



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February XX, 2015

**RAY WYLIE HUBBARD SCARES UP MORE BADASS ROCKIN'
GRIT 'N' GROOVE ON *THE RUFFIAN'S MISFORTUNE*,
OUT APRIL 7 ON HIS OWN BORDELLO RECORDS**

Renowned Texas songwriter/Americana hero returns with lean 'n' mean follow-up to 2012's triumphant *The Grifter's Hymnal*; album soon to be followed by his uproarious, hair-raising autobiography, *A Life ... Well, Lived*.

Co-produced by Hubbard and bassist George Reiff, *The Ruffian's Misfortune* showcases Hubbard's bluesy slide alongside the twin guitar leads of Gabe Rhodes and Hubbard's son, Lucas

WIMBERLEY, Texas — When it comes to down 'n' dirty roots 'n' roll, nobody in the wide world of Americana music today does it better than Ray Wylie Hubbard. Except, it seems, for Hubbard himself. After riding a decade-long career resurgence into the national spotlight with 2012's acclaimed *The Grifter's Hymnal* and his first ever appearance on the *Late Show With David Letterman* ("I didn't want to peak too soon," quips Hubbard, 68), the iconoclastic Texas songwriter is back to continue his hot streak with *The Ruffian's Misfortune* — his 16th album (and third on his own Bordello Records, via Thirty Tigers) — due out April 7, 2015.

From his humble beginnings as an Oklahoma folkie in the '60s to his wild ride through the '70s progressive country movement, and onward through the honky-tonk fog of the '80s to his sobriety-empowered comeback as a songwriter's songwriter in the '90s, Hubbard was already a bona fide legend by the time he *really* found his groove right at the turn of the century. That's when he finally felt confident enough in his guitar playing to dive headlong into his own inimitable take on the blues, a form he'd admired but steered clear of for decades, thinking its mysteries were beyond his grasp as a basic chord strummer.

"I used to go see Lightnin' Hopkins and Mance Lipscomb and Freddie King, all those cats, but I never could play like them — I guess because I never took the time or effort to *try* — until I was in my 40s and learned how to finger pick," says Hubbard. "Once I learned how to finger pick, I started going, 'Oh, OK, *this* is how they did all that!' Then I started learning open tuning, and then slide, and it was just this incredible freedom that gave all these songs a door to come through that wasn't there before. It was like all of a sudden having this whole other language or a whole other set of tools to add to my arsenal."

In lieu of drugs and alcohol, that language became Hubbard's new addiction — and the title of his 2001 album *Eternal and Lowdown* somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy: 14 years further down the road, he's still chasing hellhounds deep into the underbelly of the blues, with a Lightnin' Hopkins gleam in his eyes and a Rolling Stone swagger in his boot steps. *The Ruffian's Misfortune* is his latest missive home from this leg of his long journey. Its message? Don't wait up.

Packing 10 brand new songs into just under 34 minutes, *The Ruffian's Misfortune* is the tightest and most focused record of Hubbard's career; it will also be his first record to be

pressed on vinyl in more than 30 years. But its grooves cut just as deep in digital form, every track rumbling like muddy water over a bed of lethal rocks and gnarled roots. The terrain ain't exactly pretty, but every record Hubbard's fished, fought, and dragged from those waters — including such fan and critic favorites as 2002's aptly-titled *Growl*, 2006's *Snake Farm*, and 2010's *A. Enlightenment, B. Endarkenment (Hint: There is no C)* — has only strengthened his resolve to follow his gypsy muse closer and closer to that dark river's source. Hubbard hints that he may someday find his way back to less rocky ground, admitting that he keeps a 12-string on hand "thinking I might go back to more Gordon Lightfoot type stuff ... every once in a while the old folkie guy will rear his ugly head" ... but *The Ruffian's Misfortune* finds him still a long way from *that*.

"I really liked *The Grifter's Hymnal*, and I think *The Ruffian's Misfortune* is still kind of a part of that," he offers, noting that he likes the way both titles would look just as fitting on a dusty old book jacket — or perhaps at the start of a silent movie — as they do on an album cover. But the similarities don't end there. "This record is pretty much where I am as far as trying to make records that work on a couple of different levels, by laying down a groove with cool guitar tones and vicious nasty licks with lyrics that have a little depth and weight and even a little humor thrown in, too, as life is pretty much like that."

Hubbard describes the process of getting those lyrics down just right — with every line and word weighted and measured with a poet's discipline — as both "a joy and anguish." But the actual recording this time around went down remarkably quickly, with most of the tracks nailed down live in two or three takes over the course of five days at the Zone studio in Dripping Springs, Texas, right up the road from the rustic Hill Country cabin Hubbard shares with his wife, manager, and record label president, Judy. Hubbard's ferociously gifted 21-year-old son, Lucas — who's been holding his own onstage with the old man since his late teens — shared lead guitar duties on the album with the equally talented Gabe Rhodes, swapping leads the whole way through. "I really wanted to have that Ron Wood/Keith Richards two-guitar vibe, you know?" explains Ray Wylie, who of course played a fair amount of guitar himself: namely, all of the slide and acoustic stuff. The bedrock is provided by bassist/co-producer George Reiff and drummer Rick Richards, whose "deep in the pocket," *just*-behind-the-beat timing has been Hubbard's not-so-secret weapon for years on both record and stage. Hubbard raves that Reiff and Richards make for such a potent groove machine that he's had to share them on more than one occasion with friend (and poacher) Joe Walsh: "He called me up and went, 'I don't want to steal your band ... but I'm going to steal your *Snake Farm* band,'" Hubbard recounts with a laugh. "Which of course is a high compliment to George and Rick."

