

For the Love of Western Swing (& Other Love Songs)

For the Love of Western Swing by JAM

Inspired by the journey my band took to Turkey, Texas, home of the Bob Wills Museum of Western Swing. If you get a map of Texas out you'll notice that from my hometown of Marble Falls, I was able to pick up the drummer in Lampasas, the guitarist in Cisco then weave our way to Turkey on the way to our booked show in Red River, New Mexico.

We drove all the way to Turkey, Texas
To see Bob Will's Museum of Western Swing
We picked up the guitar man in Cisco
Headed west and north of Abilene
Made good time on U.S. Highway 83
To see the famous fiddle Bob Wills played
We pulled up a little after closing time
But they let us look around there anyway

My pilgrimage to Turkey it meant the world to me
If you play Bob Wills music then you'll know what I mean
Call me a disciple; Bob Wills is still the king,
On a pilgrimage to Turkey for the love of Western Swing
We drove all the way to Turkey, Texas
All for the love of Western Swing

We drove through the farmlands of the South Plains
In a work van filled with fiddles and guitars
The Playboys must've have passed this way a hundred times
As they rode the bus to places near and far
As we walked through the doors of the museum
And relived the life of Texas' favorite son
I swear I heard the voice of Tommy Duncan
Belting out "Blue Yodel Number One."

Who's On Your Mind by JAM

It's the song that I performed at the True Value Country Showdown in Lampasas where I competed against Jason Roberts (Grammy-winning fiddler and former Asleep at the Wheel band member) and others. The judges like my songwriting and awarded me first place and a spot at the state championships in San Antonio where I competed against Tracy Byrd (we both lost to Jim Bob Burris as did Clint Black the previous year!).

You're going through the motions
There's no love left in your kiss
You leave me with the notion
I really don't exist
You never look into my eyes
you never squeeze my hand
No matter how I try
I still don't understand

Who's on your mind when we're kissing?
Who stole your heart? Who are you missing?
I always find you reminiscing
Who's on your mind when we're kissing?
Is he a lasting memory
you're kissing in my bed?
Or just a passing fantasy
dancing in your head?
Is it love or make believe
we're making through the night?
Who's the stranger in your dreams
when I turn out the lights?

You Bring Out the Best in Me By JAM & Jerry Harkins

This is a song we started many years ago but only recently finished in time for the new swing album. Jerry and I had an earlier version that really didn't feel right until we turned it into this modern swing version, inspired by the modern swing songs by George Strait, Clint Black and Keith Whitley.

I'm the King of Two-step underneath the neon sign
A Romeo in cowboy boots when I look into your eyes
When we dance together I get better by the song
I can go 'til closing time then love you all night long

You bring out the best in me
You see the good the others couldn't see
Now I can reach the big blue sky
Because of you now I can fly
You bring out the best in me

I'm Superman in blue jeans when you're holding on to me
I can move a mountain. I can tame the sea.
I walk a little taller when I'm walking next to you
You make me believe there ain't a thing that I can't do

Cherry Springs Swing by Ron Knuth & jAm

This swing song began as a fiddle instrumental by my old band mate Ron Knuth, a world class fiddler who currently plays with Johnny Bush, and who previously toured with Hank Williams, Jr. When I told him the song needed lyrics he said he had been waiting for me to write them. I did a little research and recorded a rushed early version of this song on my Rodeo Night album for a German label distributed internationally by Universal. Years later, realizing it was not finished, I added the additional verses and lyrics. If you've been watching the Ken Burns series on Country Music you'll see many scenes by the legends at many historic dance halls. This hall unfortunately has become little more than a storage building today, but in its heyday it saw Elvis, Willie, Hank Thompson, Ray Price, Mary Robbins and so many more grace it's wooden stage.

