



Richard Hamm/Staff
Caroline Aiken (right) and John Keane work on Aiken's new album at Keane's studio on Friday.

Athens music icons join forces

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ATHENS BANNER-HERALD

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Photos by Richard Hamm/Staff

Caroline Aiken records the vocals for her new album at John Keane's studio on Friday.

A noteworthy collaboration

Athens icons Aiken, Keane come together for new crowdfunded album

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Although they've known one another for nearly four decades and have performed on-stage on numerous occasions — perhaps most notably for a “Mountain Stage” broadcast from the UGA Performing Arts Center in 2012 — Caroline Aiken and John Keane have never before collaborated on an album.

ONLINE

Visit OnlineAthens.com to see a video of Aiken and Keane at work on her new album.

That's going to change in a dramatic way as early as this spring.

Aiken, the iconic singer-songwriter who has been creating her own brand of acoustic-based folk, rock and blues since the late 1960s, and



Caroline Aiken (left) and John Keane work on Aiken's new album at Keane's studio.

ALBUM continues on A5

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ALBUM

Continued from A1

the equally iconic Keane, the Grammy Award-nominated producer of such seminal artists as R.E.M., are currently ensconced in Keane's Athens studio for Aiken's ninth album, "Broken Wings Heal."

"I've known John since I played and lived here in 1979," Aiken said. "He was in Phil and the Blanks and I got to know him and some other great folks from Athens in the late 1970s. He's such a wonderful guy to work with. I've never worked with someone so efficient and so sharp.

"He's got such a great ear for music. He's so right-on ... it's like being in school and a teacher telling you truths that you always knew, but become more significant when put in certain words. The clarity is more than I'm accustomed to."

The two are collaborating to create a more stripped down sound, which is something new for Aiken.

Also new is how Aiken is paying for the recording sessions - crowdfunding. Aiken is turning to her fans to help cover the expenses using Indiegogo. Her campaign ends Saturday.

Aiken and Keane became friends as the Athens music scene as most know it was just clearing for takeoff, and Keane says he's wanted to produce an album by Aiken, who relocated to Athens in 2008, for a long time.

"We've never worked together in the studio, but we've played together at shows," Keane said. "It's great to finally get in the studio with her because I've always loved her voice and her guitar playing and

piano playing. It's been a lot of fun to get her in the studio and do some recording - it just hasn't come about until now."

"Broken Wings Heal" is a bit of a departure for Aiken in that the 12 tracks don't showcase her rough-and-rowdy side, instead relying on more delicate compositions, including the title track, penned by former Athens resident Boo Ray.

"It's a wonderful, gorgeous song," Aiken said. "I'm really honored and excited to be able to cover it. It says pretty much everything I want it to say. Boo Ray was so nice to let me cover it."

Ray called it an honor that Aiken wanted to cover the tune.

"Caroline's a true and amazing musical voice and a top-notch industry pro," said Ray, who now lives and works in Nashville. "I couldn't be more humbled or prouder for such a fine and discriminating musician to record a song of mine."

Aiken, who served as an early mentor to the Indigo Girls and has collaborated with Bonnie Raitt during her many years in the business, said that while she's not recording a rock album, she's calling upon some significant individuals to help her along.

"The album mainly examines the heart and what makes us so vulnerable, so fragile," she said, adding that she's also accompanied by her band, Catch a C.A.B. "It's an introspective album. This is not a rock 'n' roll album, but it has some great rock 'n' roll people on it.

"Emily Saliers is playing on it; Randall Bramblett, Charlie Wooton and Ike Stubblefield are all helping out."

Keane agreed with Aiken's assessment of the forthcoming album.

"The songs we're doing for this album are more like the singer-songwriter side of her repertoire, more so than the rock and blues full-band sort of thing she's known for," Keane added.

"Broken Wings Fly" is particularly poignant for Aiken as she's dedicated the album to her daughter, Sarah Page Dukes, who has struggled with drug addiction and is currently incarcerated. The lyrics for one of the album's songs, "Everything Can Change," were written by Sarah when she was 12 years old.

"(Incarceration) stopped a terrible thing; she could be dead right now," Aiken said, adding that her daughter is taking college classes, singing with a choir and has helped some 300 women earn their GED. "She's doing great. There have been no problems with her since she got off the drugs."

"Things have come full-circle for me and her. She's done so well. She's a trusted member of the choir and she'll begin the theology course this month with the dean of theology at Emory. So I'm really grateful for her life and for all the lessons we've all learned."

To learn more about the album and the crowdfunding campaign, visit www.carolineaiken.com.