

LYLE WORKMAN BIOGRAPHY

[Lyle Workman](#) hasn't just had a successful career—he's had three. As a sideman and first-call session musician, he's toured and recorded with everyone from **Beck** and **Sting** to **Frank Black**, **Tony Williams**



and **Todd Rundgren**; as a composer for film and television, he's written music for box office blockbusters that have earned over a billion dollars worldwide, including *Superbad*, *The 40 Year Old Virgin*, and *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*; and as a songwriter and solo artist, he's written a hit single and earned praise from guitar heroes like **Steve Vai** and **Steve Lukather**.

Now, Workman is set to bring all three of his

disparate worlds together with "[Uncommon Measures](#)," a stunning new instrumental collection featuring a 63-piece orchestra captured live at Abbey Road Studios in London.

"This record ties together all the different threads of who I am as an artist," explains Workman. "It was four years in the making due to my film and TV schedule, but it's really the culmination of a lifetime in music."

Bursting at the seams with soaring arrangements and virtuosic performances, 'Uncommon Measures' plays like the score to some epic film from an alternate dimension, mixing elements of progressive rock, jazz fusion, and romantic classical music with gleeful abandon. The songs here are living, breathing entities, constantly growing and evolving in ways both subtle and drastic, and the production is similarly unpredictable, veering from larger-than-life bombast to whispered intimacy and back, sometimes within the very same track. Grand as the record is, though, it's Workman's eye for detail and gift for melody that remain front and center throughout. He paints vivid, emotional portraits on the album with his evocative guitar and keyboard work, crafting an immersive, cinematic universe plumbed entirely from the depths of his subconscious in spontaneous, improvised writing sessions. The result is a record as extraordinary as it is unexpected, a captivating, transportive song cycle that manages to scale the heights of joy and sadness, love and friendship, self-discovery and celebration, all without a single word.



"I've always felt like the muse is much more intuitive and in touch with my emotions than I am," says Workman. "Writing these songs, I tried to just go into this tabula rasa state of mind, a meditative place where I could let the music tell me where to go."

Indeed, music has been a faithful guide for much of Workman's life. Born and raised in San Jose, California, he fell in love with The Beatles at an early age and taught himself guitar by listening to their

records. While Workman's tastes would expand over the years—Genesis and Yes brought him to Mahavishnu Orchestra and Miles Davis, which led him to Ravel and Debussy—he would always hold a special place in his heart for the simple pleasures of a perfectly crafted pop song. After studying music in college, Workman joined a band out of Sacramento called Bourgeois Tagg, which landed a deal with Island Records, and co-wrote the hit single “I Don't Mind At All,” which climbed the charts on both sides of the pond and helped earn the group performances on the *Tonight Show*, *Top Of The Pops*, *American Bandstand*, and their European equivalents. Bourgeois Tagg proved to be a launching pad for Workman, who, after recording two albums with the band, soon began picking up work in the studio and on the road with a wide array of big-name artists.

“The great thing about being a sideman is that every gig is an education,” he reflects. “Whether I'm working with artists like Beck or Sting, Todd Rundgren or Frank Black, Norah Jones or Bryan Adams, they're all worlds unto themselves, and playing with them is a chance to step inside their heads and understand how they create.”

In many instances, the influence flowed both directions. Workman co-wrote songs on Sting's ‘57th & 9th,’ for example, and composed the track “Machu Picchu,” which appeared on late jazz icon Tony Williams' final album, ‘Wilderness.’

“I was a huge fan of Tony's playing with Miles Davis and beyond,” says Workman, “so it totally blew my mind when he invited me to come to his place and start collaborating. We worked on ideas together for about a month, and when we recorded ‘Machu Picchu,’ we had Stanley Clarke and Herbie Hancock playing it with us. It was an incredible experience.”

As a sideman, Workman learned what it took to help bring other artists' visions to life, a skill set that also made him ideally suited for the world of film and television. Gigs writing commercial jingles gave

way to composing jobs for indie films, which opened the door to major studio releases and a connection with Judd Apatow, who began hiring Workman to score his films and television series.

Successful as he became, though, something was still missing for Workman. He'd released a trio of well-received solo albums in the '90s and early 2000s, but as his sideman and film composing careers exploded, he found that he had to put his own artistic visions on the backburner.

"I absolutely love all the work I get to do with other artists and filmmakers," he explains, "but sometimes you need to articulate your own thoughts and feelings as a writer, too. There's a singular satisfaction that comes from creating something that's a pure expression of yourself."

And so Workman embarked on the epic journey that would become 'Uncommon Measures,' beginning at first by shutting off his mind and simply letting the music flow in his Los Angeles studio. From those improvised guitar and keyboard sessions, he began shaping discrete songs, some short and sweet, others clocking in at ten minutes and consisting of multiple suites and movements. Next, he assembled an all-star band to help flesh out the core material, tapping drummers Vinnie Colaiuta (Joni Mitchell, Frank Zappa) and Matt Chamberlain (Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen) along with bassist Tim Lefebvre (David Bowie, Wayne Krantz) and pedal steel wizard Greg Leisz (Eric Clapton, Jackson Browne,) among other A-Listers. Finally, with the intoxicating grooves of a fully realized rhythm section in place, Workman began the lengthy back-and-forth process of creating orchestral arrangements with John Ashton Thomas, the orchestrator extraordinaire behind films like *Black Panther* and *Captain Marvel*.

"For the most part, I'd start with an orchestral mockup using computer samples, which John would then take and run with," says Workman. "On the track 'Arc of Life,' though, I used guitar to map out the harmony and counterpoint intended for strings, woodwinds, and brass,

and then had John apply it to the orchestral domain along with his own brilliant embellishments, which make the piece even more grand and dynamic. John and I grew up with the same influences, so there's a personal and professional kinship between the two of us, along with a deep mutual respect for each other's musicianship, that made the record such a joy to create."

When it came time to record the orchestra, Thomas cherry-picked 63 of London's finest players and gathered them at Abbey Road for nine-and-a-half hours of pure magic. The session was a "pinch me" moment for Workman, both as a kid who grew up obsessed with The Beatles and as a composer finally seeing his vision come to life.

"Being in that studio with the orchestra playing my songs, it was like hearing everything go from black and white to Technicolor," he explains. "They added a soul and a humanity to everything that was just so beautiful and three dimensional."

That soul and humanity lies at the heart of 'Uncommon Measures,' which showcases not only Workman's unparalleled musicianship, but also his profound empathy and expansive emotional vocabulary. Tracks like the dizzying "North Star" and pulse-pounding "All The Colors Of The World" balance breakneck guitar runs and instrumental fireworks with moments of deep calm and poignant reflection, while more playful tunes like the ecstatic "Noble Savage" and funky, horn-fueled "Unsung Hero" revel in the joys of creative freedom. As the record progresses, Workman finds himself looking inwards more and more, appreciating the beauty in melancholy with the meditative "Labyrinth Of Love" and finding hope for the future on the expansive "Rise And Shine." As varied as the tracks here are—the final song, "Our Friendship," is actually a Thomas composition inspired by the pair's working relationship—there's an underlying cohesiveness that binds the collection as a whole, a unified approach to the music rooted in a radical exploration and embrace of the self.

“If there’s any one thing that ties all of these songs together,” says Workman, “it’s the power of expressing yourself at all costs, of free falling into the music with complete abandon. When I’m working on a film or someone else’s record, there are always parameters to follow and opinions to consider, but here, there were no boundaries at all. I could do anything I wanted.”

For an artist like Lyle Workman, when the possibilities are infinite, the infinite becomes possible. ‘Uncommon Measures’ is proof of that.

