

Marcia Ball



"Rollicking, playful, good-time blues and intimate, reflective balladry...
her songs ring with emotional depth" -ROLLING STONE



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SHINE BRIGHT

"A welcome ray of sunshine...Ball is a killer pianist, a great singer and songwriter. Potent blues, sweet zydeco, soulful, fast and furious Texas boogie...heartfelt, powerful and righteous" -BILLBOARD

"Fifty years have passed in a flash," says Texas-born, Louisiana-raised pianist, songwriter and vocalist Marcia Ball of her long and storied career. Ball, the 2018 Texas State Musician Of The Year, has won worldwide fame and countless fans for her ability to ignite a full-scale roadhouse rhythm and blues party every time she takes the stage. Her rollicking Texas boogies, swampy New Orleans ballads and groove-laden Gulf Coast blues have made her a one-of-a-kind favorite with music lovers all over the world. With each new release, her reputation as a profoundly soulful singer, a boundlessly talented pianist and a courageous, inventive songwriter continues to grow. Her love of the road has led to years of soul-satisfying performances at festivals, concert halls and clubs. *The New York Times* says, "Marcia Ball plays two-fisted New Orleans barrelhouse piano and sings in a husky, knowing voice about all the trouble men and women can get into on the way to a good time." *The Houston Chronicle* says simply, "She's as perfect as an artist can be."

With her new album, **Shine Bright**, Ball set out to, in her words, "Make the best Marcia Ball record I could make." In doing so, she has put together the most musically substantial, hopeful and uplifting set of songs of her five-decade career. Produced by Steve Berlin (Los Lobos) and recorded in Texas and Louisiana, **Shine Bright** contains twelve songs (including nine originals), ranging from the title track's rousing appeal for public and private acts of courage to the upbeat call to action of *Pots And Pans*, a song inspired by renowned Texas political writer and humorist Molly Ivins. From the humorous advice of *Life Of The Party* to the poignantly optimistic *World Full Of Love*, the intensity of Ball's conviction never wavers while, simultaneously, the fun never stops. **Shine Bright** is exactly the album Ball set out to make. "It is a ridiculously hopeful, cheerful record," she

says, in light of some of the album's more serious subject matter. The secret, according to Ball "is to set the political songs to a good dance beat."

Born in Orange, Texas in 1949 to a family whose female members all played piano, Ball grew up in the small town of Vinton, Louisiana, right across the border from Texas. She began taking piano lessons at age five, playing old Tin Pan Alley and popular music tunes from her grandmother's collection. But it wasn't until she was 13 that Marcia discovered the power of soul music. One day in New Orleans in 1962, she sat amazed as Irma Thomas delivered the most spirited and moving performance the young teenager had ever seen. A few years later she attended Louisiana State University, where she played some of her very first gigs with a blues-based rock band called Gum.

In 1970, Ball set out for San Francisco. Her car broke down in Austin, and while waiting for repairs she fell in love with the city and decided to stay. It wasn't long before she was performing in local clubs with a progressive country band called Freda And The Firedogs, while beginning to sharpen her songwriting skills. It was around this time that she delved deeply into the music of the great New Orleans piano players, especially Professor Longhair. "Once I found out about Professor Longhair," recalls Ball, "I knew I had found my direction."

When Freda And The Firedogs broke up in 1974, Ball launched her solo career, playing clubs around Austin, Houston and Louisiana. She signed with Capitol Records in 1978, debuting with the country-rock album *Circuit Queen*. Creating and honing her own sound, she released six critically acclaimed titles on the Rounder label during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1990, Ball—collaborating with Angela Strehli and Lou Ann Barton—recorded the hugely successful *Dreams Come*

True on the Antone's label. At the end of 1997, Marcia finished work on a similar "three divas of the blues" project for Rounder, this time in the distinguished company of Tracy Nelson and her longtime inspiration, Irma Thomas. The CD, *Sing It!*, was released in 1998 and was nominated for a Grammy Award.

Marcia Ball has appeared many times on national television over the years, including the PBS special *In Performance At The White House* along with B.B. King and Della Reese, *Austin City Limits* and HBO's *Treme*. She performed in *Piano Blues*, the film directed by Clint Eastwood included in Martin Scorsese's *The Blues* series which aired on PBS television nationwide in 2003. Marcia also appeared on *The Late Show With David Letterman* with The New Orleans Social Club, where she not only reached millions of people, but also helped to benefit victims of Hurricane Katrina. In 2012, she had a role in the independent film *Angels Sing* starring Harry Connick, Jr., Lyle Lovett and Willie Nelson. In 2017 she performed on NPR's *A Jazz Piano Christmas*, live from The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Ball joined Alligator in 2001 with the release of the critically acclaimed *Presumed Innocent*. The CD won the 2002 Blues Music Award for Blues Album Of The Year. Her follow-up, *So Many Rivers*, was nominated for a Grammy Award, and won the 2004 Blues Music Award for Contemporary Blues Album Of The Year as well as the coveted Contemporary Blues Female Artist Of The Year award. Her next release, *Live! Down The Road*, released in 2005, also garnered a Grammy nomination, as did 2008's *Peace, Love & BBQ* (the album debuted at #1 on the *Billboard* Blues Chart). 2010's Grammy-nominated *Roadside Attractions* and 2014's *The Tattooed Lady And The Alligator Man* successfully grew her fan base even further. Altogether she holds ten Blues Music Awards, ten *Living Blues* Awards, and five Grammy Award nominations. She has been inducted into both the Gulf Coast Music Hall Of Fame and the Louisiana Music Hall Of Fame. The Texas State legislature named her the official 2018 Texas State Musician. As her hometown *Austin Chronicle* says, "What's not to like about Marcia Ball?"

Since joining Alligator, Ball has blossomed as a songwriter. Each album has been filled with fresh, original songs, never more so than on **Shine Bright**. Ball easily draws her listeners deep into her music with instantly memorable melodies and imaginative imagery. Her songs paint vibrant musical pictures

richly detailed with recognizable characters, regional flavors, universal themes and colorful scenes, both real and imagined. *Living Blues* declares, "Her originals sound like timeless classics and southern soul masterpieces that no one else can imitate."

Now, with **Shine Bright**, Ball's new, aggressively hopeful songs are energized by Steve Berlin's inventive and exciting production, creating electrifying music that is daring, inspired, poignant and timely. *The Boston Globe* calls Ball "a compelling storyteller" who plays "an irresistible, celebratory blend of rollicking, two-fisted New Orleans piano, Louisiana swamp rock and smoldering Texas blues."

Of course, Ball will bring the party on the road, playing her new songs and old favorites for fans around the globe. "I still love the feel of the wheels rolling," she says, "and the energy in a room full of people ready to go wherever it is we take them." With both her new album and her legendary live performances, Marcia Ball will shine a light into the darkness, making the world a brighter place one song at a time.




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