

BOBBY LONG

Debut Album A WINTER TALE
Release Date: February 1, 2010



Bobby Long believes in making up for lost time. The young British singer-songwriter didn't even start to play guitar until he was 17, but from then on he's been creating memorable songs inhabited by hauntingly poetic lyrics. With model good looks and an engaging smile, he is a formidable presence even before he begins to sing. And when he does sing, it's with a heart-wrenching soulfulness that crushes any chance for apathy. It's a voice that simply demands attention. Now armed with an enviable repertoire of material and a legion of loyal fans cultivated through non-stop touring, this force of nature is poised to earn the status of overnight sensation.

But recognition has actually been hard-won. Born in Wigan near Manchester in Northern England, Bobby Long grew up from age four in a small town in Wessex—Thomas Hardy country. At 18, he moved to London to attend university, graduating with a degree in sound and media for film. He quickly established himself on the local open mic circuit, finding his voice and beginning to develop songs characterized by catchy melodies paired with elusive, imaginative lyrics. In London he met a circle of fellow musicians, among them Marcus Foster, with whom he wrote a song called "Let Me Sign," and soon-to-be megastar Robert Pattinson, who would sing it in the 2008 blockbuster film *Twilight*.

That coup gave him a head start on a fan base, but as an indie performer, he knew he would have to take the reins of his own destiny. So he recorded an acoustic CD, *Dirty Pond Songs*,

in his bedroom, and set off for America in April 2009. As what became known as the *Dangerous Summer Tour* continued for months, he sold thousands of copies of *Dirty Pond Songs* on the road as well as two self-released live CDs. All have been available only at his shows. He also engaged his audience directly via his MySpace page—it will soon surpass the two-million-views mark—and watched as fan-supported sites devoted to him and his music popped up to further his story.

The next step is his studio debut album, *A WINTER TALE* (on independent record label ATO Records), on which he wanted to capture the immediacy of those live performances, “to have flaws in it, some signs of human nature.” Grammy®-winner Liam Watson (The White Stripes’ *Elephant*) and his analog Toe Rag Studios in London—where they put down five initial tracks in just three days—proved an ideal match for the artist’s old-school recording approach. Backed by a coterie of studio musicians on many of the tracks, he would end up recording 18, finally making a taut selection of 11 original songs.

But Bobby Long isn’t content to coast on the songs that launched him. He’s constantly writing new ones, sharing them online and performing them live. “I write all the time,” he laughs, as if there is something wrong with that. “The songs grow from an unconscious place. If you’re always writing exactly what’s on your mind, it can come out overworked or undercooked.” The result: he has more than enough unrecorded new material for yet another album, even as he prepares for his debut release. And, he’s enjoying the little details of putting out an album, “the things kids dream about—the album cover, the order of the songs, the way it feels...it’s like the smell of a brand-new book.”

Impressing a widening circle of admirers, including many critics, Bobby has packed venues across the United States, Canada and Europe. In 2009, he played 160 shows in seven months in seven countries. The *Boston Herald* praised his “likeable, rough-hewn voice” and “catchy way with a chorus,” while *Pollstar* reported that he “continues to amaze audiences with a bare-bones sound reminiscent of early Bob Dylan.” Radio, too, has done its part, beginning when WXPN in Philadelphia added “Who Have You Been Loving” from *Dirty Pond Songs* to its playlist and invited him to perform live in their studios. His 2010 tour schedule kicked off in March with a live WXPN *Free at Noon* session, which was broadcast nationally on NPR’s *World Café Live* while he was still unsigned.

He cites Dylan’s career, as well as his songwriting, as a major influence. He also lists Richie Havens, Neil Young, Tim Buckley and Leonard Cohen as influences, along with more modern troubadours like Elliott Smith and Conor Oberst. A love of American roots music shines through his songs, evident on the album in the intense minor-key folk of “Penance Fire Blues,” the two-step groove of “Two Years Old” and the old-timey waltz “Being a Mockingbird” with its banjo and pedal steel accents. And Bobby is no dilettante when it comes to traditional sounds—his university thesis was on the social impact of American folk music.

“In London there’s a big folk scene happening,” he says. “It resonates with a lot of young people now.” Yet lurking in his background is a broader musical sensibility that encompasses the guitar-tinged blues of Mississippi John Hurt, the knowing song craft of the Beatles and the Kinks, and even flashes of the angry heat of another band he admires greatly—Black Sabbath.

Above all, it’s the honesty and aching vulnerability in his intricate songs (not to mention his shy demeanor on stage) that endears Long to burgeoning audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. “He breathes a labyrinth of imagery that is so fragile and heartrending—it’s

impossible to let go" is one description, and as another writer put it, "If music is truly a form of self-expression, then British singer-songwriter Bobby Long apparently cannot tell a lie."

It's been a fast rise, but he's not looking for a cheap route to success. "I'm in it for the long haul. This first [ATO] record is just the first step on a ladder. I want every day to be a learning experience and to have the same kind of career as some of my heroes," he says. And he's determined to work hard to do just that. At 24, Long is an accomplished guitarist, having mastered an uncommon finger-picking guitar style through non-stop performing. That impeccable approach lifts gentler numbers like "The Bounty of Mary Jane" and "Sick Man Blues" just as assuredly as a full-on strum drives the folk-rocker title track of the album, "A Winter Tale," and the acoustic epic about loss and longing, "A Stranger Song" (*"Where the wings that sting the borderline, words fall softly to the floor, A woman's love can cause a man to spill his every flaw"*).

Finally, after countless solo shows, Long is fleshing out his acoustic sound with a band behind him, though he still steps out during the set to play alone. "I'm writing more with a band in mind now. I love how good that feels, when your playing is matched by the snare, the bass." Inspired by everything from old Jack Teagarden recordings to Dylan going electric, he also says he "learned a lot from touring about how a show can be like theater."

A WINTER TALE merges band power with acoustic rawness, featuring Nona Hendryx (LaBelle) on backing vocals on "Penance Fire Blues," B. J. Cole (Elton John, Sting) on pedal steel, Icelandic singer Lay Low on several tracks, and other top-drawer musicians. And by way of continued extensive touring in North America, he will be bringing A WINTER TALE and what has been called his "tapestry of tales" to the ever-growing audiences seduced by his compelling voice, musicianship and charm.

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*"The covered surface hugs the board but keeps in the sky,
A childhood glimpse that keeps you warm but hangs you to dry,
The shameful dream the shameful face that pulls on your heart,
Those brittle winds will keep the dawn from you at the start,*

*So bring me choirs to ease me on my way,
Bring me screams of organs for the day,
Bring me choirs to brighten all the gales,
Bring me screams of organs and the wails,
Of winter tales."*

--from "A Winter Tale" by Bobby Long