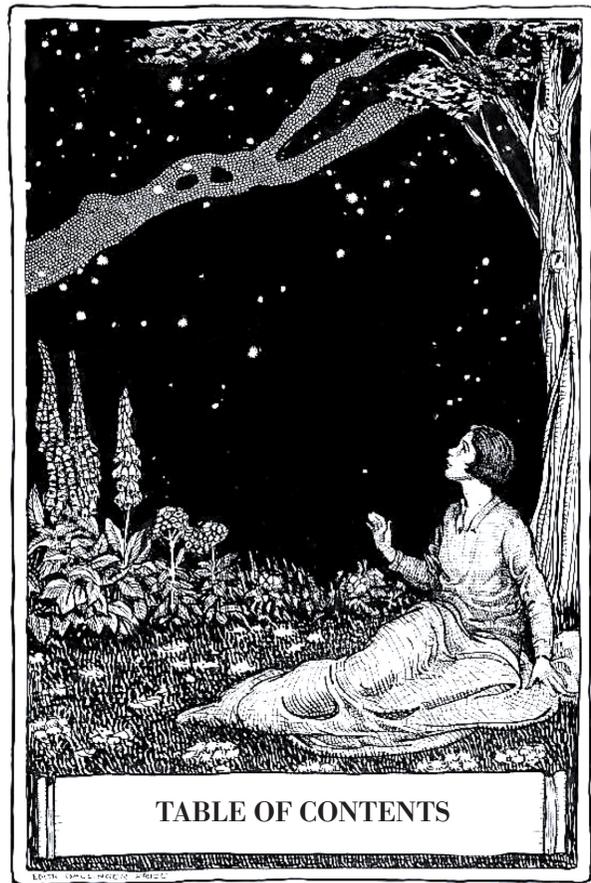




a book about **RUFUS WAINWRIGHT**
by Victoria Oliphant



CHAPTER ONE..... 6

- personal essay
- comp + space
- borders
- dreamscapes

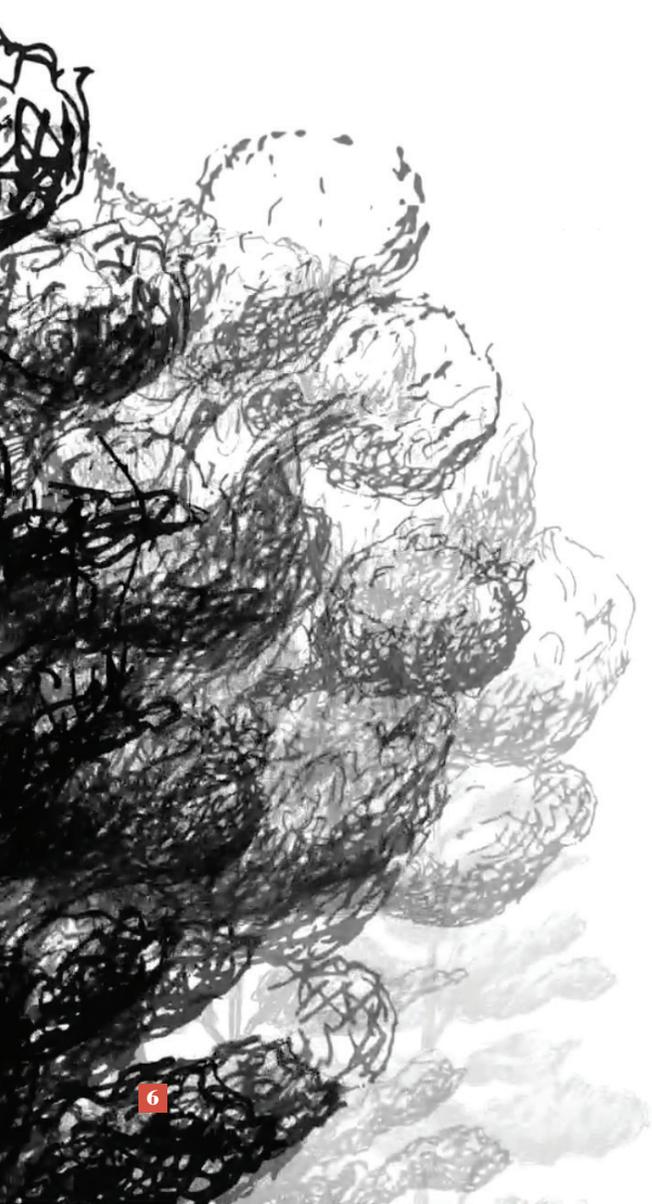
CHAPTER TWO..... 24

- interview
- rules and blocks
- type and image

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- artist biography
- lyrics
- animation





LYRICS ON POSTCARDS

more about my connection
to Rufus Wainwright,
black & white gallery
images #1-24



Song Selection & Typeface Rationale

Released September 23, 2003, “Go or Go Ahead” is the sixth track of Rufus Wainwright’s critically acclaimed album *Want One*. Canadian-born singer and composer, Rufus McGarrigle Wainwright has released 11 studio albums and is known widely for his work on various film soundtracks. His music draws a variety of references from operatic to more alternative styles of voice. Inspired by his experiences traveling across the East and West coasts, his discography acts almost as a diary, letting listeners into the most vulnerable moments of his journey and struggles.

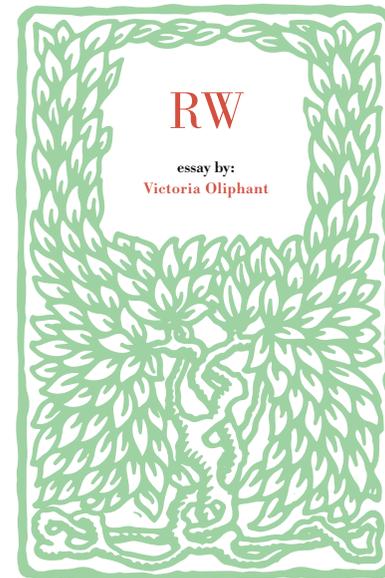
“Go or Go Ahead”, depicts a pivotal moment in Wainwright’s early life when he decided to come clean off of crystal meth. As he described to *Rolling Stone* in 2020, “I wrote it at the end of a serious comedown in San Francisco. At the end of a very dramatic and worrisome drug episode, I was able to compose a great piece of music.” He goes on to not recommend this, yet explains how this was an important moment in his career and struggle with coming to terms with himself. The song uses mythical and astrological imagery to paint a very surreal landscape comparable to that of a drug-like state. The opening lyrics, “Thank you for this bitter knowledge” reference his hindsight realization and ability to pull himself out of a very dangerous situation. Followed by, “Guardian angels who left me stranded” in which he is alluding to the veteran users who introduced him to this lifestyle subsequently leaving him “stranded”. Musically, the song rises in energy meticulously,

starting slow and ending in a heavily orchestrated swell of emotion. His voice is highlighted as he tells a narrative within the lyrics, a story of love, loss, addiction and moreover survival.

I was introduced to this song in early childhood. My mom has always loved Wainwright’s voice and his music was always playing throughout the years. When I got older, I also started taking a deep interest in his music as I have always enjoyed his expressive and powerful lyrics. To me, his music holds a lot of important memories and emotions. Throughout my life, I have always listened to his music when I am struggling or going through my own issues. The song “Go or Go Ahead” specifically strikes a chord because of its content matter and how that relates to my life. Meth addiction is something that has been heavily prevalent in the lives of my closest relatives on my mother’s side of the family. My entire

life I have been conscious of the effects of meth abuse and how it can be such a destructive force not only to the victim but their loved ones as well. I had always had an affinity to the emotion, power, and mythical nature of the song, but I only learned recently what it was about. After learning more about the meaning of the metaphors within the music I felt myself connect with the song on an even deeper level.

