

MARK WESTIN



TALES

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MARK WESTIN TALKS ABOUT *TALES*

"*Tales* is my 4th full-length album. The ten songs on the record are culled from an intensive two-year period of writing. I wrote close to 50 songs and narrowed down to the ones I felt would fit together thematically.

The unifying thread is that all the songs on ***Tales*** are character-driven narratives. Think of this album like a book of short stories. You can start at the beginning and go through to the end, or you can dip in and choose one that appeals to you at the moment, then put it down and return later for another.

Tales was recorded at The Building in Marlboro, New York. After the isolation of Covid I really wanted to get back into a room with other musicians and make an old-school record.

My band for ***Tales*** was The Restless Age: Will Bryant, Lee Falco, and Brandon Morrison. They're truly creative and collaborative musicians who have played with Donald Fagen, Marshall Crenshaw, Joan Osborne, The Lemonheads, Larry Campbell & Teresa Williams, Amy Helm and many others. They brought a great energy to the songs. I wanted the album to feel fresh and immediate, so I gave them only basic sketches in advance and asked them to go with their first instincts in the moment. We all played together live, and none of the songs took more than three takes to nail down.

In two days we recorded all ten songs. We overdubbed fiddle by Daisycutter's Sara Milonovich and bodhran from Scott MX Turner on one song. Others got backing vocals or instrumental fills but the guts of what you hear on this album is live, the first or second time we'd ever played the song together."

Tales is available on all streaming services with the rest of my current catalog (search *Mark Westin*), and on Bandcamp as a vinyl album, CD or high quality digital download.

Album credits are below

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CREDITS

Mark Westin: Guitars, Weissenborn, lead and background vocals
with *The Restless Age*:

Will Bryant: Keyboards, mandolin and background vocals

Lee Falco: Drums, percussion and background vocals

Brandon Morrison: Bass and background vocals

and

Sara Milonovich: Fiddle and background vocals, *All Are Welcome Here*

Scott MX Turner: Bodhran, *All Are Welcome Here*

Produced by Mark Westin with Brandon, Lee and Will

Recorded and mixed by Brandon Morrison at The Building, Marlboro, NY

Mastered by Alan Douches at West West Side Music, Cornwall, NY

All songs written by Mark Westin

Published by Spinach World Music/BMI (c) 2023

All lyrics are below

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All Are Welcome Here

The red tabby cat curls up on the bar not far from the warming fire
The barkeeper wipes off the brass with his towel
Cleaning up, winding down
In a booth by the door is a monsignor who has fallen asleep on his beer
Just over his head, a notice that read
To those who pass through these portals, have no fear

Honest men, grifters, young poets and old-time drifters
All are welcome here

Couples conspire in corners and snugs unaware of the ravenous eyes
A singular student takes solace in stout
Hoisting up, drinking down
At the back are the boys trying prurient ploys to advance their romantic careers
Through courtship and cuckoldry, love, lies, and lust
Furtive glances and devious smiles and genuine tears

Honest men, grifters, young poets and old-time drifters
All are welcome here

Who are we now and when we're in our cups
Then who do we become?
When we open the tap, what comes out?
When we've emptied a glass or three, who do we want to be?

This room has heard all of it much more than once and it's saved many lives in its time
There's been quite a few kittens and keepers
Curling up, wiping down
Even when it's unspoken these walls understand when a spirit gets broken
With silent compassion for lost generations
Lost weekends and hours and years, they say loud and clear

Honest men, grifters, young poets and old-time drifters
All are welcome here

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Bring God In

Bring God in off the porch he's probably getting wet out there
See if he wants some soup or something, help him dry that mane of hair
I know we talked about this but I don't know why he's here
I mean shouldn't he be somewhere lifting hearts or striking fear?

Now don't misunderstand, I'm glad he likes our little place
He laughs when I play that Stones tune goes, 'I just wanna see his face'
And if the neighbors argue with me I just smile and nod
Then settle the dispute by saying 'let's just go ask god'

But for all of his magnificence I need you to explain
Why this dude don't have the common sense to come in out of the rain
And how come he appears as an old white guy in a robe
And why is he a he? I think god might be a transphobe

It shouldn't be too hard for God to show up in another shape
A woman or a penguin or a cactus or a grape
So really what's his purpose here and why'd we let him stay?
He doesn't seem to care that we're all sinning almost every day

He's using our good towels and he leaves them on the floor
Can't he just change the weather so it's not such a downpour?
And for all his grace and blessings he don't keep us safe from harm
On second thought don't bring God in just let him crash out in the barn

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Tinkerbell and Me

'Hey Tinkerbell,' I said, 'Why you still hanging around?
I'd think someone like you got better things to do than stay in this dead-end town.'
There was one bare bulb chasing off the gloom in that dingy little room
She was flying around throwing shadows until she set herself down on the sill

She said, 'Tell you the truth, here's a good place as any you'll see.
This fairy life ain't all it's cracked up to be. Now gimme another shot, will ya?'

