In a world where models want to be rock stars, rock stars want to be film stars and most celebrities would kill their mothers just to be anything, Chrissie Hynde has never made any attempt or pretense to be anything other than herself. And what she is, as displayed on an unparalleled collection of truly brilliant records, is one of contemporary music’s greatest songwriters--with a voice that can easily melt your heart and then put it back together again, often within the same song, sometimes within the same line.

Strange, isn’t it, how people take things for granted? Perhaps because Chrissie does ‘being a rock star’ so effortlessly, so uncompromisingly, it sometimes got forgotten that her actual singing voice puts her near the top of the premier league of rock vocalists. From her very first album where she almost threw away the killer line “I’ll never be like a man in a man’s world” at the fade-out to ‘Lovers of Today’, Chrissie Hynde has a voice that can convey sadness, joy and regret better than almost anyone you can think of.

And now 25 million records sold and 30-plus years into her tenure as Pretenders founder and leader, Chrissie Hynde will release Stockholm, the first ever album under her own name, June 10 on Caroline Records in the U.S..

Just don’t open your interviews by asking about her “solo album,” or your first question could be your last:

“It’s the first album with my name on it,” Chrissie says. “But it’s not a solo album. In fact, making this album was more of a collaboration than any Pretenders album ever was.”

*Stockholm* may not be a solo album but it certainly has the vibe of an energized debut by a vital artist, one who gives voice to the disaffected while celebrating the undeniable power of a classic love song, a night on the dance floor, honest authentic rock n roll and other things that make life worth living. “So much of rock n roll has become what I would call Glory Rock, with family values. It’s the irreverence in rock that was always the turn-on. I disagree with people who say you shouldn’t take yourself too seriously. I think life is serious, and you should take it seriously, but in rock n roll either have a fucking laugh or fuck off.”

And apparently, in the six years since the last Pretenders album, Chrissie Hynde has been doing just that, albeit in new and varied company: *Stockholm* was recorded at Ingrid Studios, Stockholm, with co-writer, guitarist and producer Bjorn Yttling (Peter, Bjorn and John) and features contributions from Neil Young, John McEnroe and Joakim Ahlund of the Caesars. The songs – 11 in total, including the lead-off single “Dark Sunglasses” (which can be streamed [HERE](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=0019Q2oRRTgIwcpJyjqVD99NTTiq0gUdqB3ZthcwGQ84ErqQHg1SkV2SR8SISkd9WtCil_iFSYMi0hA-tSD_q1Kd0PP6aFx57A-37QgvGMWxfjnSbpaGPxYuJa4j00FAn9SAaBwaj3kas9wBAx4d-2dgWc6NugPRaSMRivAB7pWIN9P77uoR9Jrkg==&c=JWp77NqkMRTCl0Gwxqa_QUUZE2wJMIekWLdgPmAiFlUGjvZraBkmBw==&ch=tyTwQsS7j_ddVB9OEEmmVfglTfal2Src2qOzErQ5RGVNG6nwSYZLgg==) and [HERE](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=0019Q2oRRTgIwcpJyjqVD99NTTiq0gUdqB3ZthcwGQ84ErqQHg1SkV2SR8SISkd9WtCbNs0Hwq1vMcdYBlqRUG62LJKbQ9vyUhgfR1oBdXnb8CjOYGYkSaUIlOYRTkz_hxsCBZ_gpXKIno2wXmKebqkshFO8znc3ZBH9PkdGKnn1dNjSLry4aHgQA==&c=JWp77NqkMRTCl0Gwxqa_QUUZE2wJMIekWLdgPmAiFlUGjvZraBkmBw==&ch=tyTwQsS7j_ddVB9OEEmmVfglTfal2Src2qOzErQ5RGVNG6nwSYZLgg==)) and album opener, “You Or No One,” mix strong pop hooks with emotional and incisive lyrics. As Chrissie herself describes it -  “I wanted to make a power pop album you could dance to - Abba meets John Lennon.”

So why choose now to release a record under the name Chrissie Hynde?

“Ever since the original Pretenders – and I had replaced Pete and Jimmy after the second album – I’ve been fending off questions from album to album saying, ‘really, it’s just you, isn’t it?’  Every time I have to say no, it’s a band.  I like playing in a band – normally I’ll take most of the songs, written, to the band and the personalities make my songs sound better than they would if it was just me and a guitar.”

“I’ve always said I would never be a solo artist.  I never wanted to see my name in lights.  I’ve done a variety of Pretenders albums with completely different line-ups and different producers.  I’ve even done some co-writing now, and obviously the common denominator is yours truly.  I started doing a re-assessment of everything five years ago.  I’d played myself down to the point where it was dangerous, you know?  I had to find a way to kind of re-boot my brand.”

After the last Pretenders album, 2008’s *Break Up the Concrete,* Chrissie collaborated with Welsh singer J.P. Jones on the 2010 album *Fidelity.* “I met songwriter J.P. Jones in a bar at an art party.  He said that he thought we could write a great album together.  I was on tour with the Pretenders, but it sort of planted the seed - to collaborate and try something different from what I was used to.  So we wrote the songs and recorded it like an experiment and toured the States under the name The Fairground Boys.  I was practically anonymous, playing to clubs with a 200 capacity.  It showed me that I could work outside of my usual framework, so *Stockholm* was an easy transition to make.”