Released September 23, 2003, “Go or Go Ahead” stands as the sixth track on Rufus Wainwright’s acclaimed album, “*Want One*.” Rufus McGarrigle Wainwright, a Canadian-born singer and composer, has made significant contributions with 11 studio albums and works on well-known film soundtracks. His unique music transcends various genres, blending operatic influences with alternative voice styles.



Wainwright’s discography serves as a personal diary, inviting listeners to share his most vulnerable moments, Experiences, and struggles.

“*Want One*” includes many of Wainwright’s most beloved tunes. The album follows the story of his early life and struggles with identity, love, and loss. The track, “Go or Go Ahead”, encapsulates a critical crossroads in Wainwright’s early life when he confronted his addiction to crystal meth. He discussed the song’s origin with *Rolling Stone* in 2020, stating, “I wrote it at the end of a serious comedown in San Francisco. At the end of a very dramatic and worrisome drug episode, I was able to compose a great piece of music.” While he does not recommend such experiences, he acknowledges their importance in his personal and artistic development. The song employs mythical and astrological imagery to create a surreal landscape reminiscent of a drug-induced state. The opening lyrics, “Thank you for this bitter knowledge,” reflect his hindsight realization and his ability to remove himself from a perilous situation. Next, he references “Guardian

angels who left me stranded,” alluding to veteran users who introduced him to the lifestyle and subsequently abandoned him. Later he describes a mythical scene, where he compares looking into the eyes of addiction to looking into the eyes of Medusa. In both cases, the victim is immobilized, and life is forever changed. Musically, the song exhibits meticulous energy, starting slowly and culminating in a richly orchestrated crescendo of emotion. Wainwright’s voice serves as a central narrative element within the lyrics, conveying a story of love, loss, addiction, and ultimately, survival.

My personal connection to “Go or Go Ahead” traces back to early childhood. My mother has always been an avid fan of Rufus Wainwright’s voice, and his music was played often in my adolescent years. As I grew older, I developed a profound appreciation for his music, drawn to the power and expressive nature of his



“I listen to this song when I am both happy or sad. I especially enjoy listening to it in the car and screaming the words at the top of my lungs.”

lyrics. Wainwright’s music has carried with it a hub of cherished memories and emotions throughout my life. During challenging moments or when facing personal issues his music really reaches out to me and offers comfort and understanding.

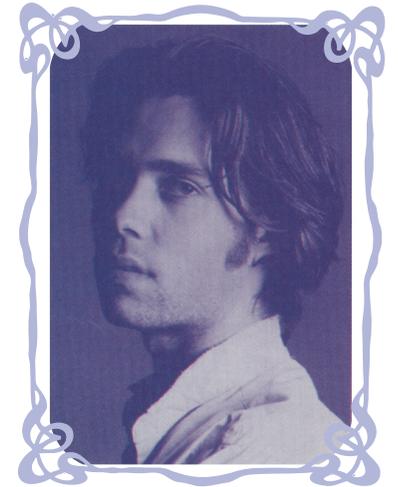
The song “Go or Go Ahead” holds a special place in my heart due to its thematic relevance in my life. Meth addiction has cast a long shadow over my closest relatives on my mother’s side of the family. From an early age, I became acutely aware of the devastating impact of methamphetamine abuse, witnessing how it ravaged not only the user but also their loved ones. Discovering the song’s true meaning, its metaphors, and the underlying message behind the music has elevated my connection to it. It has become a poignant reminder of the importance of confronting and overcoming personal struggles and addictions. To me, “Go or Go Ahead” highlights

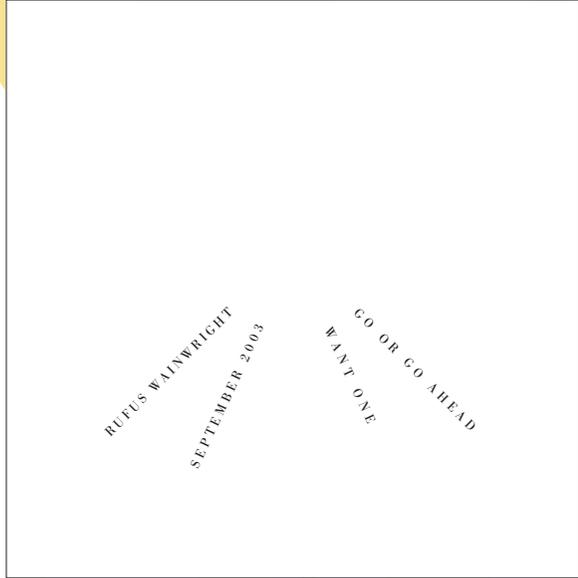
the resilience and strength needed to navigate the adversities of life while maintaining optimism. As he describes to Rolling Stone, “For me, there’s always some silver lining. I don’t do that on purpose. It’s just part of my nature. The thing about “Go or Go Ahead” in the end is that I do survive that encounter. I’m doing that battle, and I don’t want to go under.”

“Go or Go Ahead” by Rufus Wainwright is a powerful narrative of survival, redemption, and the human spirit’s ability to overcome adversity. Its emotional depth, combined with its relevance to my personal journey and experiences, makes it an enduring and meaningful choice. Visually, Wainwright’s album covers and graphic design work have a German Jugendstil aesthetic that flows through and is a common theme. Heavy ornamentation and serif fonts are regularly seen within the bounds of his work. Bodoni, a classic and timeless type fam-

ily, encapsulates Wainwright’s whimsy and elegance and highlights his love for New York and the big cities. Known for his crossed “W” in most of his iconic graphic works, Bodoni works best as a visual allegory for the work and life of Wainwright. Ultimately, Bodoni complements the song’s narrative, enhancing the overall impact of the essay and underscoring the profound connection between the song and the design elements that breathe life into its story.