I poured out a stiff one and placed it by her side
She inhaled the aroma and smiled
Then her wings started beating and she lifted straight up
Did a pirouette in midair and dove into the cup

It occurred to me then that I never had reason to think
How a pint-sized fairy would handle a life-size drink
Then I laughed 'cause I thought, 'But that's Tink.'

'Ooh, I'm gettin' tipsy,' she shouted to me when her nose appeared over the rim
She pushed back her whisky-soaked hair from her face and flashed me that tiny grin
'Be careful,' I said, 'or I'm cutting you off,' but that only made Tinkerbell smirk
'I'm a fairy you asshole, you can't fuck with me
I got spells I can throw make your dick cease to work.'

I said, 'Look at us, Tink, in this pitiful state, I thought all fairy tales ended happy?'
'First of all, nothing's ended,' said Tinkerbell, 'yet. So enjoy where you're at.
Now hit me again, make it snappy.'

'You ain't happy?' She asked as I refilled her glass. 'You got everything necessary.
Got a roof, got your booze, got your love for the blues
Not to mention your very own personal fairy.'
Then she's up in the air for a brief arabesque and a nice triple backflip down
And I wondered if this was the price of her fame as I watched her splash into the brown

Then the next thing I see, she's off blowing chunks in the sink
And I knew in that moment no one would believe me, but I'll never care what they think
I'll just laugh and I'll say, 'Well, that's Tink.'

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Dead For Years

I was snoring in bed when the telephone rang
The clock on the nightstand said quarter past two
At the end of the line the detective's voice said
'We ID'd the body, concluded for sure that the corpse is you'
I wasn't surprised, it wasn't even the worst of my fears
The fact of the matter is I been dead for years

Let me tell you the tale how this whole mess began
Crept up on me slowly and hid in my shoe
Worked its way up my leg, made a stop in my pants
Hung a left to my heart and then shot to my brain out my skull clean through
I didn't feel pain, you know I didn't feel much for awhile
I just started to notice it got a bit harder to get the bartender to smile

I been dead, I been dead for years
You'd never know it but I been dead for years

Kept my clothes and my hair in best possible shape
As I started decaying and falling apart
As for whiskey and joe well they just went right through
But I brushed my last tooth and made sure that my ribs didn't puncture my heart
Went out on some dates, but we couldn't quite seem to mesh
I guess those girls didn't dig the smell of rotting flesh

I been dead, I been dead for years
You'd never know it but I been dead for years

I know what you're saying, it's hard to believe
You think you really know somebody then you find you've been deceived
It wasn't on purpose, I swear that it's true
You see you'll do the same when it happens to you

I been dead, I been dead for years
You'd never know it but I been dead for years

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Terrible Business

'It's a terrible business,' said Vito the fat man. 'But what are ya gonna do?
'They'll yank out your teeth and cut off your head Right out on tenth avenue.'

We were sitting in lawn chairs in hot August sun just watching the traffic roll by
Vito just sighed and took out his gun. For a moment I thought he was gonna cry

'It's been 30-some years I been running this car wash
Took it over from my old dad
Never knew when I started it'd last me this long
It's a grind but ya know I'm glad.'

'Hey Richie,' he called in his baritone growl. 'Get out here and bring us some beers.
Ya know he's a good kid, pretty wise for his age. All this'll be his in a coupla years.'

Vito stared into space for a second reflecting, then went back to cleaning his gun
'It's a shame hafta do this in this day and age, but I sure as shit ain't gonna run.'

Richie poked through the door with a six in his hand
Set it down on the ground by his chair
Took his lighter and popped 'em and passed 'em around
Pushed his hand through his overgrown hair

'They comin' again? Why you're cleaning your piece?' Richie asked and he took a sip.
Vito nodded, 'I think we just best be prepared.' Looked around and said, 'I got a tip.'

Then he looked at me somber and said 'Listen Mikey, you finish your beer and you go.
It's for your own good if you're not in this hood. There's some shit you just don't wanna know.'

'It's a terrible business,' said Vito again. 'But what am I gonna do?
It's the price that you pay each and every day just to stay out on tenth avenue.'

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Girl Of My Dreams

I had a dream about you but it was not really you
It was a different more random version of you

She dressed just like you and seemed to know what to do
But when I looked in her eyes she was anything but true

Though I thought she was cute like I think you are too
I knew it just wouldn't last
I tried to make some conversation but it went nowhere fast

It was a dream and it was a blur
But one thing's for sure I like you better than her

You're not the girl of my dreams
And let's keep it that way
Don't be the girl of my dreams in the morning
I want her to go away
And you to stay

She was nervous and noisy, repeated things twice
She had opinions that weren't really nice
She said 'whatever' a lot. It wasn't all that hot

It was hard for me even to be at her place
She had redecorated in really bad taste
Every room was royal blue. You woulda hated it too

It was a dream and it was a blur
But one thing's for sure I like you better than her

You're not the girl of my dreams
And let's keep it that way
Don't be the girl of my dreams in the morning
I want her to go away
And you to stay

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The Last Bus

I grew up around here and I'm gonna be clear
It's not much of a place to come from
I got most of my school at the bar shooting pool
You could say that my people are kindly but dumb

