

THE STORY BEHIND THE SONG

SELMA AVENUE

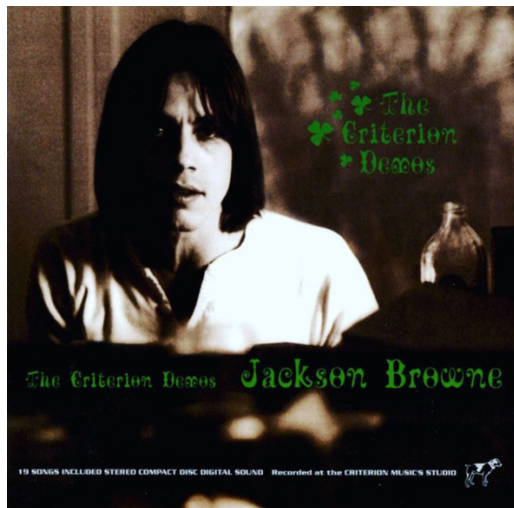
“Selma Avenue” is the title track of the “Troubadour 77” debut album. It is a song about Criterion Music Corporation, a legendary independent publishing house in Los Angeles whose doors remained open for over 70 years, and my connection to that sacred place.

This song provides some important musical references about the 70s singer-songwriter era, a time in music that was the main inspiration for me starting my Americana duo, Troubadour 77, with my husband and musical partner, Monty Powell. 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 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 with Linda Ronstadt’s Greatest Hits album being played on my portable Donny & Marie Osmond suitcase record player. The whole time, I was wishing I was already grown up, so 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, Joni Mitchell, CSNY, Carole King and a host of other great singer-songwriters got their start. When I finally did grow up and came of age, the closest thing I found to the folk-rock community of the 1970s in California was the country music migration of the early 1990s to Nashville. I found myself called to a place that had a similar awakening and melting pot community of creatives in search of the craft and power of a song. The Bluebird Café was our Troubadour, The Sunset Grill our Dan Tana’s, and Music Row our own Laurel Canyon.

When Glenn Frey passed in 2016, it was a loss that many felt, and it triggered in me an awakening. That same year, 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). His father, Mickey Goldsen, started Criterion back in the 1950s and, Bo who worked alongside his father, signed Jackson Browne to a publishing deal in 1969. Nearly 40 years later, Bo also signed me to Criterion, linking and deepening my personal connection to the story of a little recording studio attached to their publishing house located on SELMA AVENUE just off of Hollywood Blvd.

Back in the day, Criterion published a few of Jackson’s early gems like, *My Opening Farewell*, *Doctor My Eyes*, *Song for Adam*, *Jamaica say You Will* and others. Mickey and Bo were pretty forward thinking and one of the few publishers who also had a small studio attached to the office where writers could demo and work out the initial notions of their songs. There is actually a collection of Jackson’s early demos (19 songs) called *The Criterion Demos* that were recorded at this little publishing house studio. They were all guitar/vocal recordings that he made before he was ever signed to a record deal at Asylum with David Geffen.



Jackson Browne – The Criterion Demos

Genre: [Rock, Folk, World, & Country](#)
 Style: [Acoustic](#)
 Year:

[More images](#)

Tracklist

Last Time I Was Home	2:56
Jamaica Say You Will	3:44
Song For Adam	5:17
Doctor My Eyes	3:48
Low Road	3:03
Door Into The Morning	2:39
Another Place	2:32
The Bird Of St Mark	3:38
Mae Jean Goes To Hollywood	2:56
Gone To Sorrow	3:07
Hot Like Today	2:49
A Child In These Hills	3:44
The Top	3:52
My Opening Farewell	4:36
The Times You've Come	3:27
From The Silverlake	4:36
There Came A Question	

Bonus Tracks

Rock Me On The Water [Alternate Single Version]
 Nightingale [Unreleased Track For First Album]

When I spoke to Bo before he passed in October, 2016 I told him I was writing a song called “Selma Avenue” about the publishing house studio and the people who passed through its doors. He told me some great stories. It’s hard to say if I have every fact correct, but between my conversations with Bo and other sources, I have cobbled together this song about that very special place that was home to some of those early songs that are part of the soundtrack to many of our lives.

Bo 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, also did too. 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. 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. It happened to be a song that Criterion published and it was written by Richard Stekol of the Funky Kings...a song called ‘My Old Pals’. Don Henley, Jackson Browne and Jack Tempchin sang it together, gathered around one mic and an acoustic guitar, along with the songwriter, Richard Stekol.” He also told me that Kim Carnes recorded it in 1981.

Fast forward twenty-five years to the mid-nineties when I first found my way to that same Selma Avenue recording studio, and ten years after that in 2006, when I too, was signed to Criterion. In this song I talk about all of this 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 its spirit and what it hopes to celebrate and pay homage to, all the troubadours and their friends who were a part of the Criterion legacy.

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 great songwriters who passed through the doors of that studio. It alludes to the passage of time, how the music business has changed and contemplates the notion that maybe 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 eventually had to sell the sacred ground where the studio sat and an 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 will always 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.

I am going to continue doing what I am doing and see where it takes me. I so wanted to be 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 to offer. So with a most genuine and humble heart that I do say "THANK YOU", especially to Mickey and Bo Goldsen for inviting me to be a part of the lineage of great songwriters and artists who walked through the doors of Criterion Music Corp.

THE LYRIC DEEP DIVE

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 publishing and recording studio were.

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 that didn't make it/ also the death of Glenn Frey

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 T, 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 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

So I saved my nickels

of *Blue Bayou* and a couple lines from the song.

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 in 2007

I was singin' my song for you

A nod to Leon Russell's "Song for You" – and how "when my time is over...remember how we were together...and I was singing

In the tracks of my years

my songs for you”...under the Criterion moniker.

In between each line

Referencing w/ a pun Ronstadt’s version of “Tracks of My Tears”

I never dreamed that I’d ever say goodbye

Each line of every song I wrote for Criterion

To Selma Avenue

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

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 on paper 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 over 50 years.

Who carved their mark in you

The recordings cut there

For all time

Meaning the songs last forever.

You made our dreams come true

Mickey & Bo Goldsen who signed all the songwriters over the years 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

The ones who got to write for Criterion

Who somehow caught a ride

To Selma Avenue

PRELUDE REPRISE:

All those troubadours walked through your doors

Desperados of the truth

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