

VIRGIL
THE
CENTER

Devotio Moderna

VIRGIL ■ THE CENTER

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. BIG MISTAKE | 7. TO BE THERE |
| 2. ALRIGHT TONIGHT | 8. CONSTRUCT |
| 3. BREAKING A HEART | 9. THE PLAGUE |
| 4. WRONG | 10. SENTIMENTAL GIRL |
| 5. LAST CHANCE | 11. BRAVE NEW WORLD |
| 6. MAYBE THIS IS LOVE | 12. THE CALLING |

Storyteller singer-songwriter Kevin *Virgil* Wallace shares *The Center*, his third collection of all-original heart-centered tunes about who we are—this one focusing on leading with the heart and embracing love for all humanity.

For almost two decades, Wallace has been focused on his work as founding director of the Beatrice Wood Center for the Arts in Ojai, California—which he often refers to as simply *The Center*.

Caring for the legacy of Beatrice Wood and the fascinating individuals who were part of her life, including those who created the Happy Valley Foundation, Wallace kept his work as a singer/songwriter secret from all but a small group of close friends. Recognizing that, to a large extent, he was in the inspiration business as much as the art business—caring for an individual who lived life on her own terms to the age of 105—he decided that it was time to step up to the plate and debut his first collection at the age of 60.

The Center serves as a continuation of Wallace’s storytelling skills and the distinct retro vibe that defines his first two albums *Virgil* and *Waiting Home*.

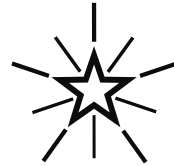


As a kid, I got a job washing dishes to satisfy my record buying wishes. Mowing neighbors' lawns and washing their cars allowed me to save up enough to buy an album now and then but my appetite for music exploration and acquisition was such that I required more income. I was probably under the legal age for restaurant work, but the Elks Club hired me anyway.

Woolworths in Petoskey had a rather large bin of deeply discounted album cut-outs and remainders (LP record albums that had been overproduced, were no longer selling well, or that had failed commercially and were sold off cheap by the record companies) and I could take full advantage of my additional dish washing income, buying five albums at a time for the price of just one new release.

In those days purchasing an album was an investment to be taken

UNFOLD
AND
BECOME
WHAT
YOU
ARE.



seriously. Music streamed and stored in the cloud did not exist. I'd study the album covers to ascertain what I might expect but took my chances and ended up with a fairly eclectic mix. So was born my rather diverse and uncommercial taste in music.

There were also gems to be found there at the Woolworths—that's where

I discovered the Velvet Underground and ultimately the albums that failed to sell well commercially were the ones that inspired and influenced my own music creation. Probably not so good if I was looking to make the big time and get rich off my songwriting of course.

This led to my inspiration for the creation of this collection. Lyrically, there were spiritual and social issues that I wanted to address, along with, of course, stories that shared the beautiful madness we call romantic love. Musically, I wanted this collection to be diverse and to offer some surprises—pushing at the edges of Americana while remaining free of the post-1970s musical landscape. This album shares the influence of those remainder bin albums more than the others.

My initial idea was that the new release should feel homegrown, and the best way to do that was, of course,

to be true to that in its creation. I also wanted it to develop organically, remaining open to the process.

The first album, *Virgil*, was recorded at the Beatrice Wood Center for the Arts in Ojai, California—a place I tend to call “The Center”—and I served as engineer and producer, knowing I’d have to go into a real studio to record the vocals with a great mic, and have it mixed professionally.

That led to my meeting JP Hesser and working with Castaway Studios. JP knows his stuff... recording, engineering, producing, playing instruments, knowing all the bells and whistles of what it takes to create a great recording. He also laid down some keyboards and did a great job of recording my vocals resulting in a debut album that I was happy with and that felt true to who I am as a singer/songwriter.

I was aware that the recorded tracks I

brought to JP for that first album made him a little crazy, and while he did his best to fix them, he made it clear that he hoped I’d record the next one with him in the studio. That’s what we did, and I was happy with *Waiting Home*, the resulting pandemic album.

