

Song 1 “(It All Started On The) Dragon Coaster” (Michael Shelley)

When I was in the midst of writing songs for this album I thought it would be good idea to take a look at songs I’d already written and see if there was some way to update them, or write some kind of sequel, or re-write them from the point of view of a 15 year old girl.

It immediately occurred to me that my song “Rollercoaster” (from 1997) might be just right for an update with a more innocent romantic teen focus. “Rollercoaster” was a creative turning point for me, the lyrics were slightly less linear and literal than my usual, and much of it written by closing my eyes and trying to see what the characters were seeing, a method I used on this new song as well.

“Dragon Coaster” takes place “down the shore” which is what people in northern New Jersey call the towns, beaches and boardwalks of Jersey Shore, but in my mind I was definitely picturing the Playland amusement park in Rye, New York, of my childhood. The rides mentioned (The Whip, Bumper Cars, Mighty Mouse and Dragon Coaster) are all Playland old-timers, and the park is also on the shore of Long Island Sound, so the mixed locations just jelled together in my mind.

The whole thing was mostly written in one evening, with some lyric polishing which came after playing the first version for Juniper. This became the typical way songs got refined, Juniper would provide feedback about what words, phrases and lyrical ideas she did and did not relate to, and I’d go off and work up alternatives for her to pick from.

Originally the feel of the song was much slower, and I imagined it as a kind of a dramatic Roy Orbison-esque ballad. But the feel evolved as we practiced it, which we did over and over.

Generally, I’d sing a new song for Juniper once, then hand her the lyric sheet & she’d try it a few times (she’s a quick melody study). After a few days of this we’d cut a simple demo. In the days leading up to the initial recordings session we ran through all the songs daily, so every song got sung 50+ times, and being that familiar with the songs was a leg up when recording time came.

This was one of seven songs that we recorded basic tracks for at Storybook Sound in Maplewood, NJ with Scott Anthony engineering.

Storybook is mostly known as a top of the line mastering studio, but Scott likes to do a bit of recording for fun, and he was enthusiastic about booking these sessions. Steve & John and Juniper & I met there on a Thursday in late August 2019. I had sent Steve & John the demos and chord sheets and it was obvious that they had put some time into listening & working up parts, because as soon as we started playing it was apparent we would get quite a lot done that day. Songs were worked up quickly, with everyone providing arrangement and feel improvement ideas, and all the songs were cut in just a few takes.

I got the tracks home (my first time ever working with mixing multi-track drums at home – quite a learning curve) and we started to add overdubs, still not quite knowing what quite what the palate of the album would be, or how we'd flesh out the very solid tracks from Storybook. We quickly realized that many of the songs would benefit from musicianship, instrumentation and musical input originating outside of our basement.

Rochester, New York's Greg Townson was very much on my mind, as I'd recently seen him with Los Straitjackets backing Nick Lowe, and was heavily getting into his band The Hi-Risers, and it seemed he'd be the perfect guy to play this solo on this slight throwback-vibed song. He was the first special guest I approached to be on the album, and he listened to the rough mix and said "yes" immediately, agreeing, he was the man for the job. He emailed back a solo and some wonderful additional guitar parts, and it all fit so well, and took the song in directions I never would have. And (importantly) it really helped set the template – I now knew I wouldn't play any solos, but would try to match each song's solo with the right player. So, we were off to a great start with this wonderful sounding memorable guitar work from a super nice guy, and unique guitarist.

In the basement we have a Farfisa, and a wonky Baldwin organ, but I knew this tune needed more of a Hammond sound, and I asked Atlanta's multi-talented Jay Gonzalez if he might be able to lend a hand. He's a monster musician and WFMU listener who sent me his fantastic solo lp "Mess Of Happiness" and listening to it I knew we had grown up listening to the same records. We corresponded and eventually met up for a beer when his band The Drive By Truckers played a theater a few blocks from where I live. Jay's organ really lifts up the second bridge of the song.

Which reminds me – this song really has an unusual structure (like a lot of the songs on this album). It goes verse, verse, bridge, solo, bridge, verse. There’s no real chorus. Also, this is one of the few songs on the lp with only one vocal track – no harmonies, no background vocals.

The recording ends with a snippet of a recording of a roller-coaster ride taken from the same sound effects album that I used on 1997’s “Rollercoaster.”

Also, picking which song would open the album was the toughest part of sequencing. There was no clear opener. This one seemed to work really well, but I’m still not quite sure we picked the right song.

You can listen to the final product here:

<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=zeQGgjtL9eU&feature=share>

Here’s a link to one of my favorite of Greg’s guitar solos (it’s really something):

<https://nicklowe.bandcamp.com/track/you-inspire-me-2>

Jay Gonzalez’s site:

<http://www.jaygonzalez.com>

Greg’s site:

<https://www.gregtownson.com>

1997’s “Rollercoaster”:

<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=azlk4GXdCt0&list=RDAMVMazlk4GXdCt0>

Jay Gonzalez - Hammond Organ

Steve Goulding - Drums

John Lee - Bass

Juniper Shelley - Vocals

Michael Shelley - Electric Guitar

Greg Townson - Lead Electric Guitar

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Song 2: “The Kids On My Corner”

Kids On My Corner (Simon Roberts & Joff Winterhart and Juniper & Michael Shelley)

The original idea for the album was to have four songs Juniper and/or I would write, four covers of '60s pop songs and four songs written just for this project by friends and songwriters we admired. A good plan, but the main reason for it was that I could not imagine that Juniper and I would be able to write more than a few songs ourselves.