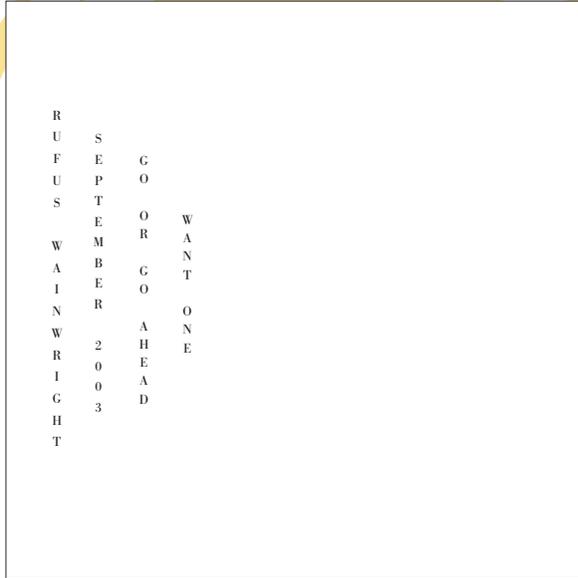
essay by:
Victoria Oliphant





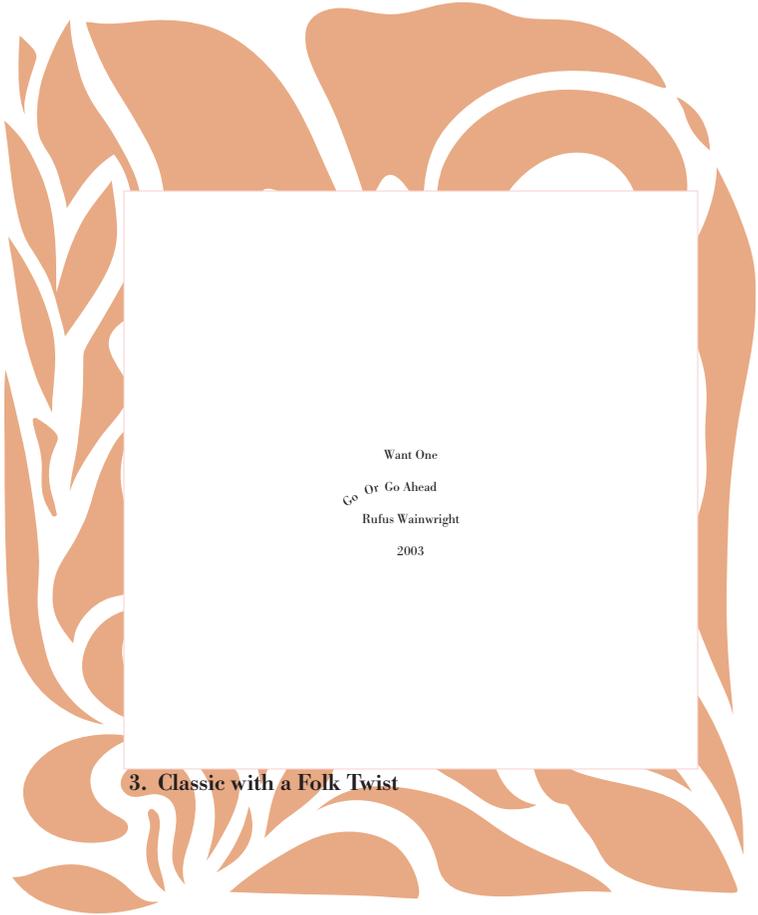
1. Sun Rays

2. Thin Lines like Window Panes



+ COMPOSITION SPACE

In design, composition and space are pivotal elements that shape visual impact. Establishing a clear hierarchy, balancing elements, and employing contrast contribute to a harmonious design, guiding the viewer's focus. Negative space, or white space, plays a crucial role by providing breathing room and preventing visual clutter. Proximity and consistent spacing ensure that related elements are grouped logically. In this exercise, only the use of 12 pt. Bodoni was permitted.



3. Classic with a Folk Twist

BORDERS AND DIAGONALS



1. Classic almost biblical formatting surrounded by lace created with the letter g



2. Branding, "fresh", skincare products

3. Movie Poster / trying to create clarity through dynamic shapes

4. Diagonals divided by a central line created with equal signs



3.

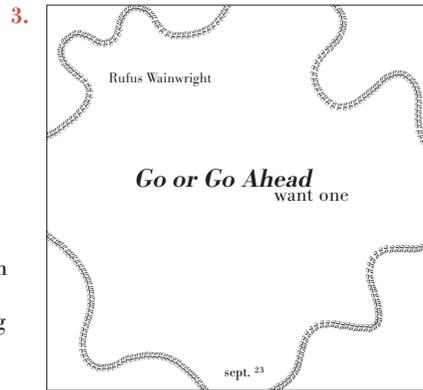
4.



1. Trying to visualize sound, Dada inspired

2. Playing with more classic but exciting styles

3. More lace trim created by g's, experimenting with organic shapes

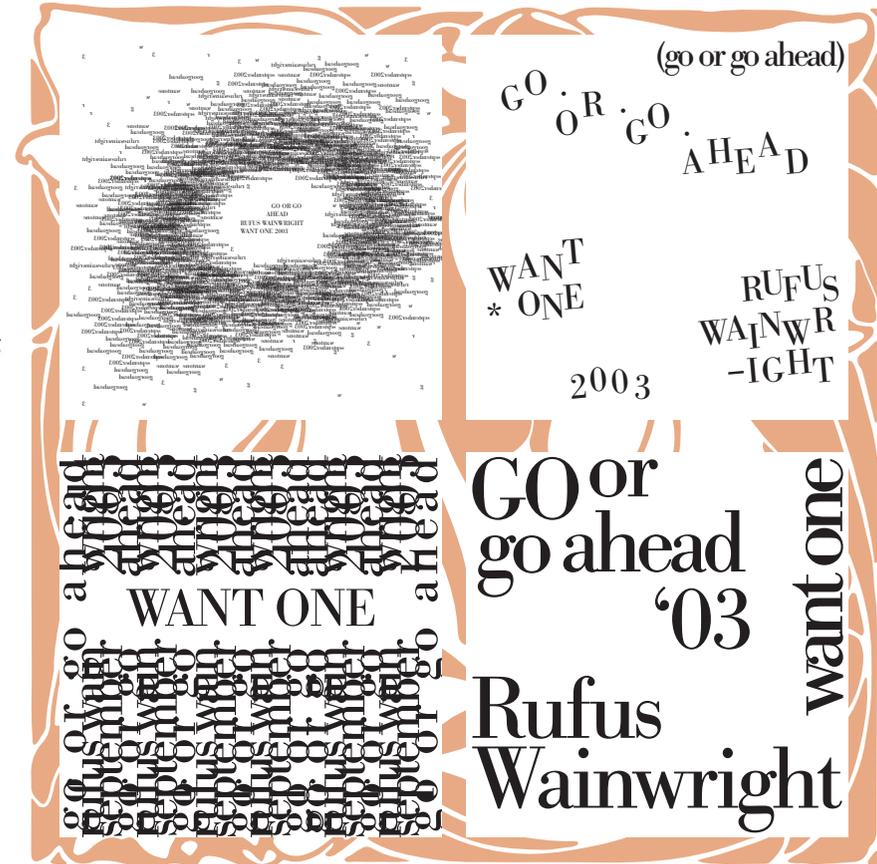


INSPIRED BY THE GREATS

4. Interlocking and layered blobs created by masking text



Rufus Wainwright 9.03.03
GO OR GO AHEAD



1. Smoke cloud seeing through the haze.

3. Luxury—a sense of clarity with in storm.

2. Kitschy & Punk

4. Clean yet Bohemian



Goorgoahed goorgoahed Wantone
 Goorgoahed goorgoahed WantOne

Rufus Wainwright XXIIIIXVIII
 Rufus Wainwright september 23, 2003
 Rufus Wainwright september 23, 2003

1.



GO OR
 GO AHEAD

2°03

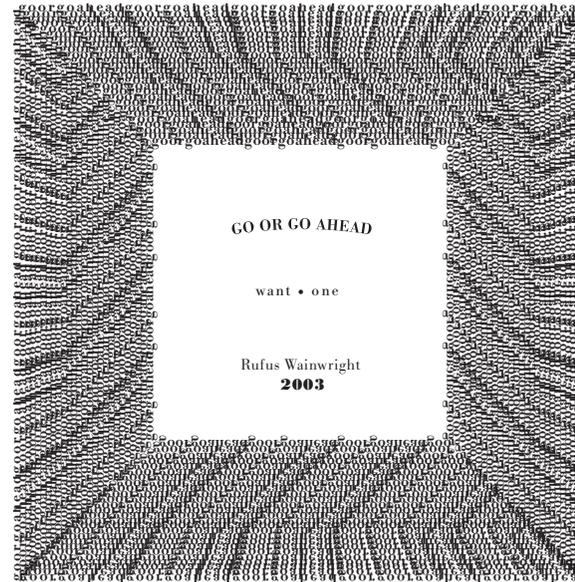
rufuswainwright.

want one

2.

