

“Shelley King is the complete superlative package - a powerhouse singer, a smart literary songwriter, and a savvy businesswoman. She has inspired and motivated me and led me into some really fun musical adventures.”

– Marcia Ball, Grammy nominated, Austin City Limits Hall of Famer and Texas State Musician

Shelley King is ready for the party with *Kick Up Your Heels*

Superlative, powerhouse, smart and savvy are only a few of the adjectives used to describe Shelley King, who is debuting her 9th album, *Kick Up Your Heels*, in the late summer of 2019.

The blues, roots-rock, gospel singer stands out in the crowd as an award-winning songwriter, steeped in Americana music. Born in Arkansas, and raised back and forth between Arkansas and Texas, Shelley has surrounded herself with A-list mentors from Marcia Ball to John Magnie and Delbert McClinton.

Kick Up Your Heels is her best effort yet, with guest artists Delbert McClinton, The Subdudes, Marcia Ball, Carolyn Wonderland, Tony Redman, Byron Isaacs (Lumineers) and Cindy Cashdollar. Her band includes Sarah Brown on bass, Marvin Dykhuis on guitars, vocals and mandolin, and Chip Dolan on keys and accordion, and longtime drummer, Perry Drake.

Shelley says, “It feels like a party album. In a time when we have so many challenges as a people and as a country, we need this music. We can let it all go. We all have a weight to carry, but we need to have some fun. I feel that in some of these songs, there are trials and tribulations, but with good music and good friends, it always feels like we are going to come out on top.”

Kick Up Your Heels runs the gamut of emotions, beginning with an introspective memory of one of her musical heroes, Levon Helm. The album’s opening track, “Levon’s New Drumset” had its beginning as she was sitting on a porch in Woodstock, New York, collecting words and images for this song but not completing it. Over several more trips to Woodstock she reworked the lyrics, each time adding a little more to the story. Inspiration struck again when she was playing a Midnight Ramble with the Woodstock Lone Stars: a super-group including Carolyn Wonderland, Marcia Ball, Cindy Cashdollar, Amy Helm, and a Woodstock based rhythm section. “It completely fell together - magically.” she recalls. “I wrote another verse right there, and it came together seamlessly, without a wrong word.”

“Storming in the South” takes the listeners through the hurricanes that rip through the South and the high winds in a relationship between two people who have chosen to take it on, go through it together, and come out on the other side. It is a song of resilience, and of sticking together, and making it through the storm.

The album brings on the party full-force with “Hurricane Party.” Shelley said she was walking on a trail near her Texas hill country home, when her friend and mentor, Marcia Ball called to say her Florida tour was canceled because of a hurricane, “so, let’s play dominoes.” Shelley said,

“It’s a hurricane party!” and immediately started working on this song. She sang lines into her phone, texting song verses back and forth, co-writing with Marcia, it all came together before she got off the trail – in time for a game of dominoes! Delbert McClinton and Marcia bring guest vocals to this highlight of the album. It’s definitely a party.

Levon Helm and Henry Glover wrote a song called “Blues So Bad,” that Shelley discovered on a 1977 Helm album. That song stuck with her. “Anytime I heard it, I sang along. It makes me feel cool. In the studio, Delbert (McClinton) played harmonica and sang backup on it.” Yeah, that’ll make anyone feel cool.

“One Shot At A Time” is a song Shelley wrote years ago about a bar in San Angelo, Texas. “People were having a good time and were so drunk.” she recalls. “They were sending shots to the band and eventually shots were lined up all the way across the stage. Everyone in the band gets to have some fun with this one: from Marvin Dykhuis’ and Tony Redmans’ duelling lead guitars to Sarah Brown’s low-end bass solo.

The title song, “Kick Up Your Heels,” is a co-write with another of Shelley’s heroes, John Magnie of the Subdudes. “John came up with the melody and turned it over to me to write the lyrics,” she says. “We were thinking about writing a song for Marcia (Ball), right after she recorded *Tattoo Lady and the Alligator Man*, feeling that Louisiana rhythm and how she kicks her heels when she plays piano. When I recorded it with my band, it was good, but it was missing something, so we got the Subdudes to add a little crazy.” Steve Amedée lays down a fun second line snare rhythm and the dudes add their rich harmonies and fun extras. Marcia Ball plays piano and John Magnie backs her on accordion, a first time musical collaboration for them.

One of Shelley’s inspirations has always been Aretha Franklin, and “Soulville” showcases that influence. “I first discovered Aretha Franklin’s version of this song and then later Dinah Washington’s version. Dinah was one of the songwriters, along with Henry Glover. I started doing a little research, and found that Henry was tight with Levon (Helm), and is even in one of the early photos of Levon building his barn in Woodstock.” Henry soon became another of Shelley’s songwriter favorites, (see “*Blues So Bad*,” a Helm/Glover co-write) and completes yet another circle of influence in her musical odyssey. Ask Shelley to tell you about rehearsing in Levon’s barn on the anniversary of his death with her good friends, a good bottle of whiskey, and a ghost for good measure.

“Heart of a Girl” showcases Shelley’s songwriter and vocal talent, and a backstory of romantic magic. “I still believe magic can happen. The idea came to me as I watched my mom fall in love again. Here was a no-nonsense businesswoman who reunited with my real father at one of my shows. They had not seen one another for more than 30 years,” Shelley says. “And suddenly, she had that soft heart of a girl, that innocence that believes in hopefulness. To see her like that was beautiful.”

Keeping the party going strong, Shelley brings “Crush” to the mix. “It’s a fun, groupie song. I won’t call any names out on this one. Someone close to me had a groupie crush on a bad boy musician, and I wrote that song for her just for fun.” With lines like “If you got somebody, I’ll make you forget her,” and “Would you rock my world like you rock that mic?,” it’s definitely a celebration song that makes everyone want to grab a mic and sing along.”

A pivotal moment in her career was in 2008, when Shelley was named Texas State Musician by the Texas Legislature, and found her voice resonating with fans across the state – and the nation. “‘How Eagles Fly’ is about hope and positivity: an anthem for America. There’s a whole lot of division out there,” Shelley continues, “but ultimately, we are all in this together. We have a lot more in common than that which separates us. Music brings us together, and everyone can agree with lyrics that speak to the common American dream.”

Kick Up Your Heels is a high-water mark for Shelley King. Through multiple incarnations of bands with friends and collaborators, and performing at hundreds of house concerts, honkytonks, theatres, festivals and solo shows, she has explored different avenues and attitudes, but she has hit her stride with this new project. She proves with this album, created with her musical friends and family, that music is much more than a career for her. “It’s all about connections,” she says. *And Kick Up Your Heels* brings Shelley King’s band family together for a reunion that is one hell of a party.