

EXTENDED VERSION

At some capacity, this particular collection of band members has existed together and created stunning music for the last decade. The act now known simply by its leader's name - Lindsay Lou - has morphed from slightly more humble beginnings. Lindsay first encountered the original lineup of her band Lindsay Lou & The Flatbellys at an open mic night in 2008, where her now-husband Joshua Rilko and Spencer Cain playing as members of bluegrass band The Flatbellys. Lindsay had adored bluegrass music growing up, but hadn't focused on it, so that experience spurred a true interest. "Learning bluegrass was so amazing," admits Lou. "It educated me by tightening up my rhythm and my chops on the guitar."

Shortly after The Flatbellys released their album *The Flatbellys Get Round* in 2008, Lou released her own stunner of a debut titled *Lindsay Lou Sings a Different Tune* with the help of both Josh and Spencer. When The Flatbellys disbanded post-college, Lou, Spencer, and Josh teamed up to form Lindsay Lou & The Flatbellys. Since then, members of the band have included Keith Bilik, Mark Lavengood, and PJ George - who Lous says, "plays the dirty, nasty, groovy bass lines that you don't necessarily find in a standard bluegrass band" - and the band has another album under their belts with the 2012 release of *Release Your Shrouds*. As of right now, the band consists of Lindsay, Josh, and PJ, has made the move to Tennessee to continue their pursuit of expression through music, dropping "& The Flatbellys" from their name.

But the build up to this point - to where the band exists together now - didn't simply start a decade ago. Born the daughter of a coal miner in middle Missouri, Lindsay Lou's family moved north to Michigan for work shortly after she was brought into the world. She describes her family as close knit and musical, their lives influenced heavily by her grandmother's radical ideals and zest for life. In fact, if you ask Lindsay, her grandmother is one of her greatest influences to this day.

My grandmother - my mom's mom - got married when she was fifteen and had twelve kids. When she was in her thirties - after eight kids - she decided she was going to take her GED with night classes. That wasn't fast enough, so she went back to high school and sat in with all the twelfth graders through class and earned her diploma. She graduated college at lightning speed with heavy course loads, and got a job at a high school in the Detroit area.

By this time, it was the late sixties and she was a part of this group of people getting hip to the Civil Rights Movement and philosophy. At one point, the White Panthers were supposed to come and when they were asked to leave, she went back to the classroom where she was teaching high school literature and she wrote the "f" word on the board and decided to have an English lesson on it. She gave the same lesson all day, and every class would talk about its meaning, intercourse, the way we interact with nature, and they really took it to this great, abstract level.

But it was 1969, so she got taken to jail for it. Her charge was “Depraving the Morals of the Young” and - mind you - this woman had eight children. All of these big organizations like the ACLU wanted to get her a lawyer, and she refused all of it because she was born again and a bit of a religious extremist, despite the fact that she had managed to have a conversation about this word with these students. She wrote a 9 page letter to the judge, who reduced the sentence to “Profanity in a Public Building” and decided that the classroom was clearly not where she was going to make an impact.

Lou’s grandmother took her activism to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and got set up in a big farmhouse that would house her growing family, as well as a few stragglers, as a Christian commune. The funny part of it all? The woman her grandmother bought the farm from was Lou’s father’s grandmother, and her dad lived just across the street.

Raised with a sense of community that was built on that farm, Lou was surrounded by music and frivolity. She built her repertoire by practicing her vocals and on various instruments so she could play with her Uncle Stuckey, the youngest and perhaps most musical of her mother’s siblings. Disclosing one of the first times she realized she could really do something with her talents, Lou admits:

I had to be older than three and younger than six - somewhere in that window of time - and my mom and my Auntie Melody sang this Judds song called ‘Grandpa’. I remember thinking to myself, ‘I want to learn to sing this song so that I can sing it with my cousin Harmony.’ Harmony is Melody’s daughter, so I felt like if we learned it from our mothers, it would be a second generation thing and it would be great. It was fall and I was standing outside her house - we were going over to visit - and this idea struck me. And I realized I could do that if I wanted to.

Her skills honed during the days of playing with Stuckey and harmonizing with Melody actually led her to a wide variety of musical opportunities, singing in choir in high school, attending an elite summer program at [Interlochen](#) on scholarship, and winning a multitude of awards for her talents.