LOUD vs. quiet

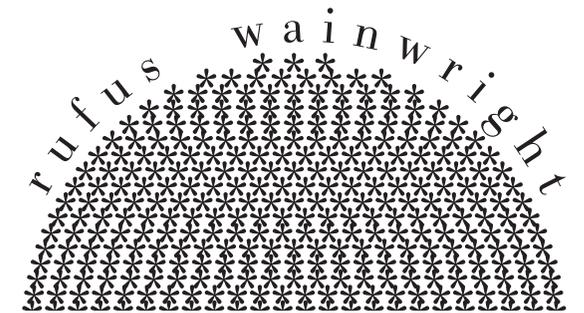
- 1. High Fashion Spread, Magazine, Experiments with headings
- 2. Quirky, playing with different glyphs in the palette



- 3. Linear Perspective, a lonely room, projection

go or go ahead
 want one

sept. 23



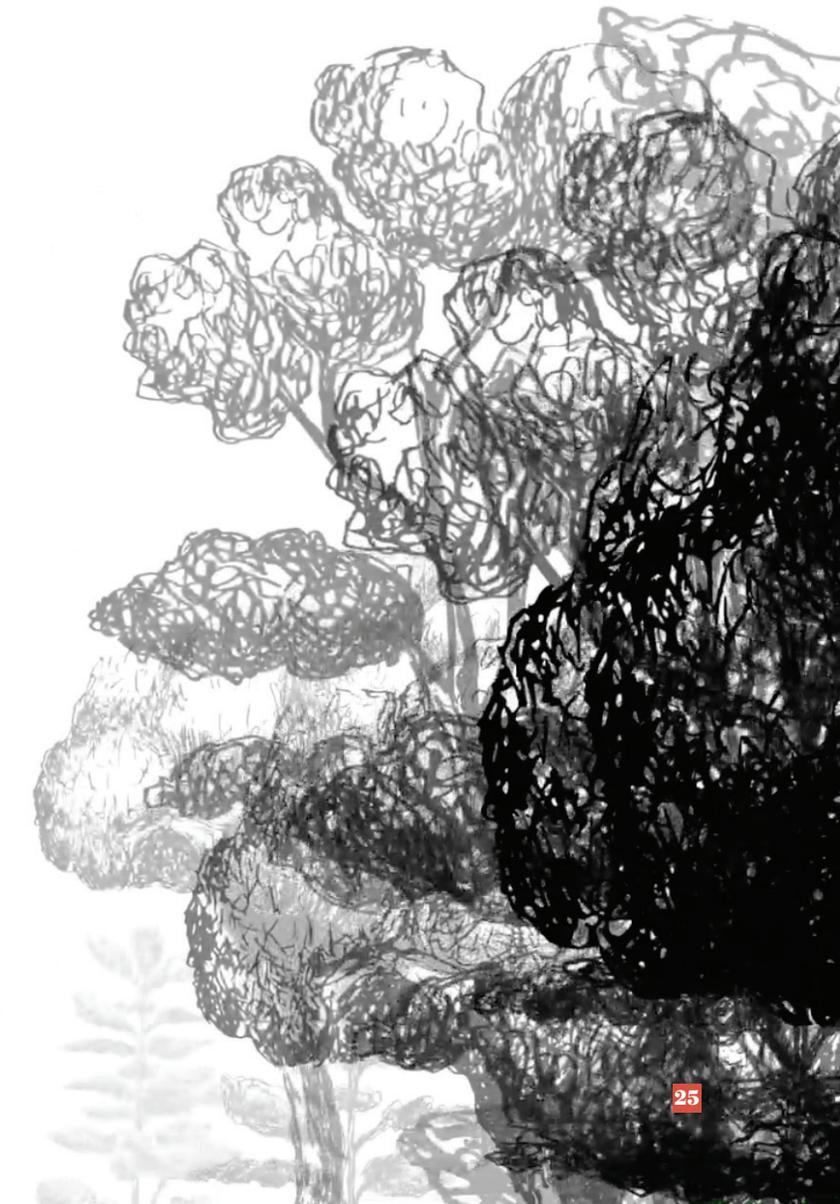
rufus wainwright

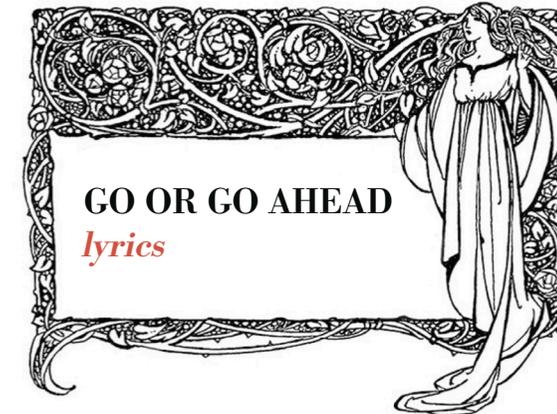
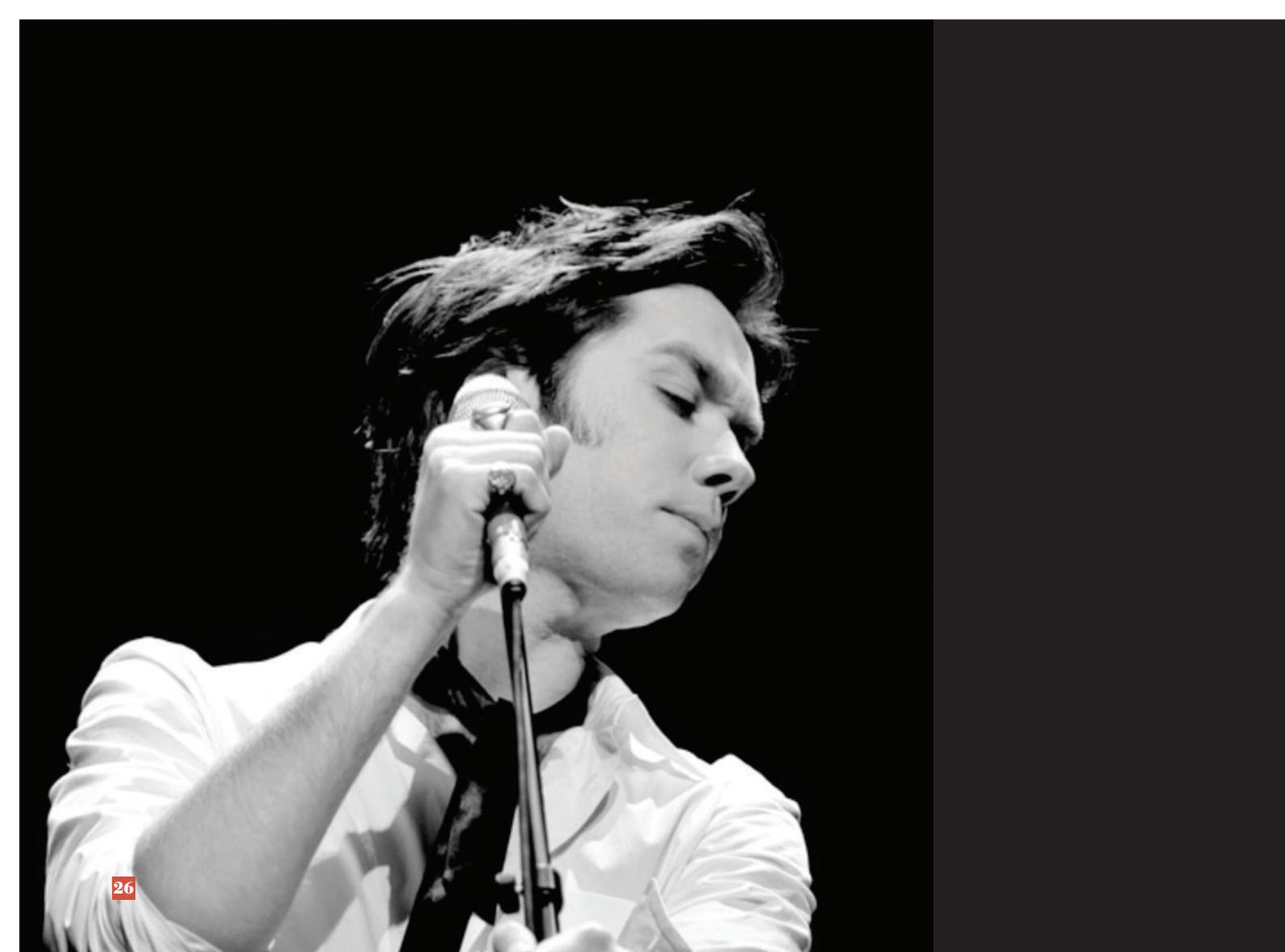
- 4. 60's inspired, hippies laying in a bed of flowers