I remember the day Buddy came up to me
With a light of some sort in his eyes
He said, 'Here's an idea, let's go travel the world
There's just so many new things that we oughta try'

Well I gave it some thought but perhaps not enough
When he asked me again I said no
Which is why I was there at the depot that night
Watching Buddy hop on to the last bus and go

Summer turned into fall, nothing happened at all
Just like nothing had happened before
Tore a page off the calendar every day
While the small talk went on at the general store

And I stayed at the bar banking shots off the rail
Downing shots just to help me get through
And from Buddy I never heard anything more
Where he ended up nobody round these parts knew

Now it's been a few years, OK more than a few
I still kick it around in my head
What would I have become if I'd taken that chance
Maybe famous or wealthy or hungry or dead

Which is why I'm out here at the depot tonight
With my boots and a fresh change of clothes
Got a ticket one way, got no reason to stay
I'll be on the last bus just to see where it goes

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Sideman

I'm not the kinda guy you take home
I'm not the man you call your own
I'm not the leader of your dream band
I'm only here to lend a hand and disappear in the glow
But I just want you to know

I'm your sideman
I'm here to make you look good
I'm your sideman
And I'll be right where I should
I'm your sideman when your front man's come and gone
I'll keep rockin on and on and on

I'm tender and tasteful but I can be bold
Loud or soft I can follow your lead
I'll learn all your licks just the way that you like 'em
And play them as long as you need

CHORS

When you ran through the changes and you got a little lost
Your sideman stepped it up and held it down
When everything is said and done until you come around to one
Your sideman's always gonna come around

I may not be the one to keep forever
But for now I'm gonna keep you in the groove
I got skills that you can use any way and time you choose
High and hard or low and slow I got a lot of tasty moves

I'm your sideman
I'm here to make you look good
I'm your sideman
And I'll be right where I should
I'm your sideman when your front man lets you down
You'll be glad you got a sideman in town

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One More Day

dedicated to Mike Herron

Sometimes when it's quiet I get an inspiration
And I realize it came from you
There was just a way you used to think about things
That always seemed to pull me through

Sometimes when it's quiet I try to hear your voice
But it's just the silent words in my head
It always makes me smile when I see a situation
And imagine what you would have said

Now that you're gone I just carry on
But I'm feeling a little bit worthless
Treasure the moments you had is what they say
But I would give all those treasures away
To spend just one more day with you

Sometimes when it's quiet I like to get lost in dreams
Cause they give me a reason
I'm walking the same streets you knew so well
Marking time with the change of the seasons

Sometimes when it's quiet i wonder where you are now
And the things that you see
Are you bigger than time and space in that place
Do you finally know what it means to be free?

Now that you're gone I'm still moving on
But I wonder if there's a purpose
You can't put a price on friendship is what they say
But whatever it costs i would gladly pay
To spend just one more day with you

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Feast Of Fools

I killed a goat with folks I met one summer in Kentucky
I chopped its head off with an axe. It came off clean, I was first time lucky
We split it down the middle and we threw it on the fire
Then drank moonshine and watched it roast. It took a little while

The head was lying on the ground. Its eyes were wide and staring
I picked it up, it blinked at me and then it started swearing
'Hey, what the fuck?' The goat exclaimed. 'The hell did you just do?
Perhaps before you take a life You oughta think it through'

I started to say something but the words caught in my throat
'What's wrong?' he said, 'cat got your tongue? Or did I get your goat?'
The folks around the fire were all caught up in their beer
I grabbed the head and moved away where nobody could hear

I put him down upon a rock and looked him in the eye
'I know,' he said 'you wanna ask me what's it like to die?'
He said 'I'd ask the same of you. So, what's it like to kill?'
Did you feel pain, remorse or shame, or was it just a thrill?'

'I've seen your kind before,' he said, and gave a little grin
'You'd travel round the world just tryin' to find where you fit in'
'You wear the hats and learn the lines and hope nobody sees
You're just a poser passing as a poet. Oh, bitch, please'

I didn't have a comeback, 'cause I knew that he was right
It sure was turning out to be an interesting night
And though he'd put me in my place already once or twice
The only think that I could think to ask was his advice

The goat stuck out his tongue at me, said, 'Try this on for style
Stop following your heart, and use your head once in a while'
'The best advice that I can give I learned from my old granny
Don't be a stupid Billy always chasing after Nannys'

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Feast Of Fools *continued*

'Just look around at all these clowns, it's all a feast of fools.
Don't try to play their game, son, figure out your own damn rules.'
The goat head sighed, 'Now leave me here, and get your ass to bed
I'm sure you're pretty drunk now, and I'm really kinda dead'

When I woke up the next day my head was two feet thick
There'd been some moonshine after all, and I felt slightly sick
I tried to put together what I'd heard the night before
Did I get wisdom from a goat? I wasn't really sure

In any case I hit the road and left that place behind
But I couldn't shake the questions that the beast put in my mind
I killed a goat one summer night and it got pretty gory
I've only killed once more since then, but that's another story