

## **Rising from the 'Debris'** **Michelle Malone delivers rollicking reflection on love gone wrong**

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“Moanin’” Michelle Malone says she has finally grown up.

“It only took me 40 years,” laughs the bluesy singer-songwriter, who got her start more than two decades ago in Atlanta’s now-legendary acoustic music scene.

“For me, it means to stop dwelling in the past, to forgive and forget and move ahead,” Malone says. “It means to be grateful for where I am now, what I have now, who I am now, and to love it all — to actually know and understand and live that there is beauty in all things.”

Luckily for listeners, Malone’s version of grown up doesn’t equal buttoned-down and boring, and stopping dwelling in the past doesn’t mean she’s stopped writing about it.

Her 10th album, “Debris,” comes out March 31 and is now available for pre-order on her website, [HYPERLINK “http://www.michellemalone.com/”www.michellemalone.com](http://www.michellemalone.com/). Many of the songs were inspired by Malone trying to come to grips with the end of a long relationship, a split so painful that it took her several years to be able to write about it.

“There are dark songs about love, but there are also angry songs about love and funny songs about love and, ultimately, redemptive songs about love,” she says. “The record for me kind of goes full circle in that respect.”

BACKED BY A FULL BAND, MALONE celebrates the release of “Debris” with three Atlanta shows scheduled for April 4. After an afternoon appearance at Decatur CD, she plays two shows at Eddie’s Attic, the stomping grounds of the Southeast’s top singer-songwriters.

Malone clearly belongs in that roster. In 20 years as a performing musician, she has virtually perfected a style that is equal parts blues, rock, kick-ass attitude and sometimes startling vulnerability.

And after a brief stint on a major label (Malone released “Relentless” on Arista in 1990), she has also remained fiercely independent.

“The whole reason I left was they wanted me to be something and someone I’m not,” she says. “I even gave it a shot, but there was so much inner conflict for me that there were two options: I could stay and kill myself slowly or quickly, depending on the day, or get the hell out and see what I could do to make myself happy.

“It is very difficult to live a life trying to please everyone, and in the process not please yourself,” she says.

Malone's music also pleases legions of diehard fans and music critics. Her last album, "Sugarfoot," drew rave reviews for her blues guitar and vocals.

With her new album, Malone says she wanted to focus on music and meaning.

"More than anything, with 'Sugarfoot' I wanted to make a fun record that made you want to shake your ass," she says. "This time, I wanted to write some songs with a little more depth to them."

"DEBRIS" offers 11 tracks that explore the aftermath of love gone wrong against a backdrop of blues and slide guitar and harmonica.

"Feather in a Hurricane," the opening track, captures the helpless feeling of being tossed about in an overextended, out-of-control world.

"It's the way I used to feel when I lived in Atlanta," says Malone, who attended Agnes Scott College and lived in the city for most of her musical career before departing five years ago for Boulder, Colo., then Nashville, and now a much quieter life in Decatur, Ala.

These days, she can visit Atlanta frequently — "It seems like just about every five minutes," she jokes, noting that besides frequent gigs, she also recorded the new CD here — then return to her less harried home in Alabama, where birds sing and a train rumbles by as she sits on the front porch.

Her now peaceful home is a stark contrast to the turbulent relationship depicted on "Debris."

"Marked" is a poignant but still rocking reflection on a lover's deception: "This one's gonna leave a mark / like a rusty knife in surgery / this one's gonna leave a mark / I'm branded by your purgery." [sic]

The title of "Restraining Order Blues" pretty much speaks for itself, applying a bit of artistic license to her somewhat-autobiographical anger.

"Obviously I didn't do those things, or I would be in jail," Malone laughs, "although I sure as hell wanted to."

IT'S A TESTAMENT to Malone's talent that despite being inspired by a break-up, "Debris" isn't a depressing CD — far from it. It's more like sing-along, foot-tapping, booty-shaking therapy.

The title track offers an invitation to set aside a difficult childhood and "If you're lonely come and lay down with me / If you're tired, we can just go to sleep / You don't have to stand alone in your debris."

And "Candle for the Lonely" closes the CD with the promise that "Out there somewhere is someone for everyone / no matter who you might be / I know it can happen for you / It happened for me."

It's music that makes you want to either testify or toss back a shot — or sometimes both, as in the case of "Yesterday's Make-up," a rollicking ode to how you can "feel beautiful in yesterday's make-up" on "Sunday morning wearing Saturday's dress."

"To tell the truth, I've grown a little tired of all the sad, angsty music that has been popular over the last few years ... I prefer to be more upbeat than that," Malone says. "I look to music as something to make me feel good, as opposed to when I was younger, when I guess I wanted to wallow in it."

“I don’t want to wallow anymore.”