest position at number 54 . " Going to a Town " lasted on the chart for two weeks in total , and failed to chart in other countries . The music video for the song was directed by Sophie Muller . The video premiered in April 2007 , and Logo aired a 20 @-@ minute feature on the making of the video on April 27 ,

2007 (Making the Video : Going to a Town) .

The album 's second single , " Rules and Regulations " , was released digitally in the UK on July 30 , 2007 . The song failed to chart . Petro Papahadjopoulos directed the music video for " Rules and Regulations " , which features a group of men performing a choreographed dance around a long john @-@ wearing Wainwright inside a London mansion .

Released in October 2007 , " Tiergarten " was the third single from Release the Stars . A limited edition (500 copies) 12 @-@ inch single containing " Supermayer Lost in Tiergarten " was released on October 27 . A one @-@ track EP containing the Supermayer remix was released in the UK via iTunes and 7digital on October 29 . Both the album version and remix of " Tiergarten " failed to chart .

= = Songs and themes = =

" Do I Disappoint You " , the album 's opener , " sees [Wainwright] present a withering defense of his own human frailties , while one orchestral battalion after another mount their attacks and Martha Wainwright summons ' CHAOS ! ' and ' DESTRUCTION ! ' like a marauding Fury " . " Going to a Town " , the album 's lead single , was considered by Uncut 's John Mulvey to be among the angriest lyrics Wainwright has written , an " indictment of the country of his birth that hinges on the refrain , ' I 'm so tired of you America ' " . The political track , which Wainwright claimed that he wrote in just five minutes on the eve of his departure for Berlin , confronts the Bush administration 's perceived damage to the U.S. in the form of a love song . It was his discontent with America at the time that lead Wainwright to spend some time recording the album in Berlin . " Tiergarten " , named after a large park in Berlin of the same name , is a song about Wainwright 's German boyfriend , Jörn Weisbrodt . While recording parts of Release the Stars in Berlin , the couple visited the park often .

" Nobody 's Off the Hook " is written about the singer @-@ songwriter Teddy Thompson , a longtime friend of Wainwright 's . Citing Mozart , Beethoven , Schubert and Mahler as influences , Wainwright stated the string arrangements were his first attempt at writing chamber music . " Between My Legs " , which Wainwright wrote about a " boy [he] was infatuated with named Tommy Hotpants " , is a " fantasy about being able to save your object of desire when the apocalypse comes , and bring him to some sort of hidden paradise " . The last 30 seconds of the song contains the opening notes of the title song from Andrew Lloyd Webber 's musical The Phantom of the Opera , along with a dramatic spoken word part by Siân Phillips . According to Wainwright , " Rules and Regulations " was originally written as a slow ballad for Robert Wilson , and is about the perspective of " someone who looks at athletes , but who is not an athlete " . " Not Ready to Love " is Wainwright 's " surrender to the whole idea of being loved and being able to maintain a relationship " .

" Slideshow " is about Michael Cavadias , a friend that Wainwright took to Australia for a Leonard Cohen tribute concert , who failed to include Wainwright in the computer slide show he put together . Wainwright wrote " Tulsa " after meeting The Killers frontman Brandon Flowers at a bar in Tulsa , Oklahoma . After reuniting with Flowers at the 2007 Glastonbury Festival in England , Wainwright said of their encounter that Flowers was " very flattered " and " somewhat bashful " .

" Leaving for Paris N ° 2 " , previously released as " Leaving for Paris " on a bonus CD for Want One in France , differs from the first version with the addition of a second verse along with added instrumental effects . In an April 2007 interview with Scotland on Sunday , Wainwright revealed the inspiration for both " Do I Disappoint You " and " Leaving for Paris N ° 2 " :

" [They were] actually written for a musical that I was thinking of writing . They 're both about the same person . Essentially it 's about an extremely beautiful individual , man or woman , who 's deathly attractive , who basically lashes out at his oppressors or fondlers or pursuers . And just tells them that , ' you know , the fact that you love me for my physical attributes is kind of a sin , and in fact I 'm a lot like you , and that 's the truth . Looking at me physically you don 't see my soul . ' And that was just [written] during the period when I was obsessed with good @-@ looking people and why people liked them . "

Wainwright later stated that the musical was Moulin Rouge ! :

" [Leaving for Paris] is a very old song . I wrote this years ago , and I 've sung it for a long time . Initially , it was a piece I wrote for Moulin Rouge ! , Baz Luhrmann 's movie . I thought it would be great for Nicole Kidman to sing , and kind of walk away from her little village and end up a prostitute in Paris . Slowly , Nicole Kidman morphed into me . Because they didn 't use it in the movie , I kept it for myself . "

" Sanssouci " was inspired by 18th century Prussian monarch Frederick the Great 's Rococo summer palace outside Berlin . Wainwright has said the song is about the discrepancy between expectations from success and its reality . " Release the Stars " , the title track and album closer , has a " brassy Broadway swagger " . The song 's lyrical inspiration comes from Lorca Cohen , Leonard 's daughter , " missing the New York show " (referring to one of the Judy Garland tribute concerts Wainwright performed in June 2006 at Carnegie Hall) .