This is where the influence of all those five-for-the-price-of-one remainder bin LPs that I dug so much growing up came in. I wanted the new album to be an authentic representation of that musical part of my life that wasn’t so studio perfect. Fortunately, Brian Ziegler who’d mastered the first two *Virgil* albums, and had an agreeable philosophical approach to recording music, agreed to assist and we set out to record the album at the Center.

I began as I normally do—recording a scratch guitar and vocal against a beat, to create the structure for each song, then added the bass to establish the right groove. Next, as crazy as it seems, I sent the files to Ursula Gerstbach in Austria and asked her to record all

the backing vocals as I loved working with her so much on the previous *Virgil* albums. Ultimately every song was created in this manner—allowing the bass and backing vocals to set the tone, and the vocal arrangements to be central to the project.

I’ve been playing music with my friend Andrew Ellison since we were kids in Middle School, and he’s played on all the *Virgil* material so far, so I of course wanted him on drums. However, Andrew had been so happy jamming with Ken on the previous recording sessions, that he didn’t want to put down his drum tracks until after Ken Emerson recorded his parts. When Emerson came to visit, I had a little over half of the songs ready to go, so he played guitar on those.

From the first *Virgil* release, Ken’s guitar was important to the *Virgil* sound, so once I had more songs started, I didn’t want to add a different lead guitarist but wanted to wait until Ken was available to record again.

That opened the door to other instrumentation.

This is where the original plan changed—although the original plan did include an organic and open approach—so it might not be that it changed as much as it became. Saxophone? Sure, cool. Vibraphone? Electric Violin? Yeah, why not? The next thing I knew there was a full-on production with strings—and I realized how much I enjoyed building up each

song with the assistance of wide-ranging instrumentation and the true miracle of collaborative recording in this modern digital world.

The songs on the first two Virgil albums led some to wonder if I'm really a cheatin', drinkin' guy with bad judgement. That country spirit is reflected in the lyrics on this one, but so are social and spiritual issues. My country music heroes were pretty straightforward, but my rock music

heroes were masters of lyric writing that, once you managed to figure out what they were actually saying, demanded the listener sort out the true meaning. These days, the Internet rapidly shares theories about various song meanings, and lyrics can be googled, but... back in the day, it was an intimate relationship between the artist and the listener—deeply listening to the music, studying the album cover, and sorting it all out was all part of the experience. This is a tribute to that.

And so, here it is, The Center—the third Virgil album—which I would ultimately describe as heart centered—a collection about who we are, and my belief that we should always lead with the heart.

Do I have another one in me? Probably, but I have no idea what it'll be like. And, oh baby, that's what I like.

Thanks for listening,



Discover Virgil's albums and read the complete Virgil story at cordinternational.com or visit virgilsongs.com

Musician & Vocal Collaboration

Kevin Virgil Wallace: Vocals & Guitar

Ken Emerson: Guitar (Tracks 2, 3, 7-12)

Andrew Ellison: Drums

Ursula Gerstbach: Backing Vocals

James Garner: Bass (Tracks 1-6, 9, 11)

Charles Berthoud: Bass (Tracks 8, 10, 12)

Johan Aranda: Keyboards

Kyle Pudenz: Violin

Michael A. Grant: Tenor Saxophone

Dan Young: Trumpet

Morgan Walbridge: Vibraphone

Produced by:

Kevin Virgil Wallace
and Brian Ziegler

Engineered & Mixed by:

Kevin Virgil Wallace and Brian Ziegler

Mastered by:

Brian Ziegler at Radiance Recordings,
Ojai, California

Executive Producers:

Kevin Virgil Wallace
and Maryann Cord

**Recorded at the Beatrice Wood
Center for the Arts in Ojai, California.**

Art Director: Maryann Cord

Graphic Design: Amy Pace

Photography by: Maryann Cord

Liner Notes by: Kevin Virgil Wallace

All songs written by
Kevin Virgil Wallace, BMI

Co-written with Brandon Dickerson
on songs: 1, 3, 5, and 6

All Songs Publishing Rights Reserved:
© Sweetwater Razamataz Music, BMI



 **Cord International**

**We'd love to hear from you!
Visit our website at cordinternational.com**

PO Box 152 Ventura, CA 93002

Visit Virgil at virgilsongs.com



VIRGIL • THE CENTER
© 2022 Cord International
CICD22222
cordinternational.com