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# Songwriter Buzz Cason back with rock-tinged "Passion"



Music City Roots

Singer-songwriter [Buzz Cason](#) is best-known for the hits he penned for other people: His “Everlasting Love” and “Soldier of Love” were famously covered by such diverse artists as Roberta Knight, [U2](#), Gloria Estefan, The Beatles, Marshall Crenshaw, and [Pearl Jam](#). In the early days, the ex-Casuals member produced The Crickets (“La Bamba”), sang backup for such bigwigs as Elvis Presley, John Denver, Waylon Jennings, and Willie Nelson. Then he collaborated with [Jimmy Buffett](#) on the “Margaritaville” maestro’s first two LPs, *Down to Earth* (1970) and *High Cumberland Jubilee* (1971).

Cason's also been cooking on his own for almost fifty years, sketching new tunes while hosting other talent (Dolly Parton, Doobie Brothers, The Judds) at his Creative Workshop studio outside Nashville. Counting the albums he recorded with The Dartz in the mid-1980s, Cason's put out over a dozen discs—from *Buzz* (1977) and *Caught Up in a Dream* (1979) to *Working Without a Net* (2010) and *Surf and Turf* (2012).

Cason's latest magnum opus—*Passion*—picks up where 2014's *Troubadour Heart* and 2015's *Record Machine* left off, with the elderly statesman of song digging deep for another batch of burning twelve-bar blues gems and boogie goodies that testify to the joy he still derives from the artistic process.

Heck, he could've called it *Busload of Love II* (in a nod to his 2009 release).

Perhaps *Passion's* is a more on point title. To wit: The title track opens the album with a hefty hunk of highway rock daring naysayers to deprive Cason of his favorite worldly possessions (his blue jeans, Chevy Malibu, gold coins) so long as they don't mess with his muse (e.g. the melodic sound of a tin roof in the rain). *Buzz's* acoustic guitar sets the pace (to Jim Thistle's dutiful drumming), but cohort Colin Whinnery paints over Bryan Grassmeyer's burly bass with sizzling electric guitar.

Oh, and that's session ace Wanda Vick (Taylor Swift, Steve Archer) on fiddle.

Harmonica and pedal steel-seasoned "Bread" takes Cason into ballad territory—and features his son Parker on guitar. Ready-made for a Rolling Stones remake, the confessional hymn sees *Buzz's* appreciative repentant thanking his partner for nurturing him from incompetence to confidence. Conversely, the acid rock of uppity "Will You Love Me?" recalls the gritty guitars of T-Rex and Blue Oyster Cult.

Vocally, Cason is a pleasing blend of Neil Young, Johnny Cash, and Tom Petty — all veterans of the same alt-country idiom Buzz exploits with his storyteller verses and simple, honest chord progressions. Parker Cason's piano (and synth jabs) underscores pilgrim paeon "Walkin'," with Michael Rinne's rumbling bass anchored by Matt Scibilia's no-frills backbeat.

Elsewhere — as on the chunky, but propulsive, "That's The Way It Is" — Buzz sounds huskier, like a mashup of Lou Reed and Iggy Pop. The extra bravura thickens Cason's sacrifice 'n' support-network number like flour in the garage-rock gravy.

"No price tag on anything, no I.D. required," he describes his unconditional love.

Co-written by country vet Billy Swan (and featuring Sugarcane Jane's Anthony Crawford on guitars and bass), melancholy "Just As Gone" remembers trends (hula hoops, *Alley Oop*) and times gone by — and the irreplaceable people we shared them with. Wanda Vick returns to lend her mandolin magic and banjo bounce to the wistful "Ballad of Berry Hill," whose former lovers sauntered through an orchard instead of merely walking in the park. Cason goes full falsetto here, his high notes arching over Thistle's persistent, percussive leg pats.

Cason shirks off oppressive hands on the defiant "Escape," his twangy Telecaster (and syrup-thick gospel organ) dueling with Whinnery's own wicked guitar licks.

"I may not be Houdini," Buzz realizes. "But freedom ain't no mystery."

*Passion* delivers music magic and is available now on [Amazon](#), [iTunes](#) and [SquareUp](#).