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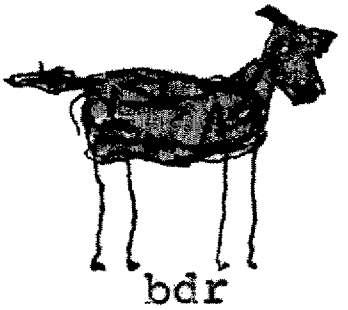

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JONATHA BROOKE
BACK IN THE CIRCUS

"I think that this is the most intimate, honest, cohesive set of songs I've ever done," says **Jonatha Brooke** of ***Back in the Circus***, her third album on her own Bad Dog label. "Maybe I say that every time I make a record, because I love every record I've made, and every one has its own story. But this one really feels special to me."

Since the early 1990s, the vivacious singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist has won immense critical acclaim and built a remarkably devoted fan base with a series of beguiling albums showcasing her supple, expressive voice and adventurous, insightful songwriting. Those qualities are particularly impressive on *Back in the Circus*, on which such haunting, personally-charged tunes as "Back in the Circus," "Everything I Wanted," "Sally," "Sleeping with the Light On" and "Less Than Love Is Nothing (the latter co-written and co-produced by **Eric Bazilian** of **Hooters/Joan Osborne** fame) signal the start of a compelling new chapter in Brooke's unique career.

"This is the first time I've consciously tried to make a record that would have a beginning, middle and end," she explains. "I wanted this album to feel like a journey, because that's what making it felt like to me."

The new collection, produced by Brooke, is the much-anticipated follow up to her well-received 2001 release *Steady Pull*, which achieved a remarkable level of sales success and media exposure without the benefit of major-label support. While her new songs exemplify the same standards of lyrical honesty and melodic craft that have long endeared her to her fans, *Back in the Circus* also finds Brooke exploring some challenging new sonic territory.

Brooke took a distinctly hands-on approach to the album's birth cycle, using digital technology to layer a variety of instruments and vocal harmonies on her own. This homespun application of state-of-the art gadgetry has yielded a personalized sound that intensifies the emotional resonance to Brooke's literate, reflective storytelling.

"The whole process was the opposite of the way I've made records in the past," Brooke notes. "It was very organic and inspiring for me. Working with Pro Tools and M-Audio I

was able to keep the impact of some of the original performances in my demos and use that as the foundation for the actual tracks. And I *love* the irony of using technology to make things sound more gritty and spontaneous. I had fully intended to again produce the record with **Bob Clearmountain**, who co-produced *Steady Pull* with me. But at one point we got together to listen to the "demos" I had been working on. After listening to the tracks Bob looked at me and said, "...wow, sounds like you're already done to me!" He was right. The songs already had everything they needed, and most importantly I'd created a very particular sound – an evocative landscape - and I didn't want to do anything to affect that."

While *Back in the Circus*' sonic focus is ideally suited to the emotional intensity of Brooke's new compositions, it also provides an exquisite framework for her first-ever attempts at tackling outside material. Bravely applying her interpretive gifts to a pair of larger-than-life pop classics, Brooke emerges with fresh, poignant re-workings of James Taylor's "Fire and Rain" and The Beach Boys' "God Only Knows." The album also includes a seemingly unlikely but unmistakably expressive reading of the **Alan Parsons Project** hit "Eye in the Sky."

The blend of craft and commitment that drives *Back in the Circus* has long been a constant in Jonatha Brooke's work. She started playing guitar and writing songs while in her teens, and began performing with fellow student Jennifer Kimball while both were attending western Massachusetts' Amherst College. As The Story, the duo became a regionally popular live act, and in 1991 released an acclaimed debut album, *Grace In Gravity*, on the independent folk label Green Linnet. The album's grass-roots success won The Story a major-label deal with Elektra, which reissued *Grace In Gravity* and released the pair's 1993 sophomore effort *The Angel in the House*.

