



**JACKSON-TRIGGS**  
NIAGARA ESTATE

## 2013 SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

### Artist Biography **Steven Page**

Steven Page will tell you that the themes explored in *Page One* are those of love, loss, and new beginnings. These are universally felt, and no less so for Page. *Page One* marks his first solo release since leaving the highly-successful band he co-founded, wrote and performed with for more than 20 years, Barenaked Ladies.

*Page One* is not Page's contribution to the they-said, he-said discourse over how the last chapter of that book should be read, it is the latest in an established and continuing exploration of his craft as songwriter and performer. It represents not a version of yesterday but rather a vision of today and tomorrow. Leave your bags at the door, wipe your feet, and come in for a listen.

"It feels great. It's not as difficult as I thought it could be, being out of my comfort zone," says Page. "As soon as I'd left BNL, I told my agent to put me on as many folk festivals as possible, so no one could assume I'd slip into the clichéd role of the eccentric hermit. I'm much more the eccentric extrovert!" *Page One* is new—yet vintage—Steven Page. "I'd like to think I'm still delivering *that thing* that has connected with audiences for so long. I enjoy the process of being artistic, of taking chances and not knowing what might come next. Some listeners might have expected a brooding, woe-is-me album from me but, while there is some reflection, this is not a collection of diary entries. It's been very liberating to make this solo record, as there's been no 'conflict' with other projects. That in itself has been a true pleasure."

Steven Page's distinctive voice is among the most instantly recognizable in Canadian music and *Page One* is immediately familiar but undeniably fresh as he captains the ship in the album's opener, "A New Shore". To navigate this sea, Page assembled a stellar crew, beginning with co-writing the songs with Stephen Duffy and Craig Northey (The Odds). The album is co-produced by Page and John Fields; the two playing most instruments, along with guests Pete Thomas (Elvis Costello); Esthero; Glen Phillips (Toad the Wet Sprocket); Kevin Fox; Prince's NPG brass section, The Hornheads; Bryden, Jesse and Jay Baird (Feist); and the late Will Owsley in one of his last recordings.

"I'm excited by the album and to be performing it live as well. The band is just so good, with the Baird brothers, Kevin Fox and Karen Graves. Although I've performed outside of BNL in several guises, with this it has a different kind of resonance because previously I might have been playing a part in someone else's project. This time, I'm in charge. Luckily, I haven't had to crack the whip much, but that's because everyone has a lot of taste."

Page's first solo sailing was 2005's *The Vanity Project*, co-written with Stephen Duffy. Earlier this year, he released *A Singer Must Die*, a collaboration with the Toronto chamber music group Art of Time Ensemble. He has also scored three plays for the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in the last 5 years. Over his 10-album career with Barenaked Ladies, Steven Page has been blessed with myriad international awards and nominations while in the process selling over 12 million albums. *Page One* is not only his most recent work, it is the most distilled expression of Steven Page.

## **PAGE ONE – IN HIS OWN WORDS**

**A NEW SHORE:** Within weeks of splitting from BNL, Craig Northey came and stayed with me and we wrote this song. I had been through the wars, and was just coming out the other side. One of the biggest hurdles to overcome when you're writing with someone else is the trust factor; you really need to rely on your songwriting partner to coax the things out of you that you wouldn't normally say. This was a dynamic that I had developed with both Ed Robertson and Stephen Duffy over a period of years. With Craig, it was a period of days. After a couple of days banging out this song, we both looked at each other in embarrassment and excitement when we realized how raw and honest this song was. It's about moving on, but more importantly, it's about landing safely. It's triumphant, and – for possibly the first time in one of my songs – hopeful.

**INDECISION:** A song from the vaults of co-writing with Stephen Duffy, one of my best friends. It wasn't considered for BNL as, at the time, there was a shift away from attaching to anything from outside the band. I had been sitting on it with the thought of it being on my next solo record. I always loved the lyrics, which I feel have that quintessential dimension. Esthero dropped by to lend her best Astrud Gilberto impression.

**CLIFTON SPRINGS:** One of the more personal songs on the album but it's NOT about the arrest. It's about in-between, uncertain times and the fallout from not trusting one's heart. I was aiming for the wistful folk-rock feel of classic late-60s/early 70s records like The Mamas and The Papas or Harper's Bizarre. I demoed this on a laptop in my bedroom and very little was added in the studio. Will Owsley plays pedal steel on this track, recorded only a few months before his death. It is one of his last recordings.

