

The War And Treaty – Biography

Since first lighting up the world with their glorious fusion of country and soul, The War And Treaty have steadily built a legacy as one of the most iconic husband-and-wife duos in music history. In the last few years alone, Michael Trotter Jr. and Tanya Trotter's phenomenal talent and daring originality have led to major milestones like earning two Grammy nominations, taking home the Duo/Group of the Year prize at the Americana Music Honors & Awards two years in a row, and performing at stadiums as support for superstars like the Rolling Stones and Zach Bryan—a triumph that's won them a whole new legion of fans thanks to the electrifying impact of their revelatory live show. On their new album *Plus One*, The War And Treaty double down on the powerful sense of togetherness that's always fueled their music, offering up 18 life-affirming songs aimed at providing a shared experience of hope and healing and much-needed joy.

“We see this record as an open invitation to be a part of what we're doing—it came from wanting to be the hope we believe people need right now, as well as the hope that we need for ourselves,” says Tanya. “Too often we feel all alone in this world, and when we feel alone it can be easy to succumb to despair,” Michael adds. “One of our main intentions with this album is to inspire people to share themselves with others, and open themselves up to the possibility of being loved.”

Mainly produced by Michael and recorded at the legendary FAME Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, *Plus One* marks their fourth full-length and follow-up to *Lover's Game*—a 2023 LP whose standout track “Blank Page” nabbed a Grammy nomination for Best American Roots Song, with The War And Treaty nominated for Best New Artist. To create their most extravagant body of work to date, the duo enlisted their longtime live band and dreamed up a singular sound touched with elements of gospel, bluegrass, contemporary country, classic soul, symphonic pop, folk-rock, and more. Partly made in collaboration with esteemed producers like Jonathan Singleton (Luke Combs, Chase Rice), John Shanks (Stevie Nicks, Sheryl Crow), and Jesse Frasure (Jelly Roll, Kelsea Ballerini), the result is a transcendent double album firmly rooted in their timeless musicality and forward-thinking vision. “There's a spirit in the walls at FAME that I could hear speaking to us—I could feel Wilson Pickett and Percy Sledge and the Allman Brothers, all telling us to be honest and humble and take this moment very seriously,” says Michael. “The goal was to pull from the energy of the past and the present, and come up with something that becomes part of the future.”

In a potent introduction to the album's sonic magnificence, *Plus One* opens on “Love Like Whiskey”: a soul-soothing portrait of a love strong enough to overcome any obstacle, co-written by the Trotters and country queen Miranda Lambert. “We've been friends with Miranda for a while, and we all got together and decided to write a song about how Michael and I work through those times when we're not getting along,” Tanya explains. With its radiant guitar work, rousing horns, and beautifully lived-in storytelling, “Love Like Whiskey” finds The War And Treaty leaning further into their deep-seated love of country while boldly expanding the genre's boundaries. “In the past we've been told our sound wasn't radio-friendly, but over time we started getting attention from country radio,” says Michael. “We've been seeing a lot of new artists pushing the envelope as far as what country music can be, so we decided, ‘Why not join them, and push it our own way?’”

Both exquisitely gifted vocalists, Michael and Tanya trade off verses all throughout *Plus One* to share their distinct perspective on their one-of-a-kind love story—a dynamic put to dazzling use on songs like “Can I Get An Amen.” Over the course of the hard-hitting but exuberant track, the two present an up-close glimpse into their daily lives and the countless ways in which they lift each other up (from the opening lyrics, delivered by Michael: “Sunday morning, she's a bona fide preacher/Laying hands all over me”). “When I sing that line, it's a true statement about when I was going through the height of my PTSD and Tanya would massage me to calm me down,” says Michael, an Iraq War veteran and wounded warrior. “The whole song came from being thankful for the seven days a week I get to spend with Tanya, and all the good that can come when I really open up and let her in.”

One of the most thrilling moments on *Plus One*, “Carried Away” revels in the unending passion at the heart of their romance. “Sometimes we have to sit back and marvel at the fact that we've been together for 15 years,” says Tanya. “So many marriages crumble a few years in, but with us it just keeps getting better and better with time.” In a

particularly brilliant move, “Carried Away” takes the shape of a pedal-steel-laced honky-tonk ballad during the verses, then slips into a groove-heavy R&B slow-burner at the chorus. “The most important part about nailing that song was making sure that Tanya and I were in the same room, vibing off each other,” Michael recalls. “We put our foreheads together and left that space between our lips, and then just moved together like the ocean.”

Endlessly revealing the incredible depth of their musicianship, *Plus One* encompasses everything from the moody bluegrass romp of “Drink From Me” (featuring virtuoso guitarist Billy Strings) to the wildly ecstatic “Called You By Your Name” (a breakneck-paced rallying cry influenced by the Black gospel tradition of shout music). On “Skyscraper,” the duo serve up a stomp-and-clap anthem graced with guest vocals from their daughter (Courtney Trotter) and Michael’s mother (Deborah Trotter), transforming the track into a triumphant family affair. “When you look up at all those skyscrapers in New York City, you don’t usually think about what it took to build them,” says Michael. “We know that sometimes it takes a lot of pain and struggle and loneliness to get to where you’re meant to be, so we wrote that song to remind everyone that we’re all beautiful skyscrapers with a story to tell.” And on “Tunnel Vision,” The War And Treaty lay down a fiery country-rock banger declaring their determination to fully live their truth. “I started writing that song during the pandemic, which reminded us how we need to stay focused on doing what brings us joy,” says Michael. “It’s about coming out of that experience with a victorious mindset and telling the world, ‘We’ve got a goal in mind, and we’re not going to let anyone or anything get in our way.’”

In selecting a title for their latest album, The War And Treaty chose to honor the once-in-a-lifetime connection evident in everything they create. Now based in Nashville, the two first met at a Maryland music festival in 2010 and instantly discovered an undeniable chemistry despite their disparate backgrounds. To that end, Tanya grew up near Washington, D.C., and found success as a singer and actress as a teenager, while Michael taught himself to play piano while encamped in one of Saddam Hussein’s palaces during his time in the military. Within several years of crossing paths, the duo co-founded The War And Treaty and set off on an unstoppable rise that’s now included sharing stages with such eclectic artists as Chris Stapleton and Al Green, performing twice at the White House, joining forces with Zach Bryan on his platinum-certified smash “Hey Driver” (nominated for a People’s Choice Country Award), and amassing an ever-growing list of accolades and award nominations. But for Michael and Tanya, the duo’s greatest achievement lies in the constant growth of their adoring and deeply engaged fanbase. “We hear a lot from veterans who tell us our music inspires them to keep holding on, and from young girls who look up to Tanya and show us the pictures they’ve drawn of her,” he notes. “We’ve also seen people fall in love at our shows, and then get in touch later to let us know that one of our songs was the first dance at their wedding. It’s becoming a whole culture cultivated in love.”

As they get set to tour in support of *Plus One*, The War And Treaty look forward to joining their fans in rejoicing in the album’s mood of unbridled gratitude and full-hearted celebration. “At a time when human connection is being threatened by AI and all the division happening in our country, I think a lot of us are thirsting to really connect with others,” says Michael. “We want our live show to be a place where you can be around other likeminded people, where we can all get together and let the love wash over all the pain we’ve experienced. And if you can, we hope everyone will bring a plus one—someone who needs to hear what we’re saying, so that we can all grow together and extend that spirit of love as far as it can go.”