Brooke then launched a consistently compelling solo career, signing with MCA/Blue Thumb for 1995's *Plumb* and 1997's *10 Cent Wings*, which saw her original folk-pop style evolve towards a more expansive, hard-to-pigeonhole sound. After splitting with MCA, she took charge of her career by launching Bad Dog Records for 1999's *Jonatha Brooke Live* and 2001's *Steady Pull*. Despite the lack of corporate clout and major-label cash, those indie releases achieved substantial success, significantly expanding Brooke's audience and confirming her firmly held conviction that "there's still a huge audience out there of people who want to hear something that's honest and real."

The experience of financing her own recording and touring efforts, Brooke says, has been exhilarating and educational. "I went into the label thing with my eyes open, and I was prepared to lose my shirt and hope that something positive came of it. It turned out to be a good gamble. We were really aggressive with *Steady Pull*, and we achieved some amazing things on our own. The single "Linger" was in the top 5 at AAA radio and one of the most played songs of the year.

Back in the Circus' title inspired the album's striking cover design, which features a series of photos in which former dancer Brooke assumes the role of the trapeze artist who's the protagonist of the title tune. The big-top metaphor is a particularly apt one for the life changes that were the impetus for many of Brooke's new compositions. "I got remarried, and I moved cross-country from Malibu to New York," she notes, "and I think that all of those changes are reflected in these songs."

"The first three songs I demoed for this record were 'Back in the Circus,' 'Sally' and 'Everything I Wanted,' and they kind of became the template for the sound and feel that I wanted to get," Brooke explains. "I had demoed them with these little cheesy Casio loops and some funky samples, and I got really attached to that sound; it felt intimate, and it didn't overwhelm the song or my voice, and that was really inspiring to me. The beauty of making a record using ProTools is that you can screw around and experiment; try out dumb ideas that may or may not work. Being able to do that easily and cheaply opened up a lot of options for me."

"I think I've come to a place in my life where I'm really centered and not concerned with what anybody else thinks," Brooke states. "It feels great to have made a couple of records on my own, and to have achieved a certain level of success with them. I've learned to trust that feeling in the pit of my stomach, and to know what's right for each song. I have amazing fans and I get to do this for a living. That's a gift, and I guess the tone of this record has to do with feeling like I've arrived somewhere as a person, confident and accepting about who I am."

Brooke is planning an ambitious concert presentation for a limited run of dates in a New York off Broadway theatre to launch the record. After that she'll take as much of that show on the road as she can afford. "I think that 2004 is going to be an exciting year," she concludes. "I'm a little scared, and that's always a good sign."

Jonatha Brooke catalogue:

Steady Pull	*BDR 60801-2*
Jonatha Brooke Live	*BDR 60201-2*
10 cent wings	*MCAD 11706*
Plumb	*BTD 7003*

"Brooke stands out in the crammed arena of female singer-songwriters both for her complex, intensely melodic tunes and her uncliched, heartfelt poetry."
Entertainment Weekly

"...intelligent, jazz-inflected tunes and a voice certain to appeal to Joni Mitchell fans."
People Magazine

"Brooke has dazzled listeners with her inventive guitar playing, gossamer voice and deep moving songs."
Performing Songwriter

***Back in the Circus* [B0001754-02] available on CD February 24, 2004.**

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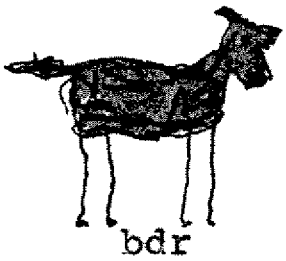
www.vervemusicgroup.com Images available at: www.umvd.com



JONATHA BROOKE
BACK IN THE CIRCUS

"**Ms. Brooke** slips considerable craftmanship into her songs. Skill and ambition remain, even as her songs have turned to pop forms, showing a fondness for the Beatles and Joni Mitchell. Now and then they also hint at Suzanne Vega, Alanis Morissette, Ani DiFranco and Neil Young. As the music climbed to graceful resolutions, the implicit promise was that romance can, too."

Jon Pareles, New York Times

"High in pitch and pretty in tone, **Brooke** excels at lofty notes that break into faint breaths. ***Back in the Circus*** is her fifth, and best, work."

Jim Farber, Daily News

"**Jonatha Brooke** has been making intimate, well-crafted records for years. ***Back in the Circus*** is stocked with lovingly detailed songs. **Brooke's** fireplace folk may be just what battered heads and lonely hearts need."