Sonically, *The Ruffian's Misfortune* picks up right where *The Grifter's Hymnal* left off, with Hubbard and his wrecking crew confidently jumping from jagged, wicked-cool roots rock ("All Loose Things," "Down by the River") to trashy, '60s-style garage stomp (the ferocious "Chick Singer, Badass Rockin'" and riotous "Bad on Fords"), Mississippi and Texas blues ("Mr. Musselwhite's Blues," "Jessie Mae") and even earnest country-gospel name-checking Sister Rosetta Tharpe ("Barefoot in Heaven"). The songs themselves are rife with wayward souls worthy of both words in the album's title — sinners, luckless gamblers, drunks, thieves, and at least one beautiful, fierce woman ("Too Young Ripe, Too Young Rotten"). Some of these characters *own* their misfit/outsider status with a proud and exhilarating air of invincibility (like the aforementioned badass-rockin' "Chick Singer," equal parts sloppy cool Chrissie Hynde and sneering Joan Jett), while others are all-too-conscious of their mortality ("Hey Mama, My Time Ain't Long") and not overly confident in their prayers for salvation ("Stone Blind Horses"). As narrator and guide, Hubbard doles out more empathy than judgment for the whole motley lot, but his words sting like grit in open wounds just the same. As he puts it rather ominously in the theme-setting opener, "All Loose Things," "The gods can't save us from ourselves."

Actually, Hubbard gives *that* line to a blackbird — the same animal that also observes, tongue-in-beak, “Look at them fools down there, they ain’t got no wings!” It’s an old trick he says he picked up from studying *Aesop’s Fables*. Of course, Aesop doesn’t get a co-writing credit on that number, nor do Charlie Musselwhite or Jessie Mae Hemphill for directly inspiring “Mr. Musselwhite’s Blues” and “Jessie Mae,” respectively. But Dallas rocker Jonathan Tyler does get one for lending a hand (and a cool guitar lick, although he doesn’t play it himself on the record) in the writing of “Hey Mama, My Time Ain’t Long,” while Marco Gutierrez and Sean “Nino” Cooper of El Paso’s Dirty River Boys collaborated with Hubbard on the cautionary border anthem “Down by the River” and Ronnie Dunn of Brooks & Dunn fame pitched in on “Bad on Fords.” After taking a shine to *The Grifter’s Hymnal*, Dunn invited Hubbard up to Nashville to write some songs together for a solo project he working on. Hubbard in turn was impressed by the country superstar’s legit Red Dirt roots and rock ‘n’ roll attitude, so he figured Dunn might get a kick out of an idea he had about an unrepentant Okie car thief with a fast and furious pick-up line: “I’m bad on Fords and Chevrolets, but I’ll be good to you!” He figured right — though neither of them could have foreseen Red Rocker Sammy Hagar getting his hands on a demo of the song and cutting it first, on 2013’s *Sammy Hagar & Friends*. (“He does it a lot different than I do,” Hubbard deadpans. “We didn’t do any high kicks when we recorded it.”)

There’s a bit more to that particular story, which is but one of hundreds, if not thousands, of colorful anecdotes Hubbard could tell about his long and eventful career — some going even further back than the one about how he came to write “Up Against the Wall, Redneck Mother,” which became one of the defining anthems of the entire progressive country era after Jerry Jeff Walker recorded it on his classic 1973 album *iViva Terlingua!* He’s certainly got more than enough of them — and years of insight to match — to fill a book, which is something he finally got around to tackling after persistent prodding (and a bit of editing help) from friend and music writer Thom Jurek. After spending the better part of the last two years sifting through his memories and hashing them out on the page, Hubbard’s autobiography is off to the printer and due out this spring or summer right alongside *The Ruffian’s Misfortune*. It’s exceedingly Hubbard-ly title? *A Life ... Well, Lived*.

His book may be finished, but Hubbard’s not done, well, living that life. And as long as he keeps his gratitude higher than his expectations (to borrow a line from *The Grifter’s Hymnal*’s “Mother Blues,” pointedly delivered by Hubbard himself and not some wiseacre Aesop’s crow), his fortune going forward should be pretty good.

“As I look back, I’ve had some amazing cool things happen, but I still feel like I’m moving forward,” he says. “I still enjoy it, and I think there’s still plateaus to reach. I don’t know what they’re going to be, because I haven’t really sat around thinking about it; when I wrote ‘Mother Blues’ for the last record, I wasn’t thinking, ‘I’ll put this album out and try to get on *Letterman*’ — he just heard the song on Sirius Radio and called up and asked for us. So who knows what will happen with this record? All I know is I feel very fortunate right now in that I’m playing gigs that are really fun to do. And as long as I can keep writing and performing new songs, I think I could keep doing this for awhile. I saw some show once where Pinetop Perkins was playing at 90 years old, and Judy said, ‘You’ve got another 20 years in you!’”

#

For more information about Ray Wylie Hubbard, please contact Conqueroo:

Cary Baker • (323) 656-1600 • cary@conqueroo.com

Brian O’Neal • (310) 702-8844 • brian@conqueroo.com