“This album *Stockholm,* though, is actually more of collaboration than any of the Pretenders albums has ever been.  I met Bjorn and I liked the stuff he’d done.  We weren’t going to do an album together; we were only going to write a couple of songs. He could only work for two or three days at a time, so I ended up going back and forth to Stockholm, which I really didn’t mind as I like travelling.  Stockholm was new to me and it was discovering a new world.

Chrissie likens this discovery of a new city, and the new group of musical cohorts it offered her, to the very beginning of her musical career, when she first emigrated from Akron, Ohio to London in the 1970s. “There was so much mutual discovery, except this time around we weren’t putting together a band with the aim of conquering the world—we were just fucking *doing* it, making this album. But the way I fell in love with London as a teenager, which to me was just like falling in love with a person… I didn’t expect to get that from Stockholm. But I did. It has all the elements you want from a city and its music scene: nothing’s phony or contrived and we all felt that. And it comes across in the music."

*Stockholm*’s love fest spread from Bjorn and the Caesars’ Ahlund to innocent bystander Zacharias Blad who was snared at the studio while waiting on a different session and enlisted personally by Chrissie to sing back-ups on "Dark Sunglasses.” “Basically everyone on the album is Swedish,” Chrissie says.  "As I said, it’s more of a collaboration than any of the Pretenders albums – so there’s some irony that it’s the first album with my name on the cover."

The lyrics on *Stockholm* are mostly about emotional matters, Chrissie’s unmistakable trademark observations on the dreams and realities of love and life.  As Chrissie says, “I’ve had enough experience in my life that I can call from a vast well of disappointments.  It’s not like a break-up album, but there’s a lot of longing, a lot of angst, probably a lot of disappointment – but if this album is about relationships then I’m just having fun with it actually.”

“The songs are certainly adult and I’m way past writing my break-up album. I’ve got 30 years of break-ups to call from. The thing is: I’m at a stage where I’m happy.  I really enjoy life. I think being happy is a discipline; it’s something that every day you have to work on.  I’ve never been very ambitious.  I love playing music, and I wanted to make a power pop album that you could dance to. That’s all I cared about”.

The first single from the album, “Dark Sunglasses,” shows Chrissie at her incisive best. A hairpin turn from album opener “You Or No One," a gloriously joyful love song,” “Dark Sunglasses” finds Chrissie taking on the English class system: “a kind of glamour, you can lend yourself, like dark sunglasses – *you’ll remember how good it tasted inside the ruling classes, wasted behind your dark sunglasses.”*  Standing at the window watching our aristos at play, like Truman Capote’s ‘Answered Prayers’ transposed into a four minute pop song, “Dark Sunglasses” is at once acutely observed and a brilliant pop song.

Another track, “Down The Wrong Way,” features Neil Young on guitar – a fact that is immediately obvious from the opening bar of the song. Chrissie says; “I kept referring to it as ‘the Neil Young song’ because the chords sounded like a Neil Young song. And I said to Bjorn, oh we should get Neil Young on this one – just fucking with him, really.  But then I thought, I really should get Neil Young on this. I know Neil Young, I’ve toured with him and he’s always been so sweet and friendly to me.  But when you’re talking about one of the Gods, it doesn’t seem like something you’d do to just pick up the phone and call someone like that.  Then I thought, I should do, because he’s a friend of mine.  Also of course I was trying to impress Bjorn and freak him out.  Neil got back and said, ‘I don’t want to hear this song, but I’ll be in London doing some shows and I’ve got a studio so if you can organize a studio I’ll come and have a go.’ So I sent a message to Bjorn and he was on the next flight.  Neil came down, plugged in and played the song and everyone’s mind was blown.  His manager was there with him and he said to me, ‘you know Neil’s never done an overdub before!’  I don’t know, I’m still amazed that Neil Young is on my album!”

The song “A Plan Too Far” features another notable guest appearance, this time by tennis legend John McEnroe. Chrissie picks up the story: “When I first met Bjorn, I walked into his studio and noticed a tennis racket in there, he loved tennis, and I told him I knew John McEnroe. Once again, I was trying to impress him.  Swedes are very stoic, you can't get a rise out of them very easily.  I hit the spot when I told him I knew McEnroe… It was all about getting that slight eyebrow raise and that did it."

The final track on the album, “Adding The Blue,” is Chrissie Hynde at her most poignant, which seems to happen when she recognizes the magic that can be captured in a first take. "That was one of the songs where I sang the vocals in immediately and we never changed it... Actually half the songs on the album are still just the demo vocals.” The lyric features a reference to famed underground comic artist S. Clay Wilson. His principal character was the completely anarchic Checkered Demon. “S. Clay Wilson did a little poster for my box set. He influenced me when I was a young lady in Ohio, possibly in a negative way. The Checkered Demon had a great influence on me, which I'm quite surprised I'm still here to live to tell."

All told, *Stockholm* is a suitably impressive addition to a Rock & Roll Hall of Famer’s staggering legacy, a fresh debut, but most importantly a record Chrissie feels confident will pass the most important test of all--not the judgments of peers, producers, critics or A&R types, but whether or not it passes the muster of the checkout girl at her local outpost of the UK drugstore chain, Boots. She explains: “When I make a record, I figure there’s no point in giving it to someone else who also makes records. They can’t listen without dissecting, without looking for what’s missing, what they would add, what they would change… It’s pointless. But if the girl from Boots the chemist likes your record, that’s what really matters. If it connects with her, then I’ve done my job."

*Stockholm* is released June 10 on Caroline Records in the U.S..

The single “Dark Sunglasses” will be available individually and as an instant grat with all pre-orders.