

# HARDENEDANDTEMPERED

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Folk duo Kristin Davidson and Carolyn Phillips (aka Hardened and Tempered) release their second album, *Hold the Line*, on January 14, 2021. Produced by Lloyd Maines, the nine songs highlight Davidson's intelligent songwriting and Phillips' gift of harmony. The storytelling shines a light on sorrow and captures with the keen eye of a street photographer glimmers of backbone and resilience. Special instrumental guests include Maines (Terri Hendrix, The Chicks, Jerry Jeff Walker, Joe Ely), Dennis Ludiker (Asleep at the Wheel), and Mark "Speedy" Gonzales (Grupo Fantasma). The album was engineered, mixed, and mastered by Pat Manske (Wood & Wire, Ray Wylie Hubbard) at The Zone Recording Studio in Drippings Springs, Texas.

*Hold the Line* is the follow-up to *The Trailer Sessions* (2017), which received praise from radio and print outlets throughout the United States, including *The Austin Chronicle* and *No Depression*. Hardened and Tempered were included on NPR's "A Not-At-All-Exhaustive LGBTQIA+ Country Playlist" (June 2020), and they were regional finalists at the 2018 Kerrville Folk Festival and official showcase artists at the 2017 Southwest Regional Folk Alliance conference. But a funny thing happened shortly after the release of *The Trailer Sessions*. Davidson, a zealous freedom fighter for the indigent and their equal treatment, was called upon to argue (successfully!) at the U.S. Supreme Court. Meanwhile, Phillips earned her PhD in nursing. Inspired by her work in cancer care, Phillips researches the use of storytelling through music to cope with the complex emotions that arise from grief and trauma.

While their activism keeps Davidson and Phillips fighting in the trenches to serve the needs of others, music is personal, the essence of home, where love and compassion fortify connection. In 2016, they co-founded Songs for the Soul, Inc., a nonprofit that uses storytelling through music to support the wellbeing of society's professional caregivers. When COVID hit, they channeled the nonprofit's efforts into using music to connect with frontline healthcare workers. Hardened and Tempered's songs have been recognized by the National Academy of Medicine and received an Excellence in Communications award from The University of Texas at Austin.

Hardened and Tempered are no strangers to sorrow, but the songs on *Hold the Line* explore the transformative power of hope, the kind that seeds itself in and arises out of despair. It is what keeps ours eyes on the horizon when we reach a dead end (*When the Harvest Comes*; *Counting the Cars*). It seeks out connection when we are lonely and uncertain (*Breaker, Breaker*; *Crossroads*). It moves a people to rise up (*The Republican River*). It is beauty in unexpected places (*Magnolia*) and a reckoning of self (*Beer Bottles and Broken Hearts*). And it is the kind of hope for humanity that empowers us to keep suiting up for the good fight, to make good trouble, believing that the good work is the hard work of a lifetime (*Hold the Line*). Sometimes, that nitty-gritty hope is all we have for strategy (*Wide Awake at Midnight*).





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