

# Steve earle: a true country outlaw

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When Steve Earle first arrived in Nashville from Austin in the 1970s, he was the young gun among a group of veteran singer-songwriters like Townes Van Zandt, Rodney Crowell, Guy Clark, Waylon Jennings and more. This is also the onset of the outlaw movement. And, Earle attempts to revisit it on his new record.

He first launched his album “Guitar Town” 1986. He says, “There was this moment when country music that was art was going on here and in Austin, and I was there.” Steve Earle hit the Nashville scene in the mid-’80s with his album, “Guitar Town,” which is still regarded as one of the most important debut albums ever released in country music.

Earle wrote the record and that was when he exchanged his acoustic guitar for a Fender Telecaster and spent a lot of time listening to Jennings’ “Honky Tonk Heroes.” He collaborated on the title track with Willie Nelson that being an outlaw meant “you can’t ever go home.”

“I was always grateful and was very aware that I had just gotten here in time to be a part of a moment,” said Earle. “A lot of the things that I am able to do at this point in my life, I am able to do because I happened to be lucky and be in the right place at the right time.”

He also says that he still meets fans who believe the movement was all about booze, drugs and a freewheeling lifestyle. Note that Earle’s previous addictions have contributed to that belief. “Part of the point of this record was to rehabilitate the term ‘outlaw,’” he said.

## **So You Wanna Be an Outlaw**

This is Steve's new album and he is working with a fellow Texan Miranda Lambert for a duet in "This is How it Ends." The two have already worked together back in 2005 for Lambert's debut album.

Although she wrote the song "Kerosene," which led to her first Grammy nomination. She later realized that it sounded too similar to a song penned by Earle, so she gave him credit. "I hate telling her this, but I would have never done anything about it," said the 62-year-old Grammy-winning songwriter known for songs like "Copperhead Road."

"It's a gift from Miranda the way I see it."

However the connection they made and the chance meeting at a beauty salon, made Earle decide to properly write a song together. So last year, they came up with a twangy breakup song. This will be part of his album "So You Wannabe An Outlaw," released last week.

"It was a really cool experience to write with him and he's such an amazing songwriter," Lambert said. "I was intimidated but I learned a lot."

Earle has the same high opinion of Lambert, calling her last effort – the critically acclaimed double album "The Weight of These Wings" – stunning.

## **No Love for Country Male Stars**

Steve has had a great influence in country music and its history but he finds the format too restrictive. He is very straightforward when his opinion on this is asked.

In an interview during a tour rehearsal in Nashville, Tennessee he says, “ The women are the strong singer-songwriters in Nashville at this point.” Chris Stapleton is an exception. Most of the guys, their stuff is all right, but they are mostly, largely just party songs. It’s kind of hip-hop for people who are afraid of black people, I guess, as far as I can tell.” He doesn’t blame country radio for largely ignoring female artists though.

“ I think the labels have an idea of what is selling, and right now the common wisdom is guys under 30 is what’s selling in country music,” Earle said.

On the other hand, Earle also expressed pretty harsh words for male country stars. He actually thinks that the male stars are not singing country music at all while saying, “ The best stuff coming out of Nashville is all by women except for Chris Stapleton,” he said. “ I like the new Kendrick Lamar record, so I’ll just listen to that.”

The legendary artist made his comments in an interview with the Guardian, where he also said Noel Gallagher was “ the most overrated songwriter in the whole history of pop music. Earle’s comments about male country artists echo those made by the late Merle Haggard, who died last year aged 79.

“ I can’t tell what they’re doing,” he said in an interview in 2015. “ They’re talking about screwing on a pickup tailgate and things of that nature.

“ I don’t find no substance. I don’t find anything you can whistle and nobody even attempts to write a melody. It’s more of that kid’s stuff. It’s hot right now, but I tell you what, it’s cooling off.”

It seems that he is really living up to being an outlaw with his opinions and he is not backing down with it. Let's just hope that these won't overshadow his new album as it competes with other releases. He probably needs the attention but at the expense of others?