

# CALEB SWEAZY – LUCKY OR STRONG

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This is not his American Dream.

So Caleb Sweazy says in the opening lines of his forthcoming Blue Barrel Records debut *Lucky or Strong* (out April 28) – but it sure feels like one.

Long spurred by restless creativity, the father of two began making his living as a woodworker after the Great Recession cratered his musical aspirations along with his day job, all but stifling the songs inside him. With his energy focused on supporting his family, Caleb didn't allow himself to give in to creativity much – he wasn't playing out very often, he was writing even less.

In a rare live performance last fall, though, an even rarer thing happened: he was discovered.

Caleb entered Music+Arts Studio in Memphis to record *Lucky or Strong*. With the help of producer Kevin Houston (Patty Griffin, Sid Selvidge, N. MS All-Stars), he assembled a diverse mix of Memphis' finest – Jessie Dakota (Grace Askew, Memphis Dawls) on drums, Logan Hanna (Grace Askew, Big Barton) on guitar, Rick Steff and John C. Stubblefield of Lucero on keys and upright bass, respectively – to track the album live, from start to finish.

These 11 songs are a travelogue – you can hear the polish and sheen of Los Angeles, the rough edges and soul of Memphis, the innocence and lilt of a childhood spent swinging from trees growing up in the middle of a forest. Sweazy's songs masterfully float from Americana to dark, guitar-driven blues to folk tunes verging on folklore, bursting with characters.

"I like things that are kind of bittersweet, that melancholy but not overt – not overwhelmingly sad," he says. "It is so much of who I am as well – I just see the balance in things. To me, that's kind of the sweet spot of music. The songs I'm most drawn to from other artists are the kind that make me happy and sad at the same time."

Indeed, Sweazy is a master of the bittersweet on *Lucky or Strong* – how could a love song about World War I ("Soldier's Heart") be described any other way? And perhaps it's also the best word for the way that fatherhood inevitably changes you, another theme that dances across so much of this album. Whether it's a story inspired by his children ("My Love") or a story to pass on to them (the tale of a chance meeting with a man who owned a car that had once been his grandfather's in "Model A Ford"), *Lucky or Strong* is a resplendent, timeless storybook.

Because, like a good woodworker, Sweazy is just trying to create something sturdy, something beautiful – something that will last. *Lucky or Strong* is out on Blue Barrel Records April 28.

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