It turned out very different than imagined.

We did record four covers, but decided to only put one on the album (more on that later), but we did get four songs by friends, and this was the last one to come together.

I've been a HUGE fan of the Bristol, U.K. band BUCKY since the first time I heard their brilliant album "All The New Mistakes."

Their sound is unique (just drums & guitar) as is their style and point of view. Highly recommended.

Drummer/lyricist Joff (also a multi-talented artist, who also did the album's wonderful illustrations but is perhaps best known for his graphic novels, one of which "Days Of The Bagnold Summer" has been turned into a movie!) and I developed a correspondence and I interviewed him on my radio show. Lots of Bucky songs have adolescent themes, and they were one of the first writers I got in touch with asking for a song for the Juniper project.

Joff and Simon sent us a demo, which we liked, but – Juniper had made a couple of rules about the songs: 1. No mentioning technology, 2. No trying to explain her generation.

We had sent invites to a bunch of great songwriters, and it was uncanny how many of the great songs we received broke one or both of those rules. Somebody could make a great album of just those songs!

But, Juniper just didn't feel right singing certain kinds of lyrics. This led to changes in many of the songs I was writing for her, and subtle changes in some of the covers. We added a bunch of lyrics to "Kids On My Corner" and Joff insisted we share credit saying "I so love this kind of collaboration."

Since we'd already recorded the bulk of the basic tracks at Storybook, Steve Goulding took the train from Brooklyn to our New Jersey basement with his snare and cymbals, and after a breakfast at the diner, he recorded the drums for this track (with two microphones, and only after removing the back head of the kick drum, and covering all the toms with dish towels), overdubbing onto guide track I'd prepared with a drum machine.

Since the tempo of the bridge slows down, in the guide track there is a pause before the bridge, then another, slower, count in, then a pause, then a new count in for the end of the song. I wasn't quite sure it would all stitch together seamlessly, but it did.

I quickly added a bass and two guitars, thinking I'd probably replace them, then Juniper added the vocals. Adding the wonderful harmonies on the choruses were her idea.

Interestingly, every time I tried to add anything or re-do the basics tracks, it made it sound worse, and I took that as a sign and soon gave up trying to adorn this one. So, the finished product is one of the least produced track on the album.

Although we love the way it turned out (we were sort of shooting for a 1978 Stiff Records sound), we did not predict it would be one of the most played and loved and written about tracks on the album.

Bucky have released their demo of this song, look for it on Bandcamp:

<https://buckytheband.bandcamp.com/>

We ended up making a video for this song using Playskool Little People that my wife has had since her childhood:

<https://loudwomen.org/2020/10/08/juniper-kids-on-my-corner-video-of-the-day/>

Steve Goulding - Drums

Juniper Shelley - Vocals

Michael Shelley - Bass, Electric Guitar

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Song 3 "Everybody's Got A Crush On Chad" (Michael Shelley)

Another one written very quickly. The only hang-up was deciding on the name Chad, which was not the first one we tried, but it had a few decent rhymes and was Juniper approved.

Like many of the songs on this album this was came about by asking “What kind of feels are missing... what kind of songs do we need to fill this album out?” And that stutter T-Rex shuffle groove was one of the answers.

This is another one with an unusual (and hard to describe) song structure. Verse, verse, bridge, verse, bridge, verse and then a weird extension (2nd bridge?) at the end (the “Eight Days A Week Part”). No real chorus, no solo.

That extension is interesting, because it features the first appearance of a C# in the song. The bridges have a C# minor, so turning that major really lifts that end bit up.

The instruments were recorded at Storybook Sound, and I believe this is the second take. The first take ruined because I had not quite dialed in my recent EBay purchased \$19 Chinese distortion pedal, and someone had the idea to add the quarter note accents (the “London Calling” part) to the second bridge.

At home we added the handclaps, otherwise this is a 100% live recording. There was some talk about re-recording the vocals, or adding harmonies, but in the end we liked the feel of the simple live vocals.

Another of the less produced tracks, and one I thought turned out really well.

In the mastering session at Sterling Sound, Greg Calbi asked if we wanted to fade this out. I’m sure we were intending a fade as we recorded it, but I got used to the natural end and kept it in through the mixing. To fade or not to fade was a tough decision... a 2:23 song with a fade out would have been nice, but one thing I learned making this record is that there are infinite ways to do everything, and not beat yourself up for your choices.

Hear it here:

<https://junipersongs.bandcamp.com/track/everybodys-got-a-crush-on-chad>

The fuzz pedal has gone up in price, but not by much. Get your own by searching EBay for “Twinote Fuzz Pedal.”

Steve Goulding - Drums
John Lee - Bass
Juniper Shelley - Vocals
Michael Shelley - Electric Guitar

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Song 4 “Best Kept Secret” (Tommy Dunbar & Kyle Vincent)

One of the writers I reached out to, looking for song for this project, was Tommy Dunbar. Tommy formed the nucleus of The Rubinoos with Jon Rubin when the two were Juniper’s age, and they’ve been making hook and harmony filled pop music in The Bay Area for fifty years.

Tommy has done a lot of writing and producing for all kinds of acts and he sent us three songs that were demoed, but