



Alan Doyle // Short Bio

Expect the unexpected from *Welcome Home*, Alan Doyle's fourth full-length solo studio album and 20th overall. While upholding his status as a perennial merrymaker — a reputation burnished by his years with acclaimed folk-pop combo Great Big Sea — the new album also finds the multifaceted singer-songwriter and 14-time JUNO Award nominee exploring novel sonic terrain.

Alongside marquee co-writers Jimmy Rankin, Donovan Woods, and Hollywood actor Oscar Isaac (yep, of *Star Wars* fame), Doyle presents nine original songs that are both typically buoyant and surprisingly intimate, what Doyle refers to as “the lower and slower: the lower part of my vocal range and the slower songs. I'm letting myself do that for the first time on this record,” which he cut in Montreal with producer-engineer Marcus Paquin.

Doyle's CV is extensive — he is a thrice-published author, a film and TV actor-producer with multiple major credits, and the co-producer of the recently released, 20-song Ron Hynes tribute album, *Sonny Don't Go Away*. Yet the wildly popular musician from Petty Harbour, Newfoundland remains most electrifying before a live audience, abetted by his ace band. “I am the luckiest guy in the world,” Doyle says. “It's such a privilege to stand among those players on stage.”

Alan Doyle // *Welcome Home*

It's not exactly unrecognizable as an Alan Doyle record. But *Welcome Home*, Doyle's fourth full-length solo studio album and 20th overall — counting live releases, EPs, and the blockbuster, million-selling catalogue he created with his acclaimed former folk-pop group Great Big Sea — is proof positive that the friendly fellow from Petty Harbour, Newfoundland still has a few aces up his sleeve.

Aces like co-writes with an East Coast country-folk king, a country-roots hipster... and a cast member of *Star Wars*. The album contains one of the first tunes Doyle ever penned. Most notably perhaps, *Welcome Home* boasts a couple of ballads — yes, full-stop, heart-on-sleeve love songs — that might have his ecstatic fans hoisting BIC lighters between raucous singalongs at his shows.

Really though, is it any surprise that Doyle, whose CV also lists marquee credits as a film and television actor, producer, and best-selling author of three non-fiction titles, is dazzling us all over again? Considering the track record of the multifaceted singer-songwriter-guitarist and 14-time JUNO Award nominee, adhering to the status quo would probably be weirder.

“This is the most personal and understated record 've ever done,” Doyle confirms with typical candour. “I have always struggled with the middle ground. I love playing live so much and I have been rightly accused of writing songs more for concerts than albums. Most people who come to my shows want that



kind of night out. So, I have overlooked the lower and slower: the lower part of my vocal range and the slower songs. I'm letting myself do that for the first time on this record."

To be clear, *Welcome Home* has party tracks aplenty, notably the fiercely rollicking, Celtic-y, fiddle-and-accordion-goosed title track and first single, one of three co-writes between Doyle and Donovan Woods, the aforementioned country-roots hipster. (Josh Kelley also abetted). "Donovan and I have written many songs together over the last eight or 10 years," Doyle says. "He's one of my favourite collaborators."

Similarly, scorching album opener "Yours and Mine," crafted with East Coast legend Jimmy Rankin a decade ago but never recorded, fuses a soaring chorus to a buoyant constellation of acoustic instruments from guitar to piano to fiddle. "I stumbled on a demo of that song in an old folder on my laptop," Doyle says. "Jimmy is one of my favourite writers and I was so happy to have a chance to write with him."

But then comes "You'll Still Be With Me" and "Dancing Like We Did Last Night," a back-to-back pair of tender, unapologetically knock-kneed songs suggesting that beneath Doyle's image as a perennial merry-maker beats the heart of true romantic.

The flipside is "How Did We Get From Saying I Love You?," a vivid portrait of former lovers bumping into each other and weathering the awkward gulf that has grown between them in their separation. Talk about a universal topic laid bare.

"That's one of the first songs I ever wrote. I was 19 and it was after my first break-up with someone in a grown-up way," Doyle offers. "I was so struck by that duality and by how quickly things can flip. Great Big Sea recorded that song in 1996 but I felt it deserved another listen. And I thought it would sound lovely with Todd's piano and Kendel's voice," Doyle adds, namechecking bandmates Todd Lumley and Kendel Carson, who elevate the track. "I am glad that song had legs and was right for this moment."

Astute liner note readers will also spot a high-wattage name listed in the credits: Hollywood actor Oscar Isaac of *Star Wars* and, more recently, *Dune* fame, who co-wrote with Doyle the toweringly melodic, wistful "Best I Never Had" which on *Welcome Home* is propelled by soaring fiddle and a sticky "na-na-na" chorus.

"Oscar and I had worked together in *Robin Hood*," Doyle says, citing the movie from 2010 starring the singer's pal and sometime musical collaborator Russell Crowe. "Oscar was in a film called *10 Years* where he played a rock star returning to his high school reunion. We wrote that song for his character. I love Oscar's version, but I always wanted to do a version of it myself."

Not all the songs on *Welcome Home* feature that kind of mythology, but all come with a snappy backstory. The gentle, tuneful "Hard Old Hands," which spotlights Doyle and his acoustic guitar and is the album's sole song without a co-writer, began as a lark on TikTok — and a wink to Newfoundlanders who know "hard old" as a colloquialism meaning ill-suited.



"I was just shagging around in my kitchen with my guitar, and I came up with this delicate melody. I am not the guy to play delicate things on guitar, I guarantee you," he howls. "Anyway, I filmed myself mainly so I wouldn't forget it and I posted it on TikTok. Hundreds of people said, 'You have to write a song called 'Hard Old Hands. 'So, I did."

Elsewhere, the song "Long Night 'captures that feeling of something imperfect but still OK," Doyle says. "To make hay while the sun *isn't* shining. That's a Newfoundland trait: we are good at good times but we're fantastic at bad times. The trick with that song is that lyrically it's quite bleak, but I wanted it to be up-tempo. Sort of like, 'Yup, things suck, but here we go!'"

Ah, Newfoundland. Is any artist as inextricably bound to his birthplace? While he didn't put the place on the musical map — that honour goes to the late Ron Hynes — Doyle and his Great Big Sea cohorts did help raise the nation's consciousness to the uniquely vibrant traditional sounds and storytelling culture of the island and its mainland sector, Labrador.

Now that *Welcome Home* is in the can, the road beckons, as usual. Not that Doyle is sweating it. "I am the luckiest guy in the world to have the band I have assembled," he enthuses. "It's such a privilege to stand among those players on stage."