



BIO

All of us are broken. But no-one is beyond repair. It's a philosophy that Walter Trout has lived by during seven volatile decades at the heart of America's society and blues-rock scene. Even now, with the world more fractured than ever – by politics, economics, social media and culture wars – the fabled US bluesman's latest album, *Broken*, chronicles the bitter schisms of modern life but refuses to succumb to them.

"I've always tried to write positive songs, and this album is not quite that," considers the 72-year-old of an all-original tracklisting that rages and soothes. "But I always hold on to hope. I think that's why I wrote this album."

For the last half-century, however rocky his path, hope has always lit the way. The beats of Trout's unbelievable story are well-known: the traumatic childhood in Ocean City, New Jersey; the audacious move to the West Coast in '74; the auspicious but chaotic sideman shifts with John Lee Hooker and Big Mama Thornton; the raging addictions that somehow never stopped the boogie when he was with Canned Heat in the early-'80s.

Even now, some will point to Trout's mid-'80s guitar pyrotechnics in the lineup of John Mayall's legendary Bluesbreakers as his career high point. But for a far greater majority of fans, the blood, heart and soul of his solo career since 1989 is the main event, the bluesman's songcraft always reaching for some greater truth, forever surging forward, never shrinking back.

It's a peerless creative streak underlined by the guitarist's regular triumphs at ceremonies including the Blues Music Awards, SENA European Guitar Awards, British Blues Awards and Blues Blast Music Awards. The iconic British DJ 'Whispering' Bob Harris spoke for millions when he declared Trout "the world's greatest rock guitarist" in his 2001 autobiography, *The Whispering Years*.

If he were a less questing artist, Trout could mark time and dine out on those past glories, leaving the polemics and calls-to-arms to a younger generation. But that's not enough, considers the still-hungry veteran. "I have to grow. I want to be a vital contributing artist. I don't want to come out every night and play my first hit, *Life In The Jungle*. I feel young. I know I'm not. But in my head, I'm still 25, still wanting to get better and do something I haven't before. I have more to say."

As the pandemic burnt out, Trout got back to business: the career-long cycle of writing, touring and resting still as natural to him as breathing. But scarcely had the world's turntable needles dropped on his latest album, 2022's *Ride*, when Trout felt the first tingles of incoming inspiration. Alternating between his homes in the remote Danish fishing village of Vorupør and Huntington Beach, California – or sometimes even in the back of the van, still slick with sweat after that night's gig – the twelve songs of *Broken* demanded to be born.

"A lot of times I put on headphones, listen to music that gets me emotional, and then start just writing lyrics," explains Trout of a process that still fascinates him. "I think these songs are as honest as I can be. The band came down to my house for rehearsals so we could just go in the studio and blow through this stuff."

Kingsize Soundlabs in LA was the scene of the crime – a familiar Trout Band haunt that also hosted 2019's *Survivor Blues* – and producer Eric Corne once again the man behind the glass. "This is our 15th album together," calculates the bluesman. "Eric and I just have a way of working, man. A friend who came into the studio and watched us and said, 'Man, you guys are like a machine'. It's unspoken."

A few collaborators joined Trout for the first time. “I thought my friend Beth Hart could relate to the title track, Broken,” he says of the warrior princess whose fiery vocals coil with his own. “With that song, I was looking at the world – especially what’s going on in the United States – but also thinking about my recovery from the things that happened to me. I had the first verse – ‘Pieces of me seem to break away/I lose a little more every day’. But it was almost too much for me to go back into that shit. So my wife, Marie, was able to help me with the lyrics – and she nailed it. The guitar solo, that’s maybe my favourite on the record. I tracked it with the band, one take. I wanted to see if I could beat it – but they wouldn’t let me!”

Another set of star guests supply the rocket fuel on two of the album’s most rocking cuts, I’ve Had Enough and Bleed. “Dee Snider from Twisted Sister put up a live cut of me on his Twitter and said: ‘Listen to this fucking guitar hero’. We started talking, became friends, he came into the studio and I knew I had to write him a song. So I’m thinking, ‘Well, he did We’re Not Gonna Take It’. So I wrote I’ve Had Enough. And it’s rockin’, big time. Bleed came about when we were pretty much done. My drummer Michael Leasure said to me, ‘Hey, Walter, you played with John Lee Hooker and Canned Heat, this is your 31st album and you’ve never played a boogie. What’s the deal?’ So I said, ‘OK, fuck it, let’s do a boogie’. I can kinda play harmonica, but I thought, ‘Let’s elevate this thing’. There’s a young harmonica player in England who’s the best I’ve ever heard, Will Wilde. He has the soul and the power of Paul Butterfield, but couples that with blinding virtuoso technique.”