Go west young man to Cherry Springs
Where fiddlers rule and swing is king
You'll find us playing for the door
Just like the Texas Troubadours
Walk the floor where E.T. cried
The night he learned his baby died
You'll hear a spirit from above
The rafters echo "Faded Love."
Elvis caught a rising star
That saw Chuck Berry's red guitar
Hank the First and Patsy Cline
Where Johnny Cash once walked the line
Shine your boots it's Saturday night
You'll swear George Jones is still alive
The German folks still love to sing
The Cherry Springs Swing
A stones throw from old Germantown
You'll hear the fiddle man breakdown
The bar will take you back in time
When a young Ray Price was in his prime
Founded by a native son
Before the west was truly won
What a run for the old dance hall
But is it time for one last call
Where Buck and Lefty took the stage
Even Willie back in its heyday
The Negro Swing Band played there too
Where Marty Robbin's sang the blues
Shine your boots it's Saturday night
You'll swear Bob Wills is still alive
The German folks still love to sing
The Cherry Springs Swing
Shine your boots it's Saturday night
You'll swear Bob Wills is still alive
The German folks still love to sing
The Cherry Springs Swing

Old Songs by Keith MacDonnell and JAM

It's a song about the joy we feel when we hear one of our favorite old songs as we're driving down the highway--how many of you belt it out as loudly as you can when you don't think anyone's listening? It's co-written by MacDonnell. "Old Songs" & "Part of the Solution" were both part of a previous crowdfunding campaign!

Old songs touch you like a friend
who shows up in the nick of time
Right on cue to comfort you
with a perfect word or rhyme
I hear "Layla" on the radio
I become part of the band
Or a Beatles' song like "Let It Be"
I sing as loudly as I can!

I love old songs. I love old songs
I sing along and the hurt is gone
A forty-five with pops and crackles
An old LP on your turntable
Hey, hey, hey, I love old songs (repeat)

Old songs take you back in time
to the sock hop where you did "The Twist."
Suddenly you're "Forever Young"
as Dylan sings for your first kiss
Like magic there you are again
making out in your first car
"Blue Bayou" on the stereo
beneath the twinkling stars

Roly-Poly (Hay Pancito) by Fred Rose

One longtime radio man told me that he's heard more versions of this Bob Wills song than any other, but that he'd never heard my bilingual twist on the song with a Mexican accordion! Some of you might remember that I sang a version of this song on the USA Network's Nashville Star Season I. My fellow Texan and national finalist Prentice Varnon and I had to convince the producers that Western Swing was a viable subgenre of Country music.

Roly Poly eating corn and taters
Hungry every minute of the day
Roly Poly gnawing on a biscuit
As long as he can chew it it's okay
He can eat an apple pie and never even bat an eye
He likes everything from soup to hay
Roly Poly Daddy's little fatty
Bet he's gonna be a man someday

Aiye pancito papas para almuerzo
Y huevos con chorizo, como no?
Hay Pancito siempre tienes hambre
Eres un pancito como yo
Comes la comida como un caballo
Una mas tortilla por favor!
Aiye pancito, hijo muy gordito
Eres un pancito como yo

He can eat an apple pie and never even bat an eye
He likes everything from soup to hay
Aiye pancito, hijo muy gordito
Eres un pancito como yo

Take Me Back To Texas by Bob Wills and Tommy Duncan

Our cumbia and swing track features Texas Tornado's drummer Ernie Durawa and Grammy winners, Max Baca on bajo sexto, and Josh Baca on accordion. According to Rick Kienzle, noted country historian, this title preceded Wills's "Take Me Back to Tulsa."

You see that girl with the red dress on,
Some folks call her Dinah
Stoled my heart away from me
Way down in Louisiana

Take me back to Texas, I'm too young to marry
Take me back to Texas, I'm too young to marry

The big bee sucks the blossom
And the little bee makes the honey
Poor man throws the cotton
And the rich man makes the money

Went down to the railroad
laid my head down on the track
Thought about that gal of mine
and gradually eased it back

Take me back to Texas, I'm too young to marry
Take me back to Texas, I'm too young to marry

We travel all over this country wide
Playing music by the hour
Always wear this great big smile
We never do look sour

Take me back to Texas, I'm too young to marry
Take me back to Texas, I'm too young to wed thee!