REBEL ANGELS

Artist biography &
discography, experiments
with line and type





Thank you for this bitter knowledge
Guardian angels who left me stranded
It was worth it, feeling abandoned
Makes one hardened, but what has happened to love?
You got me writing lyrics on postcards
Then in the evenings looking at stars
But the brightest of the planets is Mars
What has happened to love
So, I will opt for the big white limo
Vanity fairgrounds and rebel angels
You can't be trusted with feathers so hollow
Your heaven's inventions, steel-eyed vampires of love

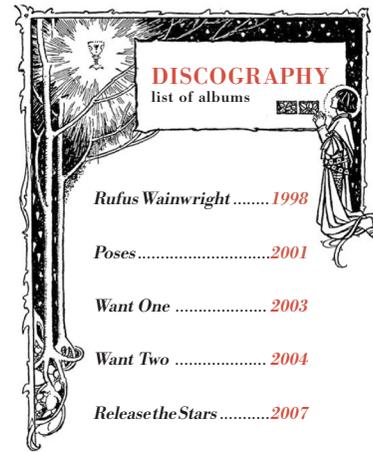
You see over me
I'll never know
What you have shown to other eyes
Go, or go ahead and surprise me
Say you've lead the way to a mirage
Go, or go ahead and just try me
Nowhere's now here smelling of junipers
Fell off the hay bales, I'm over the rainbows
But, oh, Medusa kiss me and crucify
This unholy notion of the mythic power of love
Look in her eyes, look in her eyes
Forget about the ones that are crying
Look in her eyes, look in her eyes
Forget about the ones that are crying
Go, or go ahead
Go, or go ahead
Go, or go ahead
And surprise me
Go, or go ahead
Go, or go ahead
Go, or go ahead
And just try me
What has happened to love?

All About Wainwright

Raised by the New York Times for his “genuine originality,” Rufus Wainwright has established himself as one of the great male vocalists, songwriters, and composers of his generation. The New York-born, Montreal-raised singer-songwriter has released ten studio albums to date, three DVDs, and three live albums including the Grammy-nominated *Rufus Does Judy* at Carnegie Hall. He has collaborated with artists such as Elton John, Burt Bacharach, Miley Cyrus, David Byrne, Boy George, Joni Mitchell, Pet Shop Boys, Heart, Carly

Rae Jepsen, Robbie Williams, Jessye Norman, Billy Joel, Paul Simon, Sting, and producer Mark Ronson, among many others. He has written two operas, numerous songs for movies and TV, and is currently working on his first musical for the West End and a Requiem. His latest GRAMMY® and JUNO nominated album of original songs, *Unfollow the Rules*, finds Wainwright at the peak of his powers, entering artistic maturity with passion, honesty, and a new-found fearlessness. His newly-released studio album *Folkocracy* features reinvented folk duets with artists like Chaka Khan, Brandi Carlile, John Legend and Anohni and many more.

Wainwright was born in Rhinebeck, New York, USA, to folk singers Loudon Wainwright III and Kate McGarrigle (they divorced while he was a child). He began to play the piano at age six, and by age thirteen he was touring with his sister Martha Wainwright, mother Kate, and aunt Anna as the McGarrigle Sisters and Family.



Rufus Wainwright2018

Poses2001

Want One2003

Want Two2004

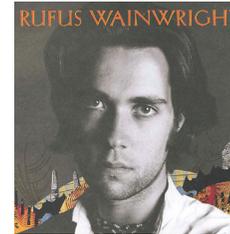
Release the Stars2007

Out of the Game2012

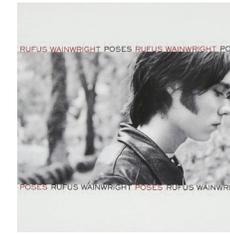
Unfollow the Rules2020

Rufus Wainwright (25th Anniversary)2023

Folkocracy2023



1998



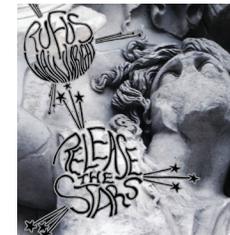
2001



2003



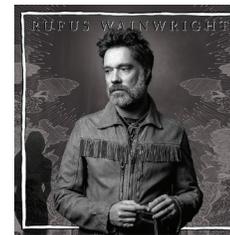
2004



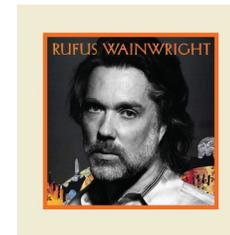
2007



2012



2020



2023



2023

His song *I'm A-Runnin'*, which he performed in the movie *Tommy Tricker and the Stamp Traveller* (in which he also played a minor character), was nominated for the 1989 Genie Award for Best Original Song and earned him a nomination for the 1990 Juno Award for Most Promising Male Vocalist.

He lived in Montreal with his mother for most of his childhood and briefly attended McGill University, where he studied both classical and ‘rock’ piano. Some of his songs feature his mastery of French. Wainwright still maintains a residence in Canada. He came out as gay while still a teen.

Wainwright became interested in opera throughout his adolescent years (for instance, his track *Barcelona* features lyrics of Giuseppe Verdi). He also became an enthusiast of such performers as Édith Piaf, Al Jolson and Judy Garland.

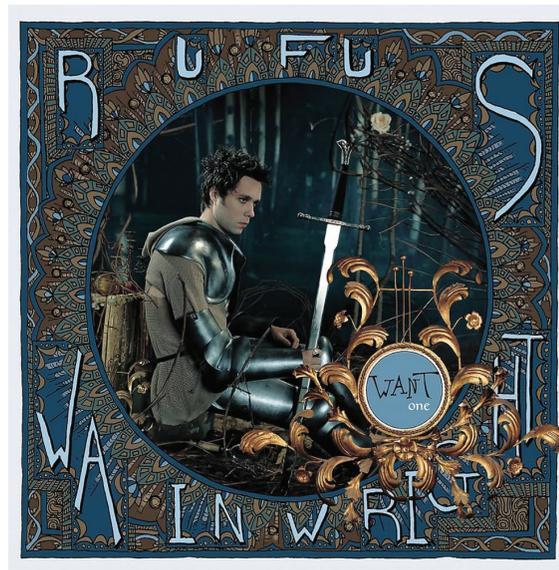
After having been a fixture on the Montreal club circuit, Wainwright cut a series of demo tapes, one of which found itself in the hands of DreamWorks executive Lenny Waronker. The label signed him and he released the self-titled Rufus Wainwright album in the spring of 1998. This album received much critical acclaim in Canada, and was recognized by Rolling Stone magazine as one of the best albums of the year. Wainwright's second album, *Poses* (2001), brought similar acclaim.

Wainwright's first main exposure to the American public came as an opener to singer Tori Amos in 2001 and 2002. He garnered praise for his performance and began touring as a main act shortly afterwards. He has frequently toured as the opener for Sting and co-headlined with Ben Folds and Guster in the summer of 2004. He still often performs with his sister Martha Wainwright (now herself an emerging artist) on backup vocals. Despite a growing cult following and critical acclaim, Wainwright has



experienced only marginal commercial success in the United States.

