

On the Loose

Acoustic roots from the urban forest
of Pittsburgh's East End

The Squirrel Hillbillies

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Dedicated to the memory of Paul Wolsk and Joe Crouth.

Cover art by Madeline Bain.

Mixing and mastering by Jesse Naus, Red Calman Media.

Special guest Eleanor Bain singing harmony on Track 2.

Jenny Wolsk (vocals, ukulele, upright bass, cello, percussion).
Gary Crouth (vocals, guitar, ukulele, upright bass) and
All songs written, arranged, performed and recorded by

1. On the Loose (roots jazz).

Upbeat celebration of the communal power of music. *Acoustic guitar, upright bass, vocal harmonies, and whimsical lyrics.*

2. Dharma Jane (mystical folk).

Quiet, contemplative song about reconnections fostered through the natural world. *Acoustic guitar, a Tibetan singing bowl, vocal harmonies, and a Buddhist chant.*

3. Bury Me Green (Americana)

Ode to green burial. *Acoustic guitar, cello, vocal harmonies.*

4. Soldier (contemporary folk)

Told from a child's perspective, a family deals with conflict after a soldier comes home. *Acoustic guitar, cello, and vocal harmonies.*

5. When I'm Gone (country folk)

Sung last will and testament, reprised from our debut album with new lyrics and a crooked refrain. *Acoustic guitar, upright bass, ukulele, and vocal harmonies.*

6. Bittersweet (urban blues)

Slow and suggestive, culinary and cautionary. *Acoustic guitar, percussion, vocals, and a mouth coronet.*

7. Fat Cat Skinny Cat (folk ditty)

Percussive homage to feline siblings, Zoe and Zilla (short for Godzilla), based loosely on a true story. *Acoustic guitar, percussion, and vocal harmonies.*

8. Old Dry Bones (Americana)

A farmer's lament years after leasing the family farm for fracking, this song appeared on our second album with a different arrangement. *Acoustic guitars, upright bass, and vocal harmonies.*

9. Stink Bug Family Reunion & Semi-Formal Ball (roots jazz)

One theory behind the sudden arrival of stink bugs in the USA. Also, our longest song title. *Acoustic guitar, upright bass, and vocal harmonies.*

1. On the Loose

Mama say, Son, I gotta run, the music's on the loose. The band is on the corner, ain't no time to snoozeroo. Drummer's making thunder with the rumble of the bass. Folks swinging from the lampposts in the latest dancing craze. Billy the Baker banging pans and pots and lookout in the fire tower shouts: "Things are getting hot!" Mama say, Boy, did you hear that noise, my banjo popped its string. Hand me down my old trombone, gonna make that metal sing. Blues are at the crossroads playing diddley bows and rags. Weatherman, he call for rain, but we got razzmatazz! Lil' Cousin Lizzie, belting out high C's and prisoners in the pokey yell: "We think we found the key!" Mama say, Child, it's going wild, stretching far and wide. Rhythm section's pounding and the horns are screeching high. No time to find your boutonniere or shine those old black shoes. Just grab your axe and pork pie hat, I hear my favorite tune! Old Uncle Ernie plays his clarinet and bones in the graveyard singing: "We ain't dead yet!"

2. Dharma Jane

Down by the place where the three rivers flow, the waves paint your face on the waters below. The lilt of your voice softly chanting the line returns as an echo that settles my mind. Om mani padme hum, Om mani padme hum. Crows in the graveyard, blacken the trees, filling the branches with feathery leaves. A lift of your hand as you bid them goodbye, the darkness erupts and a storm takes the sky. Om mani padme hum, Om mani padme hum. High on a hillside, city below, following footsteps left long ago. Mind full (mindful) of storms and then still by the edge, whispering words of the mantra you said. I'm feeling your spirit today, where have you gone, Dharma Jane? I'm hearing your voice in the rain, where have you gone, Dharma Jane? Om mani padme hum, Om mani padme hum. Om mani padme hum, Om mani padme hum

3. Bury Me Green

If I die in New York City, I won't need an airplane ride. Float me up the Hudson River to Dutchess County's burial site, nestled in among the hanging vines. If I go in Shenandoah, keep the campsite fire ablaze. Send me down to Duck Run graveyard. Bury me green in a bygone way. Seeds and flower petals mark my place. Hallelujah, Hallelujah! Rising like the sun, rooted in the ground. Hallelujah, Hallelujah! The sky my mausoleum, the earth my endless vow. If we're sailing on the ocean and my life decides to leave, trim the sails for deeper waters, give my body to the sea. I'll feed the fish and hope they like the feast. Hallelujah, Hallelujah! Rising like the sun, rooted in the ground. Hallelujah, Hallelujah! The sky my mausoleum, the earth my endless vow. Lingering a lifetime, drifting like the clouds, when this life is over wrap me in a shroud. The moon a precious jewel, the wind a sacred sound. Creatures bearing witness as you lay my body down. If I die right here in Pittsburgh, as the last breath leaves my lungs, haul me over to Penn Forest, tell Pete my song's been sung. Pet the goats and give the trees a hug. Turn the compost for the hungry bugs. "No trace" is a way to show love. I hope to leave this world as it was.

