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BLUEGRASS VIRTUOSO RON BLOCK TO RELEASE

***WALKING SONG* ON JULY 30, 2013;**

**SOLO SET FEATURES GUEST SPOTS BY ALISON KRAUSS, DAN TYMINSKI,
KATE RUSBY, JERRY DOUGLAS, BARRY BALES,
AND OTHER MUSIC LUMINARIES**

Ron Block, long regarded as one of the leading lights of contemporary acoustic music, will release *Walking Song*, his third solo set for Rounder Records, on July 30, 2013. While Block is best known as a two-decade veteran of Alison Krauss & Union Station, he is also a highly regarded songwriter, singer and producer. In recent years, he has also come to prominence for his writings about Christian theology and spirituality.

Block has written many a gospel song for Alison Krauss and Union Station, and has had songs recorded by Union Station band mate Dan Tyminski, Michael W. Smith, Rhonda Vincent, Randy Travis, The Boxcars, April Verch, The Cox Family, Sierra Hull, and The Forbes Family. He's also an in-demand sideman, who has contributed to albums by everyone from Dailey & Vincent, Bill Frisell and Andrew Peterson to Dolly Parton, Alan Jackson and Vince Gill.

For *Walking Song*, Block enlisted the help of a newfound co-writer, poet Rebecca Reynolds, whom he first encountered through his non-music writings. Block explains, "I would write posts on the theological topics that I tend to write about, and Rebecca would be one of the commenters. Whenever she'd write something, I'd think, 'Man, she's smart. Smart without trying to be smart, with a very poetic way of putting things.' I don't know how it actually ended up happening, but she said, 'Hey, would you ever want to try to write a song together?'"

Interestingly, Reynolds wasn't aware of Block's prominence in the bluegrass world. She recalls, "We were a little ways into making songs," she continues, "when I was Googling him, and I saw a Ron Block guitar. Then I saw a Ron Block banjo. I wrote him and said, 'This is YOU, isn't it? You have instruments named after you?' I had that rare and beautiful joy of finding out that a dear friend and co-creator was Bluegrass Superman in disguise."

Block and Reynolds embarked on a highly unorthodox yet extremely fruitful co-writing process that yielded some 50 songs, including all eleven of the originals on his new album.

"Let There Be Beauty," a Celtic-tinged waltz-time meditation on "stepping into creative freedom," came to life when he wrote music to her lyrics. The same goes for "Summer's Lullaby," except that time he happened to be backstage at the venerable Ryman Auditorium when inspiration hit. While visiting his in-laws in Canada, he came up with the sprightly, fetching tune to "Ivy," sent it to Reynolds, and received lyrics from her the very same day. He says, "Almost everything else was done sitting down there in my studio, and she's on Skype and we're going back and forth: 'How about this?'"

To the songs that he and Reynolds co-wrote, Block added his arrangements of three instrumentals: the fiddle tune "Devil In the Strawstack," inspired by Tommy Jarrell's version and executed at perfect Appalachian clogging tempo, the equally danceable "Shortnin' Bread" and a spare, contemplative reading of the old hymn "What Wondrous Love Is This."

When it came time to record, Block holed up in his studio and laid down every lick of banjo and guitar himself, a departure from what he's done on his other albums and from Union Station's increased emphasis on live tracking. The experience took him back to sonic exploration of his youth.

“Since I was 15 or 16 and I got a four-track recorder,” he says, “I was always recording on my own, and I was always layering and then getting other people to play on the stuff. I have all kinds of recordings from those years of doing what I did on this record. So it seems really natural to do it that way.”

Block then called on his Union Station band mates, Krauss and Tyminski for backing vocals, Jerry Douglas for dobro and Barry Bales for bass, and an array of other musicians who’d be familiar to any modern bluegrass fan, such as mandolin players Hull, Mike Compton and Sam Bush, fiddler Stuart Duncan and singer Suzanne Cox. Block even sent a few songs overseas so that British folksinger Kate Rusby could contribute delicate harmonies. He’d played on her twentieth anniversary recording, and she was only too happy to return the favor.

Walking Song shows just how easily Block can move between various branches on the family tree of acoustic music, presenting his polished takes on Scots-Irish balladry, Appalachian fiddle tunes, bluegrass romps, singer-songwriter narratives and, for good measure, grooving newgrass. And unlike his previous album, *DoorWay*, this one’s entirely unplugged.

Block long since secured his reputation as a deeply thoughtful musician. On *Walking Song*, he’s gotten back in touch with his music-making roots, and it’s a joyous occasion indeed.

For more information, or to request a review copy of *Walking Song*, please contact Regina Joskow at Rounder, rjoskow@rounder.com, 917-532-5687.

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