

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

When You Reach the End, That's When You Find the Beginning

MÔRIAH talks with Paul Salfen about “Home to Me,” the golden-era original that closes Jimmy, the 1937 theater where she directed the video, and the Hail Mary that kept her in the room.

Interview by Paul Salfen • AMFM Magazine



MÔRIAH onstage. The Los Angeles-born, Nashville-based singer, songwriter, and filmmaker performs the original end-title song for Jimmy. Photo: promotional / performance still.

MÔRIAH is sitting outside a coffee shop and a taco shop in Franklin, Tennessee, when the neighbor who once installed software on her laptop and taught her Logic Pro walks past the camera. She does not miss the joke. She is in the middle of telling Paul Salfen that no one in Nashville takes full credit for a green light — that every career that looks like a gift is actually a stack of generous hands — and Andrew materializes on cue.

“Andrew literally taught me how to engineer in Logic,” she says, laughing after she waves him off. “I didn’t have money to pay him. He just taught me how to do things.”

That is the temperature of the conversation. Salfen has called to talk about Jimmy, Aaron Burns’s forthcoming biographical drama about James Stewart, the season that runs from an

Academy Award for *The Philadelphia Story* through twenty combat missions over Europe and, finally, to George Bailey. MÖRIAH sings the picture out. Her original, “Home to Me,” written with her friend and Nashville producer Bernie Herms, is built to land as the credits roll — a live-string, golden-era performance that asks the question the movie has been circling for two hours: who is home, and what is home, after you have given everything away.

They wrapped the music video two days before the Zoom. She directed it herself, inside a theater built in 1937 and kept alive by the people who still live around it. JIMMY opens the Heartland Film Festival on October 8 and arrives in theaters nationwide November 6 through Fathom Entertainment, with KJ Apa as Stewart and a score by Grant Fonda that folds in the U.S. Air Forces in Europe Band. The last voice the audience hears is hers.

Who is home to me, and what is home to me? It's a good question to sit with right when the film ends, as soon as the credits roll.

— MÖRIAH

A GOLDEN-ERA SOUND FOR A BROKEN HOMECOMING

Salfen tells her the movie looks like it is going to be fantastic, even though the press has not seen it yet. She does not hedge.

“You will thoroughly enjoy it,” she says. “And I think you’ll really enjoy the song at the end.”

She walks him through the record the way a filmmaker walks a shot list. “This song is called Home to Me, and it was written by my wonderful friend Bernie, who is a producer here in town. It really teleports you back to the ’40s, just sonically. It’s got that beautiful golden-era sound to it — live strings, orchestra — and we treated the vocal the same way, to try and give a performance that would really welcome people into that question.”

The question is not decoration. Jimmy, as Burns and writer Justin Strawhand have framed it, is the story of a man who left the peak of Hollywood, flew the missions, came home “broken and disheartened,” and then found the role that put him back together. MÖRIAH wants the last cue to feel like a porch light, not a curtain call.

The video extends the same argument in architecture. “I’m so thankful and honored they allowed me to direct it,” she tells Salfen. “I wanted to shoot it in a space that really reflected the time, so we rented out a theater that was built in 1937. It’s been renovated by the local community, and so it’s just an extension of the settings and the colors and the themes of the film visually. We get to take that question one step further and visually represent what is home to me and who is home to me.”



Official key art for Jimmy (Burns & Co. Entertainment). The film opens nationwide November 6, 2026. Artwork courtesy of the studio; AMFM Magazine does not own studio art.

FROGGY, AND THE WORK OF A GIFT

Salfen asks the question people always ask singers who also direct and act and produce: when did she first realize she had the gift — “because you definitely do, not just in music and in films as well.”

She does not take the compliment the easy way.

“This might be an unpopular opinion, Paul, but I don’t know that I see gifts the same way I once did,” she says. “I think gifts are skills that can be honed. Anybody can learn how to do half the things that I do.” She laughs at her own origin story. “When I was little, I had such a terrible voice, my family used to call me Froggy. I sounded like a frog. It was actually my sister who was the really great singer and had a beautiful voice. But I’ve been taking vocal lessons since I was six years old, and I take them to this day.”