In addition to being a pianist, Wainwright is a guitarist, often switching between the two instruments when performing live; however, his mastery of the guitar does not approach his talent with the piano within the Piano rock genre. While some of his most moving songs feature just Wainwright with his piano, many of his songs display complex layering and harmonies, occasionally comprising hundreds of individual parts. Wainwright is an avid opera fan, and the influences on his music are evident, as well as his love of Schubert 'Lieder'; his music has been described as "Popera" (Pop Opera) or "Baroque Pop." His lyrics are filled with allusions to opera, literature, pop culture, and, more recently, politics (in songs such as *Gay Messiah* and *Waiting for a Dream*). Wainwright is a recovering crystal meth addict and a rape survivor; he uses the press to bring awareness to these societal problems.

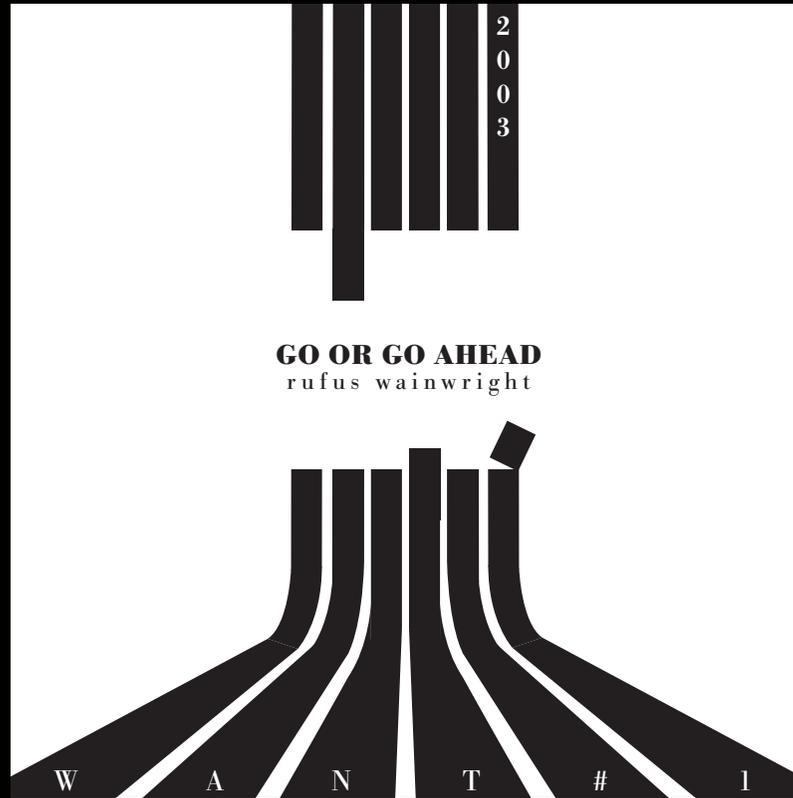


TRACKS

<i>Oh What a World</i>	<i>14th Street</i>
<i>I Don't Know What It Is</i>	<i>Natasha</i>
<i>Vicious World</i>	<i>Harvester of Hearts</i>
<i>Movies of Myself</i>	<i>Beautiful Child</i>
<i>Pretty Things</i>	<i>Want</i>
<i>Go or Go Ahead</i>	<i>11:11</i>
<i>Vibrate</i>	<i>Dinner at Eight</i>

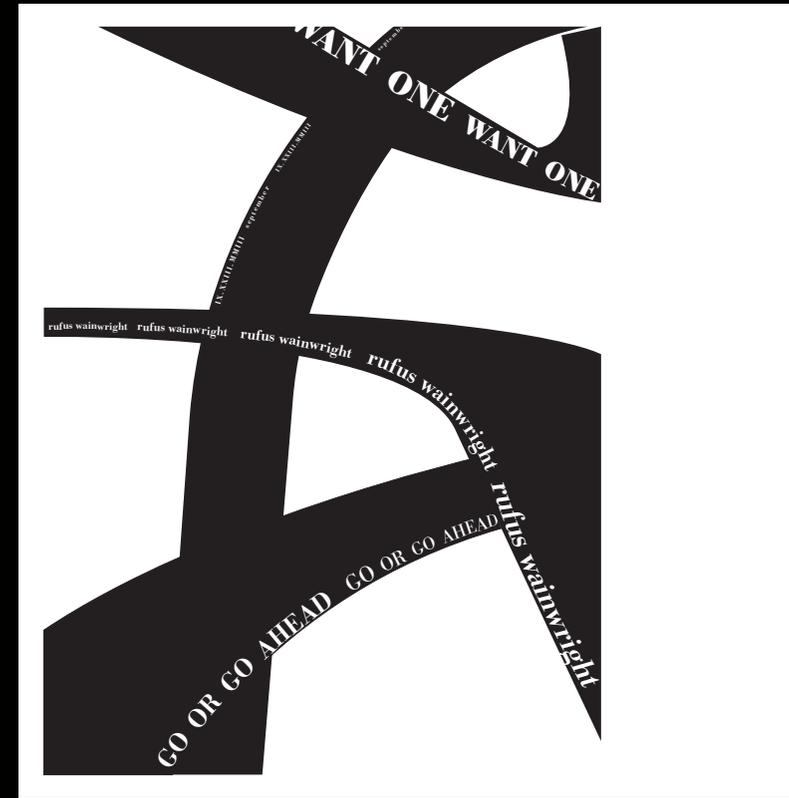
Want One is the third studio album by the Canadian-American singer-songwriter Rufus Wainwright, released through DreamWorks Records on September 23, 2003. The album was produced by Marius de Vries and mixed by Andy Bradford, with Lenny Waronker as the executive in charge of production. *Want One* spawned two singles: "I Don't Know What It Is", which peaked at number 74 on the UK Singles Chart, and "Oh What a World". The album charted in three countries, reaching number 60 on the Billboard 200, number 130 in France, and number 77 in the Netherlands. *Want One* features guest vocals from Martha Wainwright, Joan Wasser, Teddy Thompson and Linda Thompson, as well as a banjo solo on "14th Street" by Wainwright's mother Kate McGarrigle. For the album, Wainwright won the award for Outstanding Music Artist at the 15th GLAAD Media Awards, won Best New Recording and received a nomination for Best Songwriter at the OutMusic Awards, and was nominated for the 2004 Shortlist Music Prize. It was the first part of what was intended to be a double album called *Want*. The second part, *Want Two*, was released the following year. *Want One* was later repackaged along with *Want Two* as a two-disc set titled *Want* and was released on November 28, 2005 in the UK to coincide with Wainwright's tour.

1. Expanding sound waves receding backwards, intercepted and broken

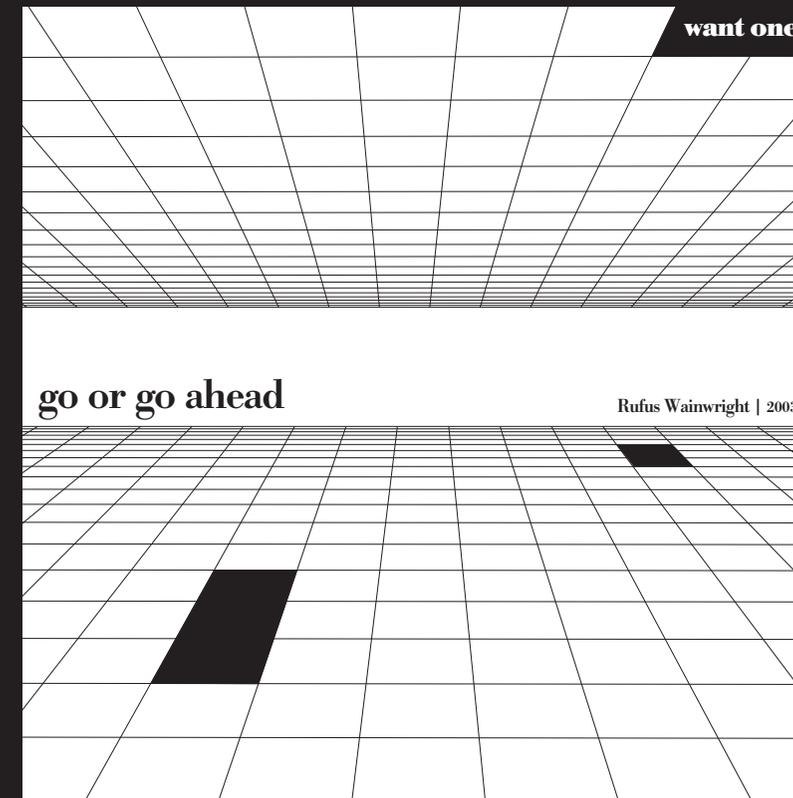


RULES AND BLOCKS

2. Diverging Pathways, creating space with slight change in size and angle



3. Visualizing music through Kandinsky inspired forms



4. 90s vapor-wave inspired, tried to use blocks to direct the eyes to the key text points