Canta Papa by JAM

One of my early songs from my college days which I had never recorded with the band. There is an acoustic guitar and vocal version on my first album, On the Border. I wrote it for my dad, the drummer and former marine who years ago performed with Freddie Fender in Austin, Texas. No one was more surprised than Freddy Fender so when his two number one hits filled the radio airwaves he hired local bands to back him up. In Austin, that band was the Texas Drovers, at the City Colosseum or City Auditorium (my Dad can't remember which!).

The drums my father played have long since been sold
But he still has the rhythm of a dancer, a young dancer's soul
He likes country music mariachis and old rock and roll
My father lives longer but he never, no he never grows old

Canta Papa de amor, de dolor, Canta Papa
Canta Papa de tu vida difícil, Canta Papa
Canta Papa de los momentos alegres, Canta Papa
Y cuando cantas recuerda tu hijo que que canta también

The songs my father sings have only three chords
Musica filled full of love--they're more than just words
They come from the heart they're not of the hand
And my father can sing them as good as any man can.

Seguro Que Hell Yes by Alex Harvey, Mike Blakely, & JAM

Who would've thought that our invitation to a birthday get-together for Alex Harvey at the Sunset Grill in Nashville, TN would eventually lead to the creation of this song recorded first by Flaco Jimenez and Raul Malo, then later by Alan Jackson. Alex's former wife had invited us for cocktails at this legendary venue near music row to celebrate Alex's birthday. I remember Alex asking if we were working on any new songs (the answer to that is always). I told him about this slang my truck driving friend from El Paso had shared with me, "Seguro que hell yes." Twenty or thirty cocktail napkins later we had a song which appeared on a Grammy-winning album by Flaco on Arista. Alan Jackson, who was also an Arista, must've heard it when both he and Flaco were label mates--we're not sure! In any case, he recorded this Tex-Mex song on his anthology, Genuine, The Alan Jackson Story. I've played it as a Mexican cumbia while Flaco cut an atypical modern Latin version, but the original groove is this Mexican polka include on the new album.

Dígame Luna que puedo pensar
María so sexy, seguro que hell yes
Seguro, seguro, seguro que hell yes
Seguro, seguro, seguro que hell yes

María, sangría es demasiado
I'm getting higher, seguro que hell yes
Seguro, seguro, seguro que hell yes
Seguro, seguro, seguro que hell yes

Maria querida, let's go for a ride
En el Toro rojo, seguro que hell yes
Seguro, seguro, seguro que hell yes
Seguro, seguro, seguro que hell yes

Maria tu padre está very angry
Adelante rojo, seguro que hell yes
Seguro, seguro, seguro que hell yes
Seguro, seguro, seguro que hell yes

Yo tengo esposa bonita, que linda,
she makes good menudo, seguro que hell yes
Seguro, seguro, seguro que hell yes
Seguro, seguro, seguro que hell yes

Gentle on My Mind by John Hartford, recorded by Glen Campbell

This Grammy-winning song by John Hartford is our tribute to the late Glenn Cambell, who influenced many a country musician with this nation television program--including me! Interestingly, it cracked the Pop charts at 39, but it only reached number 44 on the Country charts. Our version features Texas singer-songwriter Walt Wilkins and my longtime co-writer Mike Blakely on harmonies.

It's knowing that your door is always open
and your path is free to walk
That makes me tend to leave my sleeping bag
rolled up & stashed behind your couch.

And it's knowing I'm not shackled
by forgotten words and bonds,
and the ink stains that have dried up on some line.
That keeps you in the backroads,
by the rivers of my mem'ry,
That keeps you ever gentle on my mind.
It's not clinging to the rocks and ivy
planted on their columns now that bind me
Or something that somebody said
because they thought we fit together walkin'
It's just knowing that the world
will not be cursing or forgiving
When I walk along some railroad track and find.
That you're moving on the backroads
by the rivers of my memory
And for hours you're just gentle on my mind.
Through the wheatfields & the clotheslines
the junkyards the Highways come between us.
And some other woman crying to her mother
cause she turned and I was gone.
I still might run in silence,
tears of joy might stain my face,
and the summer sun might burn me till Im blind
But not to where I cannot
see you walkin on the backroads
by the rivers flowing gentle on my mind.
I dip my cup of soup back from some
gurglin', cracklin' cauldron in some train yard.
My beard a roughenin' coal pile
and a dirty hat pulled low across my face.
Through cupped hands round a tin can,
I pretend to hold you to my breast and find
That you're wavin from the backroads
by the rivers of my memory
ever smilin' ever gentle on my mind.

