

*Hometown Beauty Queen* offers a blend of folk, pop, and country songs written by Jo Anne Kurman and her cowriters Barbara Borax, Sandy Sherman, and Craig Lackey. Jo Anne and Sandy Sherman uplift us with “Wind in My Sails,” a song about never giving up on yourself. The songwriting team also penned “Long White Gown,” a song whose inspiration came from the legendary female ghost who haunts the Palos Verdes, California, Point Vicente Lighthouse: “Some folks say they’ve seen her there.” The duo approaches the delicate subject of a woman not bearing children, and the internal ups and downs that ensue, in their song “In Her Backyard.”

In the title track, “Hometown Beauty Queen,” Jo Anne sings about her experience as a beauty queen. She combined her five-month beauty pageant wave winning the titles of Miss Inglewood, Miss Los Angeles County, and Second Runner-up to Miss California and tells us how it felt for an eighteen-year-old to have her rear end and more judged by a panel of middle-aged men, as she smiled big, all the while dying inside. “The American Family” is a song about the functional side of family life Jo Anne experienced growing up. Fun, whimsical “Only Heaven Knows” and the sexy blues song “Guitar Woman” will get you laughing and swaying to the music.

Autobiographical yet universal in exploring life’s themes, this debut album was decades in the making — and well worth the wait.