

Shania Is Back

Her new album, *Now*.

Writer **Karen Bliss**

Shania Twain doesn't feel at all uncomfortable about airing her emotional struggles following a betrayal and divorce on *Now*, her first studio album in 15 years. "I'm not apologetic about my experiences nor about the way I express them," says the 52-year-old Canadian country-pop-leaning singer-songwriter. "I think it's more important to share than it is keeping certain things in."

Her rags-to-riches story—going from a poverty-stricken childhood in Timmins, Ontario, to global sales of 75 million albums—is well known. Some of the songs on *Now* are clearly about the end of her 14-year marriage to producer Robert "Mutt" Lange, who cheated on her with her best friend. It must be noted that, in a karmic twist one might expect to see on a soap opera, Twain, who has a 16-year-old son, Eja, with Lange, has been married for the past six years to Frédéric Thiébaud, the ex-husband of that so-called friend.

With Twain as the sole songwriter on *Now* (her last three albums were co-written with Lange), "Poor Me", "I'm Alright", and the first single, "Life's About to Get Good", in particular, are a roller coaster of emotions, pointedly dealing with the despair of being betrayed, the recovery of one's self-esteem, and, finally, the willingness to move on and find love again. "Well, I figured if not now, then never," Twain says of writing about the affair and the breakup. "Also, I feel like it's a way of working through things. It's self-expression and cleaning things out—and it's been a while."

Twain wrote *Now* with the perspective of someone who has come out of a dark tunnel and is now imparting what she's learned. "I know there's a lot of people that have experienced similar things and relate. So *relate*," she commands, calling her lyrical process "positive sharing ... It's my most personal album I've ever written," she says. "I've enjoyed it for the therapy; I've enjoyed it for the self-expression."

Stylistically, Twain—who co-produced the album with Ron Aniello, Matthew Koma, Jacquire King, and Jake Gosling—has always pushed boundaries in country music and now is, essentially, a pop musician. "I experimented around," she says, notably on "Light of My Life," which has a Sade-meets-'60s/'70s-era-Laurel Canyon vibe; the lilting piano-pop of "More Fun", on which her voice is barely recognizable; and the reggae-based album opener, "Swinging With My Eyes Closed."

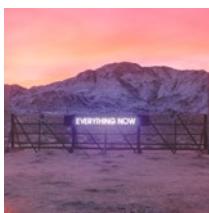
Twain started writing songs when she was 10 years old, signed with Mercury Nashville in the early 1990s, and released a self-titled country album in 1993 that did okay before she met Lange, a producer who had worked with Def Leppard, AC/DC, and Bryan Adams.



Together, they broke country music stereotypes with their pop approach to her playful sound and glamorous image on her 1995 breakthrough, *The Woman in Me*, which eventually went 12-times platinum. The follow-up was even bigger: 1997's 20-times platinum *Come On Over* became the bestselling studio album in Soundscan history by a female artist in any genre. But after 2002's *Up!*—the 11-times platinum album that had three different versions: country, pop/rock, and world—Twain retreated from the spotlight and the perpetual recording-touring-recording cycle. She raised a son, battled Lyme disease, lost her voice, and separated from and then divorced Lange.

She periodically recorded one-offs, including with Lionel Richie and Anne Murray, but no full-length original studio release was on the horizon. In 2011, she put out her autobiography, *From This Moment On*, and TV series, *Why Not? with Shania Twain*, then did a two-year residency at Las Vegas's Caesars Palace until 2014. Her voice and confidence were back. In 2015, Twain hit the road for the 72-date North American *Rock This Country Tour*. She said it was her final tour. But she's entitled to change her mind—and already has. "I really was ready to stop because I didn't know what my voice could take," she says. "But once I did the tour, I surprised myself. So, with the new music, I'm definitely ready to go and gear up again." 🎤

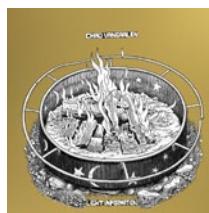
Editors' Playlist



Everything Now
Arcade Fire



Native Invader
Tori Amos



Light Information
Chad VanGalen



Duende Libre
Duende Libre



Sleep Well Beast
The National