I Could Live Without You by Harkins/Blakely/JAM

This is another one of the many songs, 73 that we can remember, that I cowrote with Mike Blakely at his El Rancho Quien Sabe during his days in Marble Falls. Jerry Harkins, a great steel guitarist co-wrote many of those with us including this one. El Rancho Quien Sabe featured a small cabin with a small front porch, an old computer, and a good coffee pot. Mike had sung an earlier version of this on our duo album, Blakely-Martinez, but I had never recorded my own version.

I don't take you dancing quite as often as I should
I don't say I love you everyday
Sometimes the things I say could be misunderstood
But darling if you ever went away
I could live without you and wish you well
I could live without you and time would tell
I could live without you but it would be a living hell.
If there's any doubt about the way I feel for you
Let me ease your troubled mind
I would barely breath and I just don't know what I'd do
Darling, if you weren't by my side
Even if tried I couldn't love you anymore
Heaven knows just what I'd do if you walked out that door

Part of the Solution by JAM & MacDonnell

This song of healing is written for our children, Mariah, Falon, Aubrie, and Ryan, who were part of the package when I married my wife. The lyrics, co-written with Keith MacDonnell, I hope are more effective than a dogmatic lecture! Female vocals are by Aubrie and Mariah.

You tell me he's not perfect; I submit nobody is
Calmy share your feelings then listen closely to his
You may never find the answer if you simply choose to run
You can hold on to the anger or be part of the solution
Remember what you told me about the kids who were so cruel
They made fun of your best friend way back in middle school
She was different from the others--a bolder shade in her complexion
You chose to stand beside her and be part of the solution

You can be the Darkness
You can be the Night
Or you can be the Goodness
You can be a point of light
Your mother learned to love me though I've got many flaws
We've had our share of struggles but we've made it through them all
I've learned to say I'm sorry and work through the emotions
You can fill your mind with worry or be part of the solution
(You can be) part of the problem or part of the solution
(You can be) part of the problem or part of the solution

The Beginning of the End of the Day By JAM & Rick Bussey

This waltz I co-wrote with Rick Bussey, a Kerrville New Folk winner, is about what inspires a man during the 9 to 5 work day. Yes, it's usually a woman!

The sun's going down over Texas..
Soon you'll hear the first double stop play
I take my first taste from a bottle of beer
The beginning of the end of the day

The moon gives a wink to the sunset
In my pocket a week's worth of pay
I trade my blue collar for a clean ironed shirt
The beginning of the end of the day.
The thought of this moment is what kept me going
when the work wasn't going my way.

My hand takes the hand of my sweetheart..
And we waltz as the band serenades
We kiss beneath stars by the light of the moon
The beginning of the end of the day.
The thought of this moment
Is what kept me going
when the work wasn't going my way.
The beginning of the end of the day.

Faded Love by Bob Wills, John Wills, & Billy Jack Wills

As many of you have learned from the Ken Burns PBS series many of the country greats borrowed from earlier standards. The melody came from an 1856 ballad, [Darling Nelly Gray](#), which John Wills knew as a fiddle tune. "Faded Love" is a sentimental song about lost love. John M. Greenberg, formerly of The Mysterios, and Tina Wilkins provide the stellar harmonies for my interpretation while Kurt Baumer and Chris Reeves do the twin fiddles!

As I look at the letters that you wrote to me
It's you that I am thinking of
As I read the lines that to me were so sweet
I remember our faded love

I miss you darling more and more every day
As heaven would miss the stars above
With every heartbeat I still think of you
And remember our faded love

As I think of the past and all the pleasures we had
As I watch the mating of the dove
It was in the springtime when you said goodbye
I remember our faded love

I miss you darling more and more every day
As heaven would miss the stars above
With every heartbeat I still think of you
And remember our faded love

TAG: And remember our faded love