The film work arrived the same way the voice did — by staying in the chair. She has directed a couple of music videos. A short film she made was just selected for a festival in California. “I love, love, love this aspect of taking music and putting it to visuals,” she says. “But that’s been a skill that I’ve just gained over the years. It started because I wanted to make a little performance video for YouTube with my brother, and so I had to learn how to edit it together. Then as years went on it was wanting to communicate my ideas in edits versus time-code notes. It was born out of necessity. Now it’s become a skill — or as you might say, a gift. I think it’s more a gift to me in that I enjoy it so much.”

Salfen asks what she would tell someone who wants the life she has and has already discovered that wanting it is the easy part.

“I would say that location matters, and location matters because community matters,” she says. “I moved out to Nashville when I was seventeen. I had no friends, no family out here, but I knew that this was a town where I could be around like-minded people and creatives.”

She will not romanticize the arrival. “If anyone has had any ounce of success, if they’ve experienced a green light, they know that it’s because of many helping hands. No one can take full credit. When you surround yourself with other creatives, you also are immersing yourself in a world of generous people. You’ve got to swallow your pride. You’ve got to be willing to ask for help. You’ve got to be willing to sleep on people’s couches in their basements out of your suitcase.”

That is when Andrew walks by the taco shop. Salfen says hello through the laptop. MÖRIAH tells the rest of the story standing up, mid-sentence: neighboring studios, key commands, arpeggiated plugins, software she could not afford, a teacher who never sent a bill.

“I would have never met Andrew. I would have never met people that I get to live in such close proximity with, and work with and create with, had I not taken the jump and moved to a creative town like this.”

Salfen, who has spent two decades collecting Hail Marys for AMFM and for his book *Going For It!*, cannot resist the alignment. His co-host is Drew Pearson. Salfen asks for her Hail Mary Moment. Moving to Nashville at seventeen already sounds like one. She has others.

This is my Hail Mary, my last prayer in the book. I won’t let hell stop me. It can’t take more than it took. I’m overdue on miracles, so heaven don’t fail me.

— MÖRIAH

THIS IS MY HAIL MARY

She lights up before Salfen finishes the prompt. “Oh my gosh, that is so funny that you say that. I’m a songwriter first and foremost. I wrote my first song when I was in third grade, I think. And I wrote a song that just came to mind.”

She sings him the hook from memory — a record she cut years ago with Paul Duncan and producer Paul Mabry and then filed somewhere the career could not see it. “This is my Hail Mary, my last prayer in the book. I won’t let hell stop me. It can’t take more than it took. I’m overdue on miracles, so heaven don’t fail me. This is my Hail Mary.”

She sits with it. “I haven’t thought of that in years. I wrote that song about the sense of, this is all I’ve got left. This is truly my Hail Mary.”

The season under the lyric is about three years old. She was writing a new record and told her producer she would bring every idea she had, on time, at full volume. “But if this doesn’t take — if something doesn’t break — if the glass ceiling does not shatter — I don’t have anything left. I’ve been a creative and working in music since I was seventeen years old. Nashville is called the ten-year town. It takes ten years for people to try on different things and experiment before they really hit their stride, and it had been over a decade for me. I was just like, I’m kind of done. I think I’m done after this.”

She does not leave the sentence there, because Jimmy will not let her. “Those are the moments that I think we find something really special, and that’s why I really, really love how we’ve gotten to celebrate Jimmy in this film. We drop into a section of his life where he’s truly reached rock bottom. He has nothing left. There have been so many failures. He’s reached the end of himself, and he doesn’t know which step to take next.”

Then she turns the camera toward whoever is listening in the same place.

“If you’re in that place — if you’re listening to this message right now and you are truly at rock bottom — I would say you are in a glorious moment. This is an exciting moment, because when you’ve reached the end, that is when you find the beginning. That is when you launch into the next era and echelon of your life, and you don’t get there without reaching the end. So keep going with those Hail Marys.”

Salfen tells her she might need to bring the song back. “I know,” she says. “I do love that song.”



MÔRIAH at the Bluebird Cafe in Nashville. The artist bills herself as Latin country — Tennessee soul, Mexicana style — and is finishing a new album for early 2027. Still from a live performance video.