4. Soldier

The army sent my daddy home with shrapnel in his hands. Uncle got him working at the plant. He said he felt like he was back behind a prison wall. Ma said it was a shame he came home at all. The neighbor left us rosaries and magazines and cards. She prayed as I played in the yard. Daddy left his work boots in the dumpster up the street. The foreman said take all the time you need. He took up carving figures with a rusty pocket knife. His broken hands brought the wood to life. He whispered and he hummed while he whittled with his thumbs, and told me fairy tales that he made up. He talked about the desert and a soldier on a quest and he twitched as he described the sun's relentlessness. He pulled the window curtains down and next he took the blinds. I wonder if he thought the sun might need his help to shine. The flag was like a lookout high above the clinic steps, 50 stars and countless cast off cigarettes. Mama left the bus fare on the counter with a key. I let Daddy have the window seat. At night he'd often pace and then he'd curl up on the floor. He had a favorite spot near the door. One morning Mama kicked him as she hurried off to work. He groaned but he didn't say a word. When he woke he grabbed his coat and reached out for my hand, then he vanished like an etching on the sand. Ma told me that she always knew he'd end up on the street. She said it even when the tears rolled down my cheeks. Mama got new curtains and a man to share her bed. Time for me to move along, she said. Uncle bought my ticket and a shiny pocket knife, and I'm leaving for the desert with a shadow at my side.

5. When I'm Gone

I spill the milk, I spill the beans. I've run every stoplight I've ever seen. I play the wrong chords and I sing out of tune and I tell all the punchlines way too soon. When I'm gone pour beer on my grave. Sing me a song with a crooked refrain. Drive my old car into the sea. Just don't forget about me (singing off key). Don't forget about me. I drink too much coffee and keep you awake with stories of nonsense adventures I take. I talk to the trees and I sing to the stars and I dance

5. When I'm Gone (cont.)

with the chickens out there in the yard. When I'm gone pour beer on my grave. Sing me a song with a crooked refrain. Drive my old car into the sea. Just don't forget about me (talking to trees). Don't forget about me. Give my guitar to the girl down the street, my coat to anyone cold that you meet. When I'm gone I won't cry anymore about hunger and greed, anger and war. When I'm gone pour beer on my grave. Sing me a song with a crooked refrain. Drive my old car into the sea. Just don't forget about me (when you're sipping your tea). Don't forget about me (when you smell Patchouli). Don't forget about me.

6. Bittersweet

Mama called me Sugar Plum and topped my bottle off with rum. That's how I got rotten teeth and my taste for bittersweet. Cupboard full of pixy stix, refrigerator on the fritz. A growing child has gotta eat. I got my fill of bittersweet. Bittersweet, bittersweet. Before I even got my teeth I got my taste for bittersweet. If you like your peaches ripe, and soaked in syrup overnight, find yourself another shop 'cause bittersweet is all I got. Milky chocolates in a box, glass o' bubbly on the rocks. Did you miss the candy gram? Bittersweet is who I am. Bittersweet, bittersweet. Check your box of recipes, I'm under "B" for bittersweet. Bittersweet, bittersweet. Lord knows I'm no beauty queen, with my calloused feet and rotten teeth. But you can have a piece of me, if what you crave is bittersweet.

7. Fat Cat Skinny Cat

Skinny cat eat on the microwave, fat cat eat on the floor. Fat cat eat what skinny cat leave when skinny cat eat no more. Skinny cat only like fresh food. Fat cat he don't care. Skinny cat always hanging out. Fat cat hiding somewhere. Fat cat, skinny cat, live just two doors down. I stop in to see 'em when the family's not around. Skinny cat he get a kitty treat, but I can't remember when. Fat cat he get hairballs, gotta brush him now and then. I read all the instructions, put them in this song. Fat Cat Skinny Cat, they always sing along. And they sing, Fat cat, skinny cat, live just two doors down. I stop in to see 'em when the family's not around. Skinny cat say to fat cat, "Hey the chickens flew the coop! Time for us to have some fun, let's go and shoot some hoops! Paint our nails, curl our hair, play some air guitar! Raise the door on the shed out back and drive that nice sports car!" Fat cat, skinny cat, live just two doors down. I stop in to see 'em when the family's not around. Fat Cat say to Skinny Cat, "Don't want no trouble, man. Just leave me be and let me eat, there's tuna in that can. Them folks of ours they tight, you know, they limit what I get. Now they gone I'm gonna feast so hand me that baguette!" Fat cat, skinny cat, live just two doors down. I stop in to see 'em when the family's not around. Yeah there's a fat cat, skinny cat, live just two doors down. I stop in to see 'em when the family's not around.

8. Old Dry Bones

Old dry bones left along the road. I still hear the lows of the cattle when the wind blows. How they make my heart grieve, these old dry bones. Out on the farm there ain't much alive. Dust fills the air when trucks pass on by. Dirt roads I used to cross every day, broken pipes covered in rust block the way. Them papers I signed with my daddy's old pen while I joked with the bankers and the company men. Told how the gas and the dollars would flow, both ran out a long time ago. Now there's old dry bones left along the road. I still hear the lows of the cattle when the wind blows. How they make my heart grieve, these old dry bones. I think of my daddy and the way that he lived and I know there's no chance he'd a done what I did. I picture him turning these bones in his hands, and mourning what's happened to his sacred land. The load that I carry around in my heart is enough to tear anybody apart. I buried my daddy and all of my kin. All I got left is memories of them, and these old dry bones left along the road. I still hear the lows of the cattle when the wind blows. How they make my heart grieve, these old dry bones.

9. Stink Bug Family Reunion & Semi-Formal Ball

Heard the buzz? They're here in town! Flew all night and just touched down for the Stink Bug Family Reunion and Semi-Formal Ball. Looking smart the way they're dressed in their prehistoric best for the Stink Bug Family Reunion and Semi-Formal Ball. Buzzing as they dance through the night. Do-si-do-ing left and right. Country two step, what a sight! Buzzing as they dance through the night. Shake and shimmy left and right. Chicken dance, what a sight! Picnic tables full of loot. Stolen soybeans, kale and fruit at the Stink Bug Family Reunion and Semi-Formal Ball. Parties can be so much fun but we'll be glad when this one's done, the Stink Bug Family Reunion and Semi-Formal Ball.