Elsewhere, in a flash of telepathy, Trout discovered the line he was singing as a placeholder lyric for the cowboy blues of Turn And Walk Away had already been written by Marie (“I have a box of lyrics, and I find this piece of paper, in my wife’s handwriting, from twenty years ago and the first line says: ‘It never occurred to me that you would ever set me free’. It fit the song perfectly”). As for the blues tune, Courage In The Dark, Trout believes it took no more than ten minutes. “I was actually reading a book of poetry in the van, and the line was something like, ‘In a world of darkness, it’s a necessity that you hold on to your courage.’”

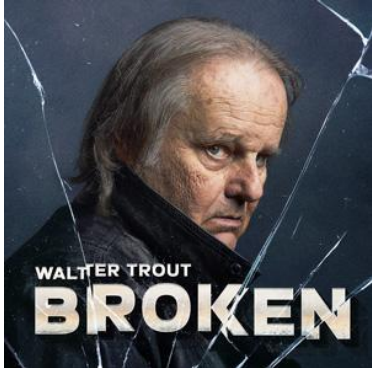
For the wistful Talkin’ To Myself, Trout took inspiration from the hits that crackled from AM radio in his youth, paired with a lyric about his habit of yelling at the hotel TV on the road, and a highly successful first attempt to play a vintage electric sitar (“Y’know, it’s ‘66, you’re riding in your car, and Paul Revere and The Raiders comes on – I wanted this song to sound like that”). But on No Magic (in the street), he acknowledges the march of time. “I’ve been living here in Huntington Beach for 50 years. For decades, I knew everybody on Main Street: ‘Hey Walter, what’s goin’ on?’ But I took a walk down there recently and realised there’s a new generation, with their own Steinbeckian society, and I felt like an anachronism. So when I say there’s no more magic out on the streets now, that’s just for me.”

No words were required for the tender instrumental Love Of My Life (“Of course, it’s about Marie”), while the bluesman’s muse of three decades also inspired the gossamer balladry of I Wanna Stay (“I’m whispering that song – it’s meant to be as quiet and gentle and possible. That’s about the first time I made love to my wife”). The bright-eyed soul of Breathe was written by keyboardist, Richard T Bear and reimagined by Trout with a nod to the Faces’ heart-wrenching Debris. “I told the bass player Jamie Hunting, ‘I want you to play like Ronnie Lane here’. And I told Skip Edwards, the piano player: ‘I want Ian McLagan’. And they nailed it.”

Then comes a wildcard, in the form of the scalded, spacey, spoken-word punk-blues Heaven Or Hell. “I met an old blind man on the street,” explains Trout. “I gave him a little money to eat, he started preaching, and I went back to my room and wrote a poem about what he said. I couldn’t sing it, I couldn’t fit it into music, so I told Eric, ‘I’m just gonna speak it’”

For most of the new record, Trout reached for his battle-scarred Fender Stratocaster or Delaney signature model, plugging into his trusty Mesa/Boogie MkIV stage amp (no pedals required). But for the closing Falls Apart, he pushed the sonic envelope. “Anyone who thinks I’m just a blues guy, I’m gonna hit them with my version of Pink Floyd,” he laughs. “That outro has three different electric guitar rhythms, and two acoustic guitar rhythms in different inversions. Then there’s a Nashville-tuned guitar. Our middle child Biscuit, AKA Captain Buzzface, wrote the song and arranged and sang all the background vocals. I think that the kid wrote an epic song that is very fitting for the state of the world today. I have a hard time getting through that one without breaking down.”

With gallows humour, Trout notes that his new album opens with a track called Broken and ends with one called Falls Apart. He can't deny the socio-political mood in the air, and as such, between those two bookends lie some of the most personal, bruised songs of his career (albeit twinned to some of his most rocking and defiant guitar work). Yet as the man says, as long as there's love and music, there is always a light to guide us. "That Sixties idealism still burns in me and I want to make music that means something or helps somebody. I may be naïve but I'm ok with that. In the face of what's happening in the world, I will stubbornly hold on to my idealism and hope. I want to make music that matters..."

Walter Trout – Broken	Track List	Extra Information
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Broken (feat. Beth Hart) 2. Turn And Walk Away 3. Courage In The Dark 4. Bleed (feat. Will Wilde on Harmonica) 5. Talkin' To Myself 6. No Magic (in the street) 7. I've Had Enough (feat. Dee Snider) 8. Love Of My Life 9. Breathe - written by Richard Gerstein 10. Heaven Or Hell 11. I Wanna Stay 12. Falls Apart 	<p>Release Date March 1, 2024</p> <p>Available formats LP CD Digital</p> <p>Walter Trout Online http://www.waltertrout.com/ www.facebook.com/waltertroutband/ www.twitter.com/waltertrout www.instagram.com/walter_trout</p>

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