Rufus Wainwright
want one

2003

REPRESENTING SOUND

1. The song employs a strong musical structure utilizing contrast between many small elements and instruments coming together to form an atmospheric and lush environment of sound.



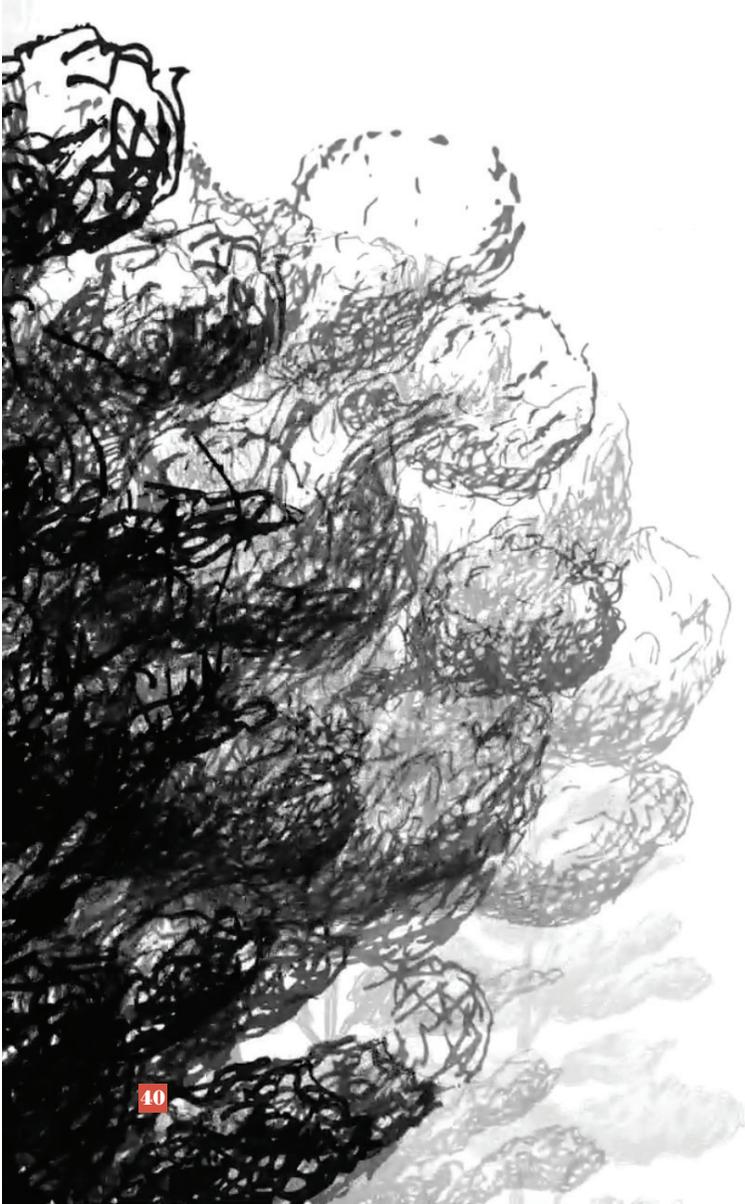
2. Story-book style embodiment of the whimsical nature of the sound, the maximalist elements within the music such as the heavy orchestration contrasted with classic moodiness

3. All-Around-
Pattern as a
metaphor for
the lush and
vibrant sounds,
harmonies,
percussions
present in the
songs main
chorus.



4. The small
strokes building
up represent
the rising guitar
exploding into a
symphony of
instrumentation





MEDUSA'S KISS

Artist interview,
type integrated image,
movement and sound.



25 Years Since Debut Album...



It's been 25 years since the world was introduced to Rufus Wainwright with his debut self-titled album, which featured songs like "April Fools," "In My Arms" and many more. To celebrate, the singer-songwriter sat down with Billboard's Tetriss Kelly to reflect on his career.

"I feel awful," he jokes about how it feels to celebrate 25 years since his debut. "No, I'm very proud and excited to be alive and still making music and happy. That first record I made has proven to have lasted, and I worked very hard on it. It took me three years to make that first record. It cost a lot of money."

As for the 25th anniversary re-issue that came out early this year, Wainwright said that the album was remastered and has some bonus material as well. "What's interesting about the record is that it was made in the mid to late 90s, and it really was part of the last breath of the grand record company-artist relationship, where they'd sort of write all the checks and then let you do whatever you wanted to do. They really didn't expect you to be popular until your third or fourth album," he recalls.

"I wasn't trying to be a trailblazer or anything,"

"AIDS was still very much – it's still part of our world today – but at that time, it was killing a lot of people, a lot of gay men, and I just didn't want to end up in the situation if I did get AIDS at that point, that I would be dying and also have to come out of the closet. I just wanted to avert that tragedy. Thankfully it didn't happen."

If his debut album was released in 2023, Wainwright believes "it would be considered very unique and very unusual and very romantic, especially, because we live in such a tough world."

interview by:
Rania Aniftos, *Billboard*

Quotes



"Crazy as it sounds, I'm a believer in destiny and serendipity, and I have had cosmic experiences all my life. Something told me I was meant for greater stuff. And look, I've had a baby! And I've written an opera!"

"I'm definitely a fan of juxtaposition. Using the most beautiful line to say the most horrific thing - I think one of the main things in songwriting is definitely friction between the words and the melody."

"Why be in music, why write songs, if you can't use them to explore life or an idealized vision of life? I believe a lot of our lives are spent asleep, and what I've been trying to do is hold on to those moments when a little spark cuts through the fog and nudges you."

