Born in the new millennium, Luke Tyler Shelton makes soul-soothing rock-and-roll with all the ineffable charm of a faraway time. With a profound gift for dreaming up heavenly melodies and fantastically loose grooves, the Los Angeles native found his sound as part of a close-knit scene of young musicians and artists—a DIY-minded community whose spirit and sensibilities recall the near-mythic creative hotbed of early-’70s Laurel Canyon. Produced by Shooter Jennings (Brandi Carlile, Tanya Tucker) and Jonathan Wilson (Father John Misty, Angel Olsen), Luke’s debut body of work merges country-rock, folk-pop, and Southern soul into songs that immediately transport the audience into a state of enchanted ease.

A mostly self-taught musician, Luke was steeped in music from an early age thanks to his father (a reggae singer hailing from Hawaii) and mother (a classic-rock obsessive who bought him his first guitar). Originally from the San Fernando Valley, he got his first drum kit at age four, took piano lessons in elementary school, and played in a psych-rock band for most of high school—an experience that involved spending untold hours honing his chops in his family’s garage, steadily developing the potent sense of rhythm that still informs his sound today. As he began exploring the artists and bands he now names among his essential influences (Neil Young, Faces, George Harrison, Bob Dylan, and Peter Green-era Fleetwood Mac), he taught himself to play guitar and started writing songs soon after finishing high school in 2019, and shortly thereafter, stumbled upon the vibrant creative community that would radically alter his musical path. “There were all these people my age who were making art and clothes and music, and they were all so talented and put so much personality into what they were creating,” he says. “I started playing with people I’d met through that scene, and now it’s turned into this revolving-door kind of thing where we all play in each other’s bands and share bills at shows.”

As he continued sharpening his songcraft and building up a following online, Luke caught the attention of Concord Records and signed a deal with the label after playing a gig outside a warehouse art show near the beach. Not long after the signing, he linked up with Jennings and Wilson and set to work on his first batch of songs, all recorded to tape with his circle of friends at Wilson’s studio in the bohemian enclave of Topanga Canyon.

Mixed by four-time Grammy-winner Trina Shoemaker (Sheryl Crow, Queens Of The Stone Age)—and also featuring Jennings’ longtime bandmate Ted Russell Kamp on bass and Wilson on drums, guitar, and Moog synth—Luke’s debut singles achieve a certain rarefied magic, matching their exquisitely orchestrated sound with a free-flowing energy that instantly transfers onto the listener. On “Anna,” Luke brings his warm and soulful vocals to a sublimely tender piece of storytelling, adorning the song’s statement of lovestruck devotion with lush fiddle melodies and sweetly rolling harmonies. “I wrote ‘Anna’ about someone who’s had such an impact on your life that their presence never fully leaves you, even if you’re not together anymore,” he says. A shining example of the deliberately unhurried pace of his music, “Love On My Mind” drifts from dreamy pedal steel to gently shimmering vibraphone to cascading guitar as Luke captures the serene euphoria of “finally finding a person to love and to love you back, and feeling secure in a relationship for the first time.” And on “Feeling Always Down,” with its wistful piano tones and moody guitar work, Luke’s voice takes on a bittersweet intensity as he channels the all-consuming ache of self-doubt and despondency. “I was driving around very early in the morning and listening to George Harrison and going through a rough patch and I decided I needed to write a sad song,” he recalls. “I’m rarely that intentional about what I’m writing, but I parked outside my friend’s house and got out my guitar and wrote the song right then, and it helped me to release some of that emotion.”

Now at work on his debut album, Luke ultimately hopes to impart others with the same sense of exhilarated wonder he felt upon discovering the music that most inspires him. “That era of music happened so long ago that, for someone my age, it doesn’t seem completely real—it’s almost like folklore,” he says. “That’s what really pulled me into it, and made me want to figure out how those sounds could be made. I hope my music gives people that same kind of excitement and joy, like they’re experiencing something that they’ve never heard made in their lifetime.”