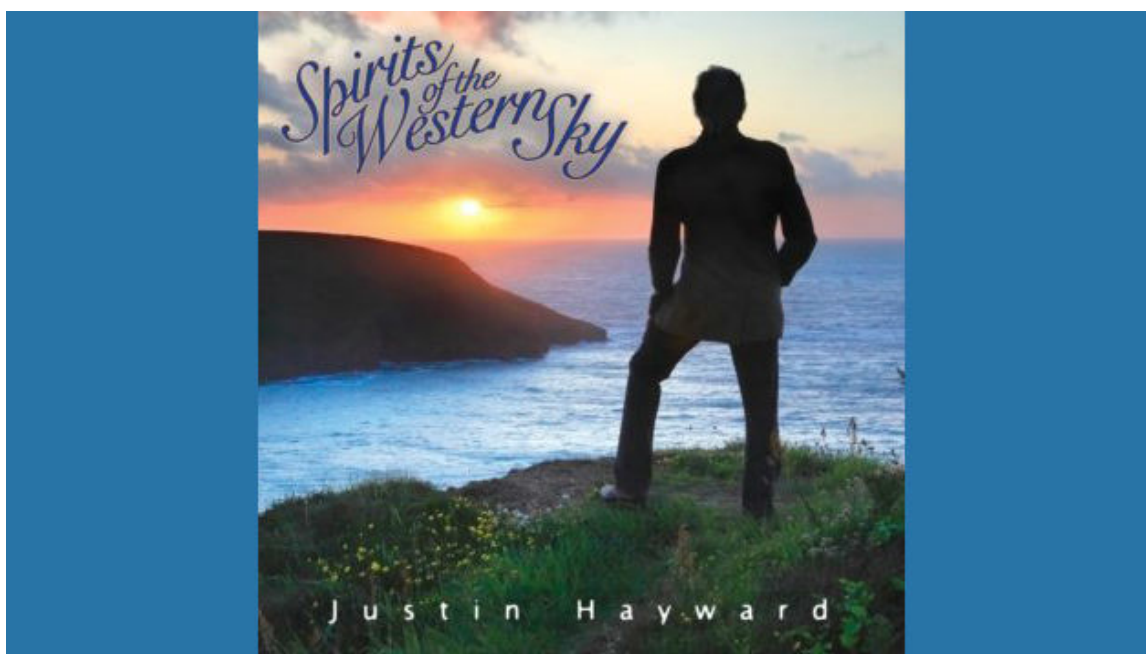




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The Moody Blues' Justin Hayward Gets Personal, Explores Bluegrass Sounds on New Solo Album



The Moody Blues will launch a new North American tour on March 8 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, but the band's longtime singer/guitarist, **Justin Hayward**, has even more reason to be excited. On Tuesday, Hayward released *Spirits of the Western Sky*, his first solo album since 1996's *The View from the Hill*.

The 15-track collection offers about a dozen new original compositions from Justin as well as two remixed versions of The Moody Blues' 1988 hit "I Know You're Out There Somewhere." *Spirits of the Western Sky* was recorded in Genoa, Italy, and Nashville, and features Hayward exploring a variety of styles, including classic "Moody-esque" melodic

and orchestral rock, acoustic folk, and even some country and bluegrass-influenced sounds.

Hayward tells ABC News Radio that the album's title refers to his lifelong love of looking toward the West, and is a reflection of the American music that inspired him when he was young.

"I became kind of obsessed with the western sky when I was a small boy," he explains. "My brother and I lived in this house in [England's] West Country...and our window in the room that we shared together had this amazing view of the sunsets, and the sky was massive and the sky was vast, rolling over us. And, we always thought that all our heroes were in that sky...from **Buddy [Holly]** to **The Everlys** to **Nat King Cole**."

Hayward says he began collecting songs for the project as far back as the late 1990s, and he noted that the tunes he decided to include on the album tended to be "very, very personal, about relationships and people that I'm close to."

Among the standout tracks on the album is "On the Road to Love," a mid-tempo rocker reminiscent of the early Moodys that Hayward co-wrote with **Kenny Loggins**. Hayward tells ABC News Radio that he and Loggins spontaneously began writing the tune after meeting at a hotel while on separate tours with their respective groups. After coming up with the initial idea, Justin explains, "I did a demo of it and I sent it back to him and he loved it and added some things to it and sent it back to me and then I sent it back to him again. But then, it just lay there for a couple of years." Hayward eventually completed the song for his new album, adding that Loggins thought that the finished track sounded great.

Hayward says, "It was a great pleasure [to collaborate with Kenny] and I feel his spirit comes through on that song, and certainly his voice does."

Perhaps the centerpiece of *Spirits of the Western Sky* are three bluegrass-flavored songs that appear in the middle of the album -- "What You Resist Persists," "Broken Dream" and "It's Cold Outside of Your Heart" -- which Justin recorded with Nashville sessions players. The tunes seamlessly blend Hayward's melodic pop-rock stylings with classic country twang.

Notes the singer, "I'd been very welcomed in Nashville over the years at songwriter's showcases and things and I got to know a lot of musicians. And, I just thought a couple of the songs were just so right to do it in that bluegrass treatment."

Hayward says that one of his very favorite songs on the album is "In Your Blues Eyes," which easily can stand alongside some The Moody's' memorable 1980s hits. "That's the song that in my little music room, I could pick it up anytime on my 12-string guitar and play it, and it would give me a thrill," he tells ABC News Radio.

According to Justin, fans going to see The Moody Blues on their upcoming trek shouldn't expect to hear any of his new solo songs at the shows. However, the singer reports that he'd eventually like to support the album with his own acoustic tour, and that he wants it to be an acoustic affair. To find out more about *Spirits of the Western Sky* and The Moody Blues' tour plans, visit JustinHayward.com and MoodyBluesToday.com.

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Justin Hayward - In Your Blue Eyes (Spirits of...