Rolling Stone

"In a perfect world, the prefab poseurs would be waiting tables and the gifted singer-songwriters would be big stars. **Jonatha Brooke** tosses around gorgeous chords and whip-smart words like Britney tosses her hair. She paints in true grays while Beyonce paints on her next costume. She looses water-clear, love-weary phrases the way American Idol loose recycled licks. Such elegant pop songs deserve to be heard."

Joan Anderman, The Boston Globe

"This overlooked talent deserves to be heard. If the music world was fair, **Jonatha Brooke** would be a huge star. Her songwriting is more memorable and more poignant than Sarah McLachlan's or Sheryl Crow's. Her voice is more stunningly beautiful than Dido's or Jewel's. And she's way cooler than Liz Phair."

Glenn Gamboa, Newsday

"**Jonatha Brooke** has one of the most distinctive voices of the crowd of singer-songwriters, both as a writer and as a vocalist. ***Back in the Circus***... is another chapter of lush, literate, intricately structured pop originals."

San Francisco Chronicle

"**Jonatha Brooke's** ***Back in the Circus*** is a literate, lyrical and luminous chef d'oeuvre."

Billboard

"**Jonatha Brooke's** music can't be contained in one category, as her latest release, ***Back in the Circus***, proves. **Brooke** has moved from folk rock to engaging acoustic to pop perfection with ease. There's a little bit of everything."

Associated Press

"***Back in the Circus*** is easily **Brooke's** best recording since her solo debut, "Plumb," filled with lovely music for the lovelorn. Loss, pain and regret -- **Brooke's** lyrical trademarks -- are made palatable by her passionate vocals and clever musical settings.

Detroit Free Press

"***Back in the Circus*** is the heartbreak CD you listen to while dressed to the nines and slumped over a martini."

Karen Iris Tucker, Time Out New York

"***Circus*** is **Brooke's** best disc in her decade of album-making."

Doug Elfman, Las Vegas Review-Journal

"**Brooke** is a woman with a gorgeous voice, an artist who consistently finds interesting ways to apply it."

David Perry, Lowell Sun

"**Brooke** has become more musically adventurous, shining throughout Back in the Circus."

Rashod D. Ollison, Baltimore Sun

"**Brooke** gives weighty subjects a breezy pop-song brightness, sophisticated jazzish chords, unconventional rhythms, yet never pretentious." 3 1/2 Stars!

Tom Moon, Philadelphia Inquirer

"Indie darling **Jonatha Brooke** sprinkles her latest disc with three terrific covers...the singer-songwriter-guitarist keeps things strumming along nicely with her literate, Lilith-Fair-ready sounds."

Chuck Arnold, People

"Full of wry wisdom, chronicles the high wire act of finding real true love: and the messy plunges that tend to follow....also freshly paints classics."

Entertainment Weekly

"**Jonatha Brooke** puts her wry, knowing voice in "Back in the Circus" (Bad Dog), this time juggling strong adult rock originals with covers of "Fire and Rain," "God Only Knows" and "Eye in the Sky."

Knight Ridder Syndicate

"**Brooke's** ornate folk-pop and sophisticated lyricism are in top form on ***Circus***."

Bill Frost, Salt Lake City Weekly

"***Back in the Circus*** finds **Brooke** stretching, and it's quite a feat to witness. Quite simply, she's one of the best at the top of her musical game."

Sean Hickey, Daily Local (Philadelphia)

"After two successful self-released discs, **Jonatha Brooke** has returned with the stellar ***Back in the Circus***. This will touch listeners in ways that are unique to **Brooke**."

Gregg Shapiro, Windy City Times

"***Circus*** is best listened to from start to finish, a journey to be absorbed in one sitting, repeatedly."

Christopher Treacy, Bay Windows

"Ever present are **Brooke's** knack for storytelling and gorgeous, understated vocal work...."

JR, Fly Magazine

"Her voice is siren-like, her lyrics so poetic they seem to have different personal meaning for every listener, and her refreshing blend of folk, pop, and rock manages to be both comfortable and 'edgy'."

L.D.H., Frontiers Newsmagazine

For more information about Jonatha please contact **Patrick Rains at (212-860-3233)**