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT

GO OR GO AHEAD | WANT ONE | 2003



CONNECTING NAME TO FACE

1. Classic with that little sprinkle of Rufus whimsy



2. Inspired by past Rufus covers and branding, fun yet moody

3. Bathrooms are a meeting place where drug culture and LGBT culture collide, themes of shame and addiction



RUFUS WAINWRIGHT

want one | september 23, 2003



4. Inspired by classic jazz graphics

w A n T o N e



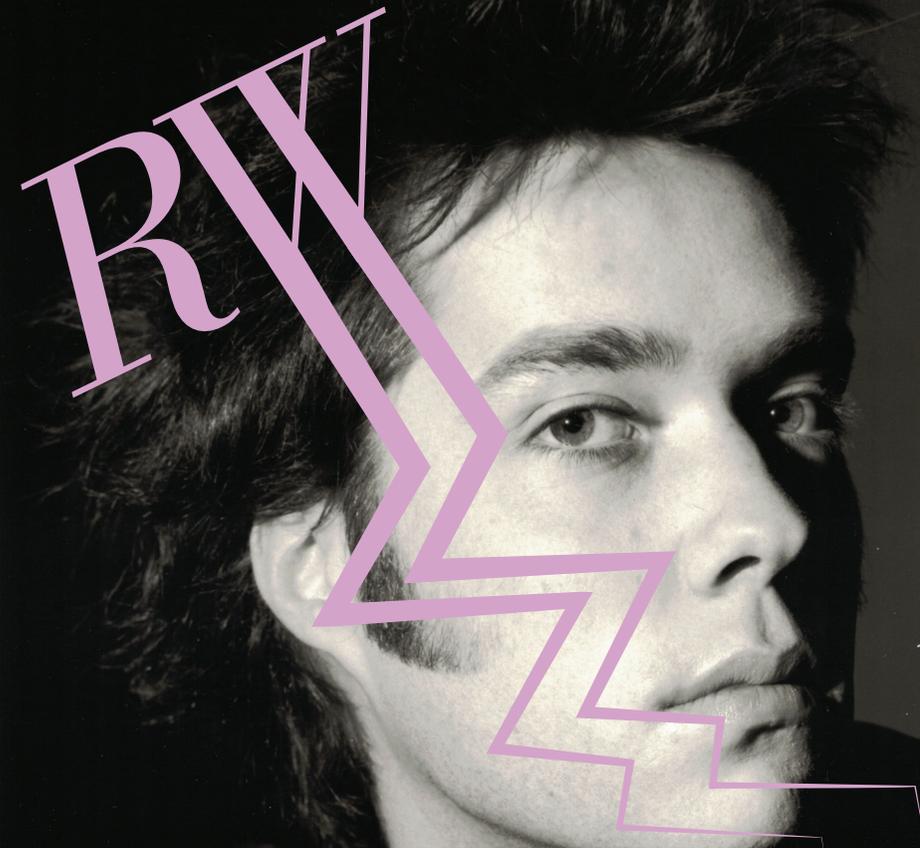
go or go ahead | 2003



5. Cerebral and contemplative

6. Edgy "Zine" inspired

want one

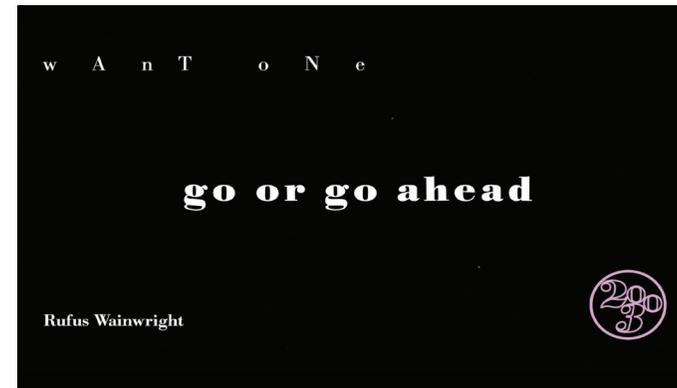
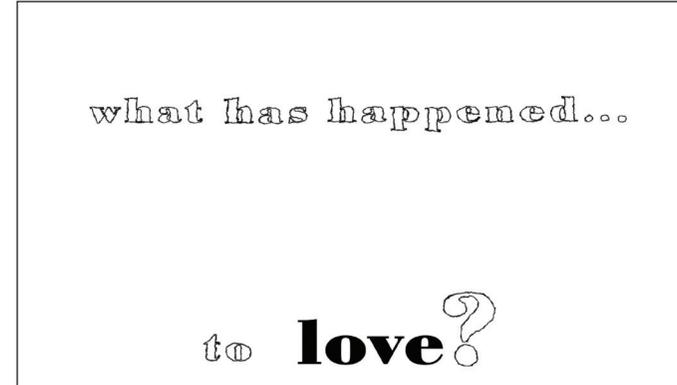


G O R G O A H E A D



Animation Stills

In the creation of the mesmerizing lyric video for Rufus Wainwright's poignant song "Go or Go Ahead" from the *Want One* album, the journey from inspiration to animation was a captivating exploration. The inspiration stemmed from the profound nature of Wainwright's lyrics, particularly the compelling lines "What has happened to love?" and "I'll never know what you will show to other eyes." These words became the narrative thread guiding the visual storytelling. The animation process unfolded as a delicate dance, mirroring the emotional nuances of the song. The striking imagery, coupled with



carefully synchronized lyrics, aimed to amplify the song's depth. The incorporation of celestial elements and cosmic vistas, inspired by the reference to stars and planets, added a cosmic dimension to the visual experience. Crafting each frame was both a technical and artistic endeavor, where the lyric's essence was translated into a visual symphony. Importantly, the lyrics became a cornerstone for the video's emotional resonance, exploring themes of love, abandonment, and the unpredictable nature of relationships. The process was an enjoyable odyssey, a creative voyage where every frame spoke the language of Wainwright's lyrics. Through this artistic exploration, I not only crafted a visual tribute to the song but also gained profound insights into the craft of storytelling through animation.

WHAT YOU HAVE SHOWN,

1. “What you have shown to other eyes”
A lyric in reference to the many unseen sides of drug abuse



2. Hundreds of eyes flash hauntingly...
A climactic moment leading into the chorus of the song



1. The title lyric, rising out from the deep, bold and red

or go ahead

1. A question as poignant as “to be or not to be”

*RW: a book about Rufus Wainwright, by Victoria Oliphant,
University of California, Los Angeles
DMA 25/ Typography*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Simon Vozick-Levinson, *Rolling Stone*, “Rufus Wainwright: My Life in 15 Songs”
Rufus Wainwright, *Rolling Stone*, “Grey Gardens at 40...”
Rania Aniftos, *Billboard*, “25 Years Since Debut Album...”
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Anthony Decurtis, *New York Times*, “Rufus Wainwright Journeys to ‘Gay Hell’...”
Rufus Wainwright, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rufus_Wainwright
Want One, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Want_One

IMAGES

Baltimore Out Loud
<https://baltimoreoutloud.com/wp/rufus-wainwright-brings-anniversary-tour-to-mid-atlantic-region/>

Konserthuset Stockholm
<https://www.konserthuset.se/en/programme/calendar/external-concert/2019/rufus-wainwright-anniversary-tour/>

Artsper
<https://www.artsper.com/us/contemporary-artworks/photography/894321/rufus-wainwright-2010>

Steinway & Sons
<https://www.steinway.com/artists/rufus-wainwright>

LALA Productions
<https://lalaproductions.com/posts/2015/12/1/rufus-wainwright-2003-2007>

DISCOGRAPHY

ALBUMS:

1998 *Rufus Wainwright*
2001 *Poses*
2003 *Want One*
2004 *Want Two*
2005 *Want*
2007 *Release the Stars*
2007 *Rufus Does Judy*
2009 *Milwaukee At Last!!!*
2010 *All Days Are Nights*
2012 *Out of the Game*
2014 *Live from Artists Den*
2015 *Prima Donna*
2016 *Take All My Loves*
2020 *Unfollow the Rules*
2023 *Rufus Wainwright*
2023 *Folkocracy*

Want One
DreamWorks
2003

TRACKS:

Oh What a World
I Don't Know What It Is
Vicious World
Movies of Myself
Pretty Things
Go or Go Ahead
Vibrate
14th Street
Natasha
Harvester of Hearts
Beautiful Child
Want
11:11
Dinner at Eight

SPECIAL THANKS

*My wonderful Mom,
who I owe my
whole life.
To my sweet love
Mark, thank you.
To my angel
Augustus, you gave
me the best 6 years of
friendship...*

*Beth Elliott
Bobby Joe Smith
Jason Oliphant
Cassandra Oliphant
Jessie Jamgotchian
Lucas Dauer
David Cruz*