

A look at Winter Music Festival headliner Livingston Taylor

Dapper and delightful on stage and off. Adept at folk, jazz, gospel, and pop genres. Able to sport a bow tie and command a grand piano or create a relaxed coffeehouse ambiance with guitar and incomparable storytelling.

This is Livingston Taylor.

Yes, he of the famous musical Taylor family that includes James, Kate, Hugh, and Alex — will be Saturday night's headliner for this year's Florence Music Festival, Jan. 24-26 at the Florence Events Center.

Taylor often chats with his audience from the stage saying that he is "fulfilled and overjoyed" by the presence of the audience. "Livingston Taylor is a natural performer who peppers his shows with warm, often humorous anecdotes, making the audience feel as if he's an old friend," reads a review from the *San Antonio Express News*.

"These 50-plus years of musical excellence will be on stage in an evening not to be missed," says Kirk Mlinek, Florence Winter Music Festival producer. "This is a rare chance to be part of the instant community created by Liv and his ineffable warmth. Even with eight other great bluegrass, folk, and Americana acts during the weekend, we sought out Liv as our headliner for good reason."

The man who writes songs about love and loss, lessons learned, and family memories is author of Top 40 hits "I'll Come Running," "First Time Love," "I Will Be in Love With You," and several of his brother James' hits, is equally at home with a small audience or as the big-stage, spotlighted soloist backed by a full orchestra.

Taylor is also the subject of 2018's award-winning documentary "Livingston Taylor: Life is Good" and received the Van Gogh Award at the Amsterdam International Film Festival. American Public Television profiled him in March 2019 with "Livingston Taylor Live from Sellersville: Songs and Stories."

Taylor, inspired by older brother Alex, picked up his first guitar at age 13 and was recording at age 18. His latest of his more than 20 albums, "The Best of LIVE-50 Years of Livingston Taylor Live," contains new, never-before-released material from live performances.

When not following a busy touring schedule, Taylor teaches as a full professor at Boston's prestigious Berklee College of Music where his Stage Performance course has been consistently voted most popular at the college. Each semester he brings in a high-profile guest speaker, a list that includes Jimmy Buffett, John Mayer, Steven Tyler of Aerosmith, and of course brother James.

He spends summers at his cabin on Martha's Vineyard, "writing music and puttering," fixing lawn mowers, tractors, working on his motorcycles, arriving there piloting his own Cessna 205.

Taylor has said that he's delighted anytime he's confused with his brothers James or Hugh (Alex died in 1993); and when it comes to their careers,



COURTESY PHOTO

Livingston Taylor performs a combination of styles from jazz and folk to gosepl and pop. He will perform Jan. 25 during this year's Winter Music Festival.

there is little competition between these brothers.

Though Liv's career launched first, "I got the early attention," James Taylor said in an interview published on nytimes.com, "but there is no real reason that it couldn't have been Liv. We could easily have swapped. Our sense of the world is informed by each other."

"Let there be no confusion. James Taylor is the greatest. He's not only a wonderful musician, but he's a wonderful and supportive brother," says Liv. "People always want to know if it's difficult being in his shadow. Are you crazy? I'm his brother, and I get to revel in the remarkable music that he makes. I get to be his friend and

his confidant. But he's got his life and I've got mine. He admires my career, but he doesn't want my career. I admire his and I don't want his career," he said in an interview with *Christianity Today*.

However, Liv admits, he and his brothers are very competitive in the sense that they enjoy "showing off" to each other when

they have new songs that they are working on. They enjoy sharing with each other experiences being onstage, playing guitar, using other instruments, and song choices.

According to a *Rolling Stone* article, while James writes simple melodies and avoids using an overabundance of words, Livingston tends to compose more complicated melodies and lyrics. "James has a great knack for writing very pointed metaphors," says Livingston. "I pay much more attention to word syllables, syncopated phrasings, and puns."

Peter Fish, co-executive producer of the award-winning docu-

mentary about Liv, "Life Is Good" describes him as "One part Mark Twain, one part W.C. Fields, one part musical icon, one part iconoclastic and beloved professor, and most importantly, a man whose life is testament to the concept that life is good."

"An airplane-flying, motorbike-riding, singing-guitar/piano-man, dead set on enriching the world he inhabits."

To be part of this intimate evening, discover more about the other eight acts featured during the weekend, or get tickets visit www.WinterMusicFestival.org or call the Florence Events Center, 541-997-1994.β

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