

LIFESTYLE

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Patty Larkin takes a look back at 25 years on '25'

By: **NANCY DUNHAM**
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Patty Larkin likes to think of her just-released album as a "big, fuzzy thank you to those who have supported me through the years."

The new album -- "25" -- is filled with 25 love songs featuring Patty and 25 of her musical friends recorded to celebrate Larkin's 25 years in the music business.

If you go

Patty Larkin and David Wilcox

Where: The Birchmere, 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria

When: 7: 30 p.m. Sunday

Info: \$35; ticketmaster.com

"I didn't write an exorbitant number of love songs but we were able to get songs from each of my albums," Larkin said. "It's interesting to look back at them. I can see the roots of them, where they came from as well."

Larkin began singing in coffee houses when she was still a high school student and broke into the business soon after she moved to Boston to study jazz guitar at Berklee College of Music. Mixing folk, jazz, acoustic and country, Larkin has made a name for herself in a host of musical formats.

When the question arose about choosing 25 guest artists to work with her on the latest album, Larkin was almost overwhelmed by the response she received from her invitations.

"I wish I could have used 50" guest artists, she said. "I mainly reached out to those I have known and toured with the years, ones that have touched me musically in some way."

Rosanne Cash, Jonatha Brooke, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Shawn Colvin and the other musicians on the album represent some of the paths she's taken through the years. Larkin said she was humbled by the willingness of so many of her musician friends to put their personal and professional plans aside to work on her album.

"They all came through for me big time," Larkin said. "I honestly don't know how people squeezed it in."

Adding to the poignancy, Larkin's mother was dying at the time she made the album. The memory of sharing the songs and excitement with her mother as she crafted "25" only added to the album's meaning, she said.

"Some of these songs become more poignant when you think back to where you were when you wrote them," Larkin said. "Thinking back and sharing these with her really helped me through the grieving process; it was a huge distraction in a way because I was able to invite friends and we'd sing some of these songs to her. She really enjoyed that."

Musically, the album means a lot to Larkin because it reaffirms her lifelong commitment to pushing musical boundaries, a trend she sees as more accepted today than when she began in the business.

"I've always felt that musical borders were fluid; many different types of music influenced me as a writer and interpreter," she said. "What I see happening now is really refreshing, [with musicians] pulling from everything. They are fearless. They are way outside the "American Idol" pop system."