

The Story of **SELMA AVENUE**

“Selma Avenue” kicks off the “Troubadour 77” collection and it is meant to set the tone and provide some important musical references about the 70s singer/songwriter era, a time in music that was the main inspiration for starting our band, **Troubadour 77**. Our mission is to carry the torch of that style of music. Many of the references that are written into this song give specific and important historical context, so I am writing this open letter to listeners to encourage them to read about the song so they can better understand what is being referenced and why every line is so important to me. My wish is that it becomes important to you.

In 1977 I was five years old, singing into my hairbrush along with Linda Ronstadt in my bedroom in Pennsylvania, wishing I could be a part of the scene that swirled around *The Troubadour* in Los Angeles. *The Troubadour* was and still is a club where the likes of Jackson Brown, James Taylor, Glenn Frey, Don Henley, J.D. Souther, Carole King and a host of other great singer/songwriters got their start.

After years as a songwriter and recording artist based in Nashville, TN, I am finally writing and recording the music I have always wanted. It feels different than it ever has. Almost like a calling. Like it has purpose, more than it ever did before. So in response, I formed a new band, at 44 years old, with my husband Monty Powell (55 years old), called **Troubadour 77**. It's never too late and you're never too old to pursue your passion. Our band's mission is to write songs that embody the sonic landscape and lyrical power of what the great artists of the California Country and Singer/Songwriter movement did back in the 70s. We call it “new music with a classic sound.” We believe there is an audience out there who might like to know that there is music being made for them that is reminiscent of what they grew up on, compliments, and can live alongside all of their favorite but worn out playlists.

When Glenn Frey passed last year, it was a loss we all still feel. In 2016, I too lost a few close personal friends in the business who have been with me from the start. One of them was my beloved publisher, Bo Goldsen (Criterion Music Group, Los Angeles, CA). His father, Mickey Goldsen started Criterion back in the early 60s and he was the first guy to sign Jackson Browne to a publishing deal, per Bo's recommendation. Criterion Music owns a few of Jackson's early gems like, *My Opening Farewell*, *Doctor My Eyes*, *Song for Adam*, *Jamaica say You Will* and many others. Mickey was pretty forward thinking at the time and was one of the few publishers who also had a small studio attached to his office where writers could demo and work out the early notions of their songs. The studio/publishing offices were located on SELMA AVENUE just off of Hollywood Blvd. Here is a picture of it:



There is actually a collection of Jackson's early demos (19 songs) now available called *The Criterion Demos* that were recorded at this little publishing house studio. They are all guitar/vocals of those early songs in his career before he was ever signed to a record deal with David Geffen.

When I spoke to Bo before he passed in October, 2016 I told him I was writing a song about his studio and the people who passed through its doors. He told me some great stories. He said Jackson spent a lot of time there in the early days. I can't help but wonder if Don Henley, Glenn Frey, Linda Ronstadt, JD Souther and others, who were all so close, also ever passed through. I believe they likely did. Regardless, the music they were all making together at that time, and the friendships they had, are referenced in this song. Some are based on the stories Bo relayed to me about what he knew and heard from that time period and some from the Eagles documentary.

I asked Bo if he knew Glenn Frey and he said yes. He said he went to his funeral service. I asked him what songs were sung and he said, "Just one. A song called "My Old Pals" and that Don Henley, Jackson Browne and Jack Tempchin sang it together, along with the song's writer, Richard Stekol from the Funky Kings". Apparently Kim Carnes recorded it in 1979. It's hard to say if I have every fact correct, but between my conversations with Bo, and other sources, I have cobbled together a song about that very special studio that was the home of some of those early songs that are part of the soundtrack to many of our lives.

Fast forward twenty-five years later in the mid-nineties, I found my way to the doors of that Selma Avenue recording studio and was signed to Criterion. In the song I talk about that and the legacy that Bo left behind through his life's work of shepherding the songs of great songwriters and artists. This song is my heart. It's special to me, but what I think is most important is the spirit of this song.

The first verse is about Jackson Browne and references his song "My Opening Farewell." It acknowledges how I as a songwriter am standing on the shoulders of all the greats who passed through the doors of that studio. It alludes to the passage of time, how the music business has changed so much and contemplates the notion that perhaps I should have taken Jackson's advice and stopped before I even started.

The second verse is about *Longbranch Pennywhistle*, J.D. Souther and Glenn Frey's first duo that was signed to Amos Records, but never really took off. It also mentions *Shiloh*, which was Don Henley's band from Texas before he was in the Eagles. Shiloh's soul is a reference to Don Henley. The phoenix that rose is of course, the *Eagles*.

The third verse is about how I made my journey out to LA and Criterion.

The bridge references "the machines came". That is about how Bo had to sell the sacred ground where the studio sat and hour after the real estate deal was made, the bulldozers came in and leveled the old publishing house and studio. It is now condos. "The machines" is also a metaphor for the record business machine and how it has a way of stealing the souls of artists. However, redemption is acknowledged that through all the loss, the songs still remain.

Below is the lyric and a road map to much of what may seem cryptic without proper explanation. I encourage everyone to check it out. It's rare that a songwriter reveals all the inside references, but I believe knowing the back story will make the song that much more meaningful for listeners. Also, please go watch *The Eagles* documentary. It explains so much!