**ENTOURAGE:** Another Page/Duffy number, which he already recorded (along with me singing back-up). We wrote it with a bossa nova feel and I, at some point, changed it into a strummer on acoustic. I imagined this to have a big-sounding, Trevor Horn-type production, from the period when he was doing Frankie Goes To Hollywood and Marc Almond records. I frequently think of a particular producer's sound when looking for the feeling of a song and was vindicated when Pete came in to record his drum part and exclaimed he thought it sounded like FGTH! The song is about the alternate reality of celebrity culture, where ordinary morals need not apply, as inspired by BNL's tourist days at the top of the world's charts.

**MARRY ME:** This one came really quickly in recording; we did it in something like four takes. Stylistically, there are nods to The Jam (teenage heroes) and The Mountain Goats (friends of mine). The theme is about departure, whether from a marriage or a career, the need to tear things down in order to start fresh, and the hope that we don't repeat the same mistakes.

**ALL THE YOUNG MONOGAMISTS:** I've never written a proper love song, really. My stuff always contains something of a sourness. This is me with my guard down: A real, live love song.

**SHE'S TRYING TO SAVE ME:** Stones to Beatles to Monkees to Billy Joel as played by The Dukes of Stratosphere. At least that's how John Fields and I envisioned it. I wrote this with Stephen Duffy, and one of the things I love about writing with him is when we get to writing the bridge, it's like opening a door to another room, and then closing it again after eight bars. By the end of the song, we've descended into the Klezmer world I often tend to land in.

**OVER JOY:** For this song, the fantasy producer in mind is Jeff Lynne, were he producing a record in the Rubber Soul era. I think it comes from the same place as a song like "Brian Wilson", choosing dark over light. I like the juxtaposition of a dark lyric over a sprightly melody. Glen Phillips happened by the studio (he's a friend of John Fields) and was pressed into singing backing vocals. I knew the song was working when I later overheard him on the phone, saying he was singing the happiest-sounding song about depression he'd ever heard.

**IF YOU LOVE ME:** Inspired by a lot of the music I grew up listening to in the 80s, from ABC to

Scritti Politti. I love the cynical edge in the lyrics, like “Tonight you might be near of sight, but that’s all right with me.” It’s the crassest come-on and makes me smile every time. I think it would make a good soundtrack to the scene at the high school dance at the end of *Pretty in Pink*. Instead of OMD, there could be this...

LEAVE HER ALONE: I came up with the chorus while walking the dog and amazingly remembered it upon arrival home. [So often you forget your ‘great’ ideas but I console myself with the belief that if they’re great, they stick—if not, they weren’t really much good. I hope. ] The song is about the sense of being stuck in a provincial backwater, breaking out, failing, and coming home. It’s from the perspective of a parent with an adult child; it could be a dark sequel to “She’s Leaving Home.” I wrote the verse as a glam rock shuffle with Craig, and imagined the chorus as a big-band arrangement in the style of Billy May or Neal Hefti. Imagine Morrissey meets Sinatra. I recorded the basic tracks with Fields and he sent it to his friends in Minneapolis, Prince’s NPG horn section. They recorded a part and sent it back (the next day!), the result of which was me being able to find the space to sing it in a way I hadn’t felt able to get to yet. Maybe I’m trying to out-Bubl  Bubl , but it’s still got the Steven Page wink™.

QUEEN OF AMERICA: I tried for something like Bowie’s “Heroes” but Fields thought it sounded a little ordinary and we messed with it until it took shape this way. The song is partly about the co-opting of gay culture by straight culture, which frequently doesn’t necessarily benefit the former. Which, of course, is why I’m doing the same thing in making it sound like this.

THE CHORUS GIRL: It’s all about the chorus, girl. It’s about the process of writing songs, looking for the universal and never finding it. Heck, the writer of this song doesn’t really find the chorus, ultimately. It’s about the power of music, and the frustration in creating it. In the end, whether it’s about art or about love, it’s about dedication and opening up oneself to the vulnerability of feeling everything profoundly.