Salfen asks what she keeps in her pocket on the days the ceiling does not move. Faith? A line she repeats? Some private success mindset?

“Two things,” she says. “One is older, one is newer.”

The older one is trust. “Every time I’ve felt discouraged, every time I’ve felt like a failure, I come back to trust. You’ve got to put your trust in something, because that’s what gives you an openness to the right side of your brain to be creative — to get out of logistics, to get out of what is real, what’s going to work, what’s not, and to go over to the other side, where you can imagine and you can become a visionary. If you don’t have trust, you never open the door to go from left to right brain.”

For her the object of that trust is specific. “I trust, ultimately, in a God that is good, and a God that is kind, and a God that is loving, and a God that wants the best for me. Believing that that’s true helps me open that door.” She leaves room for people who do not share the theology. “For others, you might have to just trust that you’re going to get through this day. Trust that when your feet hit the floor, you are going to make it to the end, and you’re going to get back into your bed, and you can say, I did it. I did another day. Trust is the antidote to fear.”

The newer practice is almost comic in its bluntness. She tells herself the opposite of the thought that wakes her up. “My subconscious thought that keeps me stuck is, I will never be successful. It doesn’t matter how much success I’ve had, I still believe that.” So she says the other sentence until it sounds less insane. “I will always be successful. When I fail, or when a business plan falls apart, or when I lose the money, or when the pitch doesn’t take — if I can keep saying I will always be successful, it reframes the failure. It makes me go, great, well, that must be one step in the direction of me being successful. It just keeps me going.”

She has started running the exercise on friends and on her husband. Distill the spiral to one thought. Say the opposite out loud. “The opposite sounds so crazy in the moment, but it’s how you get yourself unstuck.”

The life of Jimmy Stewart was marked by selflessness and sacrifice. In a time that is so focused on me getting mine and me getting my way, we could all use a little more of that.

— MÔRIAH

WHAT THE CREDITS ARE FOR

Salfen asks what she hopes people carry out of the theater once “Home to Me” has done its work.

“It’s a stunning film. It’s very beautiful. I think people will enjoy watching it,” she says. “What I take out of it is what I hope others will take out of it, and that is the life of Jimmy Stewart was

marked by selflessness and sacrifice. In a time that is so focused on me getting mine and me getting my way, I think it's really important to celebrate someone who made decisions based on serving others — sacrificing his well-being for the sake of others' well-being. We could all use a little more of that."

She is not waiting on November to work. She just wrapped *A Music City Story*, a Sony film she helped write and for which she wrote all the music, shot in Nashville for a 2027 release. Tanya Tucker is in it. Josh Holloway is in it. Randy Houser is in it. Her husband, Joel Smallbone, plays opposite her as the love interest — "a little nerve-wracking," she admits, "but it worked out well." Follow @AMusicCityStoryMovie. Closer to the ground: the first single from her new album arrives September 26, with the full record due at the beginning of next year. "It's all one cohesive story that I can't wait for people to get immersed in, and hopefully have a lot of fun in."

Salfen sends her off with the Dallas premiere still unofficial on his calendar and Drew Pearson still available for a catch. She was a quarterback on a co-ed team in California. She would like some tips.

"If I come to Dallas," she says, "tell your co-host I will look forward to throwing the football with him."

He promises Pearson will not drop it. She already knows what to do with a Hail Mary.

FIND MŌRIAH

JIMMY — in theaters nationwide November 6, 2026, via Fathom Entertainment. Tickets: tickets.jimmythemovie.com. Official site: jimmythemovie.com. Score and featured tracks, including MŌRIAH's end-credits original "Home to Me," arrive on an EP in November.

MŌRIAH — Instagram and YouTube @holamoriah · moriah.komi.io · Spotify artist page. First single from the new album lands September 26, 2026; full album expected early 2027. Sony's *A Music City Story* (music and story by MŌRIAH; 2027).

Interview conducted by Paul Salfen for AMFM Magazine, September 2026.

*Paul Salfen is Managing Editor of AMFM Magazine and a veteran interviewer of film, television, music, and sports figures. He is the author of *Going For It!*, a collection of Hail Mary moments from the artists and athletes he has spent two decades putting on the record.*