I am going to continue doing what I am doing with my new band and see where it takes me. Often times I wish I could have been twenty-something in the 1970s. It was a great era for music. It had so much meaning. It yielded what I believe to be the best music, that still has staying power and relevance all these years later. "Thank you" isn't nearly enough, and as a poet and songwriter I am oddly at a loss for the right words to be able to fully express my gratitude for the contributions of such a great movement in musical history. But it is all I have. So with a most genuine heart I do say, "THANK YOU" with this song to the great songwriters, artists and Mickey and Bo Goldsen for their amazing contributions.

With heartfelt sincerity,
Anna Wilson (Troubadour 77)

SELMA AVENUE

Words & Music by Anna Wilson

PRELUDE:

All those troubadours walked through your doors	The songwriters
Desperados of the truth	Referencing "Desperado"
So take it easy baby, you have saved me	Referencing "Take it Easy" / Saved by the fact that it all existed once, even if it doesn't now.
Selma Avenue	The street where the recording studio was.

VERSE #1:

I'm standing on your shoulders at the door	Jackson's shoulders / his early legacy at Criterion.
But no one seems to answer anymore	Studio is closed / Loss of the music industry as we knew it...people stealing music, loss of that era, etc.
You opened with goodbye	Next 3 lines: Referencing "My Opening Farewell"
And tried to spare me from the fight	The fight of the music business to be heard, to succeed.
As if to be kind	A line from "My Opening Farewell"

VERSE #2:

When the Pennywhistle blew it broke some hearts	Glenn Frey & JD Souther's duo/ also Glenn's death
It was just the dream of two that set the spark	
Cause in its ash a phoenix rose	Phoenix is "The Eagles"
And with it, it took Shiloh's soul	Shiloh's soul is Don Henley. "Shiloh" was his band before he was in the Eagles.
So the story goes	According to "The Eagles documentary (on Netflix)
You saw it all unfold	The studio saw it all.

CHORUS #1:

On Selma Avenue

There were a chosen few

Jackson, The Eagles, Linda, JD, Jack, etc.

Who carved their mark in you

Carved is a reference to "Recording"

Before my time

Before I came of age in the music business / Back in the late 60s/early 70s when I was just a kid in my room

And when their dreams came true

When they all started getting discovered.

I discovered Blue Bayou

Next 3 lines: Referencing Linda Ronstadt's recording of *Blue Bayou* and a couple lines from the song.

So I saved my nickels

And I saved my dimes

Yeah I was dreamin' of the day I'd catch a ride

Me at 5 years old wanting to sing and write songs.

To Selma Avenue

VERSE #3:

When the thrill was still around, how sweet the sound

Referencing "After The Thrill IS Gone" / The Eagles sweet harmonies.

But then California waved to those old pals

When the era was gone and The Eagles broke up / Referencing the Kim Carnes recorded song "My Old Pals" which was sung at Glenn's funeral.

And some of that amazing grace

Referencing "Amazing Grace" / The inspired songs from that time period

That shined through in those early days

The early 70s

Still remained

Feels like those songwriters left some magic in the building for others to claim years later...Lyle Lovett, Rodney Crowell, maybe even me, etc.

And it called my name

CHORUS #2:

From Selma Avenue

Your red light shined for truth

The recording light

And led me straight to you

In my own time

25 years later / mid 1990s when I was old enough to pursue my dream.

And when my dreams came true

When I was signed to Criterion

I was singin' my song for you

Referencing Leon Russell's "Song for You" – and how *when my time is over...remember how we were together...and I was singing my songs...* under the Criterion moniker.

In the tracks of my years

Referencing sideways "Tracks of My Tears"

In between each line

Each line of every song I wrote for Criterion

I never dreamed that I'd ever say goodbye

Never thought that sacred spot where incredible music was made would have to be sold and brought to rubble.

To Selma Avenue

BRIDGE:

Then like a thief in the night

Biblical reference

The machines came

The bulldozers / Also the record machine

As soon as pen hit paper

The sale of the bldg....1 hour after the contract was signed the bulldozers came / Also the actual physical writing of the songs on paper back in the day.

Your soul is what remained

The spirit of what happened there / The SONGS are the SOUL. The songs remain.

When all the rest was washed away

Building was rubble / Bo died (Oct, 2016)

Your song played

The legacy of Criterion and all the songwriters.

And it got carried on the wind

Where it will sing on once again...and again....and again...and again

The songs last forever
regardless of how things
change and people pass.

From Selma Avenue

CHORUS #3:

Yeah down on Selma Avenue

There were a chosen few

All the troubadours who got to write and
record there....spanning 50 years.

Who carved their mark in you

For all time

Meaning the songs last forever.

You made our dreams come true

Mickey & Bo Goldsen who signed all the
songwriters and gave them a shot at their
dream.

Now we're singin' our songs for you

The artists and writers who are still
performing the songs and keeping the flame
alive for Criterion, Mickey, Bo and the fans.

Every night

We were all just dreamers

Who somehow caught a ride

To Selma Avenue

PRELUDE REPRISE:

All those troubadours walked through your doors

Desperados of the truth