

# ZZ Ward discusses new songs, returns to Belly Up Aspen

News | February 27, 2020



**Andrew Travers**

atravers@aspentimes.com

**ZZ Ward during her 2019 Jazz Aspen Labor Day Experience set. The blues singer will headline Belly Up on Wednesday, March 4..**

*Lynn Goldsmith*

## IF YOU GO ...

Who: ZZ Ward

Where: Belly Up Aspen

When: Wednesday, March 4, 8:30 p.m.

How much: \$36-\$536

Tickets: Belly Up box office; [bellyupaspen.com](http://bellyupaspen.com)

Near the end of her blistering September set at the Jazz Aspen Snowmass Labor Day Experience, blues singer and guitarist [ZZ Ward](#) teased that she'd be returning to Aspen for another show soon.

Six months later and propelled by two new singles, Ward is back in town to headline Belly Up on March 4, one of three Colorado stops on her late-winter tour.

She has released two winter singles looking at both sides of a break-up: "Sex and Stardust," a bad-girl empowerment anthem about cheating and "living lies and lust;" and "Break Her Heart," a break-up anthem about being done wrong and wishing the worst for her ex's new woman ("I hope you break her heart like you broke mine").

The songs, both accompanied by slick new narrative videos, are the first of many to come as Ward works toward a new full-length album (her first since 2017's "The Storm") and the continuation of a fearlessly personal songwriting that's defined her career.

"Writing is my best therapy and always has been," she said in a recent phone interview from home in Los Angeles. "I don't want that to change, because that's what people connect with at the end of the day. And even if they don't, it's making me feel better, which is all I really need."

Performance, she said, has a similarly cathartic effect but it gets dulled when she's doing long runs on the road. After spending months focused on writing new songs and working in the studio on a new full-length album, she's hungry to get back onstage.

"When I'm doing it a lot, I get used to it," she said. "But when it's been awhile and then I go out and perform it's like, 'Oh, whoa, it's crazy that I get to go out and do this.' It makes me feel euphoric."

Ward's themes may be old as the blues — vengeance, heartache — but her sound brings a contemporary vigor into the form, with notes of hip-hop and soul and pop. In concert, along with showcasing her songs, she's been known to bust out covers from artists as varied as Son House and Drake.

Writing "Sex and Stardust" began with the swaggering stop-start chords of the chorus, which struck the defiant mood that inspired the song.

“I knew the mood it was representing from things I’ve done in my life,” she said. “So it was easy to go back to what I was feeling in that time and put it in the song.”

And, from the start, she knew it’d go over well live.

“Some songs you have to figure out what to do with them,” she said. “That one, it was just so natural and simplistic in a way. I think it’ll be a banger live.”

Ward has found a loyal fan base in Colorado. She started coming to Belly Up soon after her debut album, “Til the Casket Drops,” was released in 2012. Since then she has made regular stops playing to full houses in ski country and on the Front Range (after this Aspen stop she’ll play the Fox Theatre in Boulder on March 5 and the Gothic in Denver on March 7).

Ward’s afternoon set was a high point of [last summer’s Labor Day festival](#), opening the sold-out Saturday of the festival with a blaring version of “Put the Gun Down,” her biggest hit single.

Raised in Oregon — the daughter of a blues singer and harmonica player, she started singing and playing in her dad’s band as a child — she relishes the rare opportunity to have a tour stop in a place surrounded by mountains and forest that remind her of home.

“I love it there,” she said of Aspen. “It’s one of my faves for sure. ... It lends itself to being in a good headspace.”

[atravers@aspentimes.com](mailto:atravers@aspentimes.com)