= = Cover art and liner notes = =

The images on the front cover , back cover , and liner notes of the album are from the gigantomachy frieze at the Pergamon Altar in Berlin . The photos were taken by Wainwright . Insert photographs of Wainwright , the altar , the bushes , and the long path were taken by Sam Taylor Wood , Wainwright , Lucy Roche , and Jörn Weisbrodt . In the liner notes , Wainwright gives " special thanks to all [his] family and friends " .

= = World tour = =

To promote the album , Wainwright embarked on a tour that lasted for nearly eight months , starting in London in May 2007 and ending in New York City in February 2008 . The tour visited the United States and Canada during June ? August 2007 , the UK in October , Europe during November ? December , and Japan and Australia / New Zealand during January ? February 2008 .

Throughout much of the tour , fans could audition to join Wainwright on stage and perform their own rendition of Siân Phillips ' spoken word part in " Between My Legs " . Candidates posted their audition videos on YouTube , and a winning act was chosen for each concert . Photos of " Between My Legs " contest winners performing on stage with Wainwright were posted on his official MySpace site . The last stop of the tour was on February 14 (Valentine 's Day) , 2008 at Radio City Music Hall in NYC .

= = Critical reception = =

Overall , reception of the album was positive . In his review for The Guardian , Alexis Petridis wrote that Release the Stars " is , by anyone 's standards , a wonderful album , packed with stunning melodies and brilliant lyrics " . Billboard magazine 's Susan Visakowitz described the album as Wainwright 's " most unabashedly flamboyant record yet " , with " larger @-@ than @-@ life melodies wrapped in swelling strings and surging horns and buoyed by the singer 's typical swoon @-@ inducing , caramel @-@ covered tenor " . The Observer 's Stephanie Merritt called the album " complex , melodramatic , ambitious , vain , beautiful and frequently magnificent " . While she wrote that Release the Stars may not yield many chart hits , Merritt claimed " it feels like an album that will endure " . Music journalist Robert Christgau complimented the album , observing , " To prove he can , [Wainwright] sets just one of this career @-@ topping aggregation of florid melodies to electric guitars , and damn my heterosexual ears for liking it best " . Caitlin Moran of The Times declared , " The stars will be released , in batches of fours and fives , in every review " . Referring to Sanssouci , the former summer palace of Frederick the Great and inspiration for the song of the same name , Uncut contributor John Mulvey wrote , " If he keeps making albums as good as this , we should wall him up in there forever " .

However , the album did receive some criticism , mostly pertaining to its overly lavish and decadent style . Regarding Wainwright 's attempt at creating radio @-@ friendly music , Petridis claimed that Wainwright " doesn 't seem to be trying at all " by employing Neil Tennant (a musician also known

for grandiloquence) as executive producer of the album and including extravagant orchestrations . He wrote , " every time Wainwright seems on the verge of making a straightforward appeal for the mainstream , he throws a glittery spanner in the works " . He noted the exotic instruments used in " Do I Disappoint You " : " It 's a marvelous song , but it 's lavishly decorated with thundering timpani , fluttering woodwind , pizzicato strings and brass . " Petridis questions , " Is this really the way he proposes to win over the punters who pick up two albums a year ? " In his review for NME , Priya Elan wrote , " Someone needs to tell Wainwright there 's a huge difference between ' epic ' and ' over @-@ egged ' " . Entertainment Weekly 's Gregory Kirschling stated that Release the Stars was " adorned with more strings , horns , choirs , and piccolo flute (!) than ever , his melodies ? and what melodies they are ? are drowned out by the bombast " , citing " Nobody 's Off the Hook " as an example . " But " , Kirschling stated , " he still yearns more beautifully than anyone " .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written by Wainwright .

" Do I Disappoint You " ? 4 : 40

" Going to a Town " ? 4 : 06

" Tiergarten " ? 3 : 26

" Nobody 's Off the Hook " ? 4 : 27

" Between My Legs " ? 4 : 26

" Rules and Regulations " ? 4 : 05

" Not Ready to Love " ? 5 : 51

" Slideshow " ? 6 : 21

" Tulsa " ? 2 : 20

" Leaving for Paris N ° 2 " ? 4 : 52

" Sanssouci " ? 5 : 16

" Release the Stars " ? 5 : 20

Track listing adapted from Allmusic .

= = Personnel = =

Credits adapted from Allmusic and the album liner notes .

= = Chart positions and certifications = =

Release the Stars debuted at number 23 on the U.S. Billboard 200 , Wainwright 's highest debut chart position as of 2009 , selling about 24 @,@ 000 copies in its first week . The album also achieved Wainwright 's highest chart position on the UK Albums Chart , debuting at number 2 with sales approaching 30 @,@ 000 in the first week . Overall , Release the Stars charted in 13 countries , reaching Top 10 positions in Denmark , Norway , and the United Kingdom . The album was certified gold in both Canada and the UK .

= = Awards and recognitions = =

For Release the Stars , Wainwright received two nominations for the Juno Awards of 2008 , including Adult Alternative Album of the Year and Songwriter of the Year for " Going to a Town " , " Release the Stars " , and " Do I Disappoint You " . Wainwright won the Outstanding Music Artist award at the 19th GLAAD Media Awards , an awards ceremony created by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation to recognize and honor LGBT representation in mainstream media . At the same ceremony , Wainwright was presented with the Stephen F. Kolzak Award , an honor given to an openly gay member of the entertainment or media community for his or her work toward eliminating homophobia .

The following table displays some of the 2007 " End of Year " list placements by various

publications :