

HEARTLESS BASTARDS BIO

No salve soothes quite like music does. Like the ultimate balm, it releases tension and stress and reinvigorates the spirit. With a warm patchwork of rock 'n' roll, psychedelia, folk, alternative, and blues, Heartless Bastards unlock healing and catharsis within their music. Whether in the studio or on stage, the Austin-based band fronted by vocalist, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and producer Erika Wennerstrom calm as they captivate. After generating over 100 million total streams and enrapturing audiences at legendary venues such as Red Rocks Amphitheatre, the group continue to connect with listeners everywhere through boundary-breaking sonics and straight-from-the-heart lyrics.

"Music is medicine," observes Erika. "It gives me a sense of purpose beyond just creating art. The idea someone might find comfort in it or it can actually help another person is incredible to me. I don't know if I ever thought about it in those terms when I was younger. I've realized it over the years though."

At the turn-of-the-century, Erika founded Heartless Bastards in Cincinnati, OH. Inspired by the likes of Joan Jett, Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, and more, she cut early demos in 2003, performing the bulk of the instruments herself. A bartending gig inspired the name Heartless Bastards. The bar's touch screen game posed the question, "*What is Tom Petty's backing band?*" and offered "*The Heartless Bastards*" as an answer option, so she accepted this humorous twist of fate and adopted it as her band's moniker.

The band initially came to life with *Stairs and Elevators* in 2005, building a discography of fan favorites highlighted by *All This Time* [2006], *The Mountain* [2009], and the seminal *Arrow* [2012]. The latter captured #2 on the *Billboard* Top Independent Albums Chart, went Top 10 on the Tastemaker Albums Chart, and even cracked the Top 200. "Only For You" notably amassed north of 42.6 million Spotify streams and 17.2 million YouTube views. In the wake of the album, *Time* attested, "*Wennerstrom's voice is one of the cornerstones of their success. It is tender even when it is severe, and she is unabashedly soulful even when she rocks, almost as though she were at once performing a slow country ballad and singing alongside Mark Bolan from T. Rex.*"

Meanwhile, 2021's *A Beautiful Life* arrived to widespread praise from *Uncut*, *Glide*, and *Classic Rock* with *Pitchfork* going as far as to claim, "*A Beautiful Life is her best album as a vocalist, as she finds new ways to bend her voice to different styles and sounds.*" In addition to sharing the stage with The Flaming Lips, The Decemberists, Wolfmother, Lucinda Williams, and The Avett Brothers, they lit up festivals a la *Bonnaroo*, *Lollapalooza*, *Austin City Limits*, *Newport Folk Festival*, *High Sierra Music Festival*, and more. Through it all, Heartless Bastards constantly evolve.

"The vibe is pretty eclectic," she goes on. "My voice ties it together. The earlier albums were a bit more garage- and punk-influenced. We've drawn from classic rock, indie, and folk too. I love music, and I'm always exploring sounds."

In 2022, they celebrate the 10th anniversary of *Arrow* with a special limited-edition re-release on vinyl, new acoustic recordings, and the addition of the previously unavailable "Got to Have Rock and Roll," "Parted Ways," and "Bye Bye Baby Blues" originally by George "Little Hat" Jones.

"*Arrow* is the album that reached the most people," she smiles. "It's cool to celebrate the success of it and give fans something else. The response to '*Only For You*' made me feel connected to people everywhere in a beautiful way. I'll always be grateful for *Arrow*."

In the end, Heartless Bastards might just be able to heal what ails you.

“Ultimately, I hope people enjoy themselves when they’re listening to our records or seeing us live,” she leaves off. “Playing shows really brings me a lot of joy. I hope the connection translates. I’m ready to tour a lot and release more music.”