Her most noted talent - that gorgeous, amazing voice - is more than what she calls a simple party trick. It has the unique ability to open up the soundscape and make every word she sings feel powerful and freeing. Take lead track on the group’s upcoming album *Southland*, a track titled “Roll With Me”, for example. The robust, intense flare to her vocals creates this open - almost more breathable - space in the atmosphere for the listener to really feel through its emotions. Beginning the album with this track is almost kismet, as Lou describes the attainment of the track as such:

I heard it at the first faculty concert of [Miles of Music](#) the year I attended. [Laura Cortese](#) and Zak Hickman performed it with a band, and later I told her I loved it and asked if I could have it. Then Sam, our producer, produced her record and somehow - without

knowing I had talked to Laura about it - thought the song would fit our band and recommended it not for her record but for ours. After that my attention to it was even more elevated. So I learned it and brought it to the dudes.

Southland - you'll come to find - is full of those great moments of kismet, much like Lou's life. But the identity for this particular record - the beauty with which its sound slips into the ether - didn't come by crazy random happenstance. The year leading up to its recording, 2016, was a rough year emotionally for several of the band members so - after taking a beat to really delve into the roots of it all and work on themselves - the band is re-emerging with material written during that time in a cathartic and transformative light. With a "clear head," the band entered the studio and re-emerged with a ten track stunner that will undoubtedly work its magic on any music lover. "Go There Alone" was written during a songwriters' lodge Lou attended, the sound fully developed with the band a little later on. The lazy, beautiful harmonies pull at your heartstrings in a way that feels like home, despite the lonely and bittersweet message. And though songs like "The Voice" and "Southland" were spurred on by more abstract ideas and words, they transformed when collaborators would start freestyling with their instruments and Lou simply sang what came to mind. Impressively enough, Lou played electric bass, electric guitar, acoustic guitar, and whistled on "Southland", which the singer admits was written about the peace and kinship she finds further south in places like Nashville, where the band now resides.

With their transition into a more genre-bending style and a new perspective on life, Lindsay Lou and her band are ready to completely take over the world. *Southland* is a refreshing glass of water on a hot summer's day, and will fill you with warmth during the harshest winter storm.

SHORTENED VERSION

At some capacity, this particular collection of band members has existed together and created stunning music for the last decade. The act now known simply by its leader's name - Lindsay Lou - has morphed from slightly more humble beginnings. Lindsay first encountered the original lineup of her band Lindsay Lou & The Flatbellys at an open mic night in 2008, where her now-husband Joshua Rilko and Spencer Cain playing as members of bluegrass band The Flatbellys. Lindsay had adored bluegrass music growing up, but hadn't focused on it, so that experience spurred a true interest. "Learning bluegrass was so amazing," admits Lou. "It educated me by tightening up my rhythm and my chops on the guitar."

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EVEN MORE SHORTENED VERSION

Lindsay Lou has been making beautiful, soul-shaking music for the last decade with her band The Flatbellys, though 2018 marks what might be the biggest year for the band, both sonically and with the fact that they are dropping "& The Flatbellys" from their name, a decision that seemed like the natural next step for them. With two albums under their belts - 2008's *Lindsay Lou Sings a Different Tune* and 2012's *Release Your Shrouds* - the band is set to release their latest, a transformative and heart-wrenching album titled *Southland*. The identity for this particular record - the beauty with which its sound slips into the ether - didn't come by crazy random happenstance. The year leading up to its recording, 2016, was a rough year emotionally for several of the band members so - after taking a beat to really delve into the roots of it all and work on themselves - the band is re-emerging with material written during that time in a cathartic and transformative light.

Raised with a sense of community that was cultivated by a humble but culturally enriched and musical family, Lindsay is an absolute powerhouse. Her vocals are robust and intense and her knack for musical instrumentation is well-developed, though her sound wouldn't be what it is without her talented band, now comprised of Joshua Rilko and PJ George. With their transition into a more genre-bending style and a new perspective on life, this trio is ready to completely take over the world. *Southland* is a refreshing glass of water on a hot summer's day, and will fill you with warmth during the harshest winter storm.

By: Meredith Schneider
Edits available upon request.