

It's the truth behind what an artist does – and the way they choose to do it – that defines their art. And while the ways in which audiences get their music has changed, the reasons why a certain kind of artist makes music have remained the same. Call it an uncompromising commitment, an inspired confidence, or just the need to share with and connect to those who listen. For Jeff Black, it's what's continued to build a career like few other singer/songwriters in the business. It's how he's grown one of the most fervent grassroots followings anywhere. And it's why *B-Sides and Confessions, Volume Two* is his most musically and emotionally resonant album yet.

"This album comes straight out of my journal. There's nothing accidental about it," Jeff says. "I'm very dirt-road with my writing. It's always been a candle, guitar and piano, pencil and paper."

Jeff's five previously acclaimed albums, numerous indie-film soundtracks, fan-sponsored tours and a catalog of songs cut by artists as diverse as Alison Krauss & Union Station, Waylon Jennings, BlackHawk and Dierks Bentley have forged Jeff's reputation as a road warrior and songwriter's songwriter throughout the Alt-Country, AAA and Folk fields. His pioneering podcast 'Black Tuesdays' – glowingly profiled by NPR in 2005 and subsequently copied by numerous performers – constitutes 100+ downloadable EPs that continue to grow both his live audiences and record sales. It's a unique melding of old-school touring and new digital content, creating a community of devout fans who have in turn made *B-Sides and Confessions, Volume Two* possible.

"I was lucky a long time ago to realize that as an artist in these times, I need to stay in touch with the people who come to listen to my music and pay their hard-earned money to see a live performance. And I think that has to do with everything I try to say in my songs," Jeff explains.

With *B-Sides* comes the launch of the TAPROOM, Black's virtual speakeasy where these patrons connect with not only Black but each other. Featuring everything from Black's Hoot - a fan-generated cover radio - to 333, Black's virtual stage to the world, the TAPROOM is a cutting-edge file exchange site that brings Black Tuesdays into a 360 degree multi-media format.

When *B-Sides and Confessions, Volume One* was released in 2003, Black used the "b-sides" moniker as a tongue-in-cheek way to remind listeners he still had a sense of humor after the closing of his first record label.

"I knew that one day I would make a Volume Two as I had so many other things to say," Jeff notes. "And it's not that these songs in themselves are cast-offs, it is just sort of a different little turn that I like to take. Because I do love so many kinds of music and although my whole style or motif seems to kind of stay in my vein, I do feel that I try and weave down the road as much as I can - just for honesty's sake."

As Jeff began to craft the songs – several of which he'd been performing on the podcast and in concert – he discovered textures within them he hadn't heard before. He also found that the freedoms he'd created within his writing/recording process allowed him to reach for the phone.

“The greatest talent of any good producer is knowing whom to call to bring their own muses and magic to the recording,” he says, “then knowing how to get out of the way.” Jeff’s first call was to longtime friend and collaborator Sam Bush, whose 1996 recording of Jeff’s “Same Ol’ River” remains one of the Father of Newgrass’ biggest hits, and with whom Jeff most recently co-wrote the title track to Bush’s 2010 GRAMMY-nominated album *Circles Around Me*.

“At this point, I would feel strange not working with Sam on a record,” Jeff says. “He brings everything up several levels. In fact, it wouldn’t be the album it is without Sam, Jerry, Matraca or Gretchen. Everyone who came to play or sing listened to the songs and helped me to lift them up with great care. It’s where they all reside musically, bringing all those years of experience and all that love of what’s happening in a song in that moment. They all raised the bar, and I was happy to follow.”

Finally, the album was mixed by Dave Sinko (best known for his work with The Punch Brothers, Béla Fleck and Don Williams) and mastered by Eric Conn (known for work with Garth Brooks, Willie Nelson and George Strait) to seal the album’s distinctively organic sound and power.

“The best things that happened on the record were because I was experimenting and exploring,” Jeff says. “I was able to constantly circle these songs, see how they felt, let them breathe. And if I was quiet enough long enough to hear what they were doing, I would find the moments that let me travel inside and made me smile.”

Ultimately, *B-Sides and Confessions, Volume Two* is a testament to those moments, where an artist shares their journey with an honesty and passion that lets listeners know they’ve been invited along to chart the course.

“This is such an old-school album in every sense of the word,” Jeff says. “It follows a path, and that path is always open to interpretation. But I hope that people might feel the same affirmation I take from writing these words in my journal. Most of all, it’s the sense of where we are now and where we’re going that’s more important than where we used to be.” For Jeff, that place is where he can make music on his own terms in his own time for a devoted audience that’s come to expect nothing less. And Black knows that those truths and that audience are what truly pull the plow. “If a person’s really lucky after a few decades on the planet, you begin to feel more comfortable in your own skin,” he says. “Beyond all the self-doubting and second-guessing, there’s always that inner compass way down deep that will tell you – if you’re listening – that you’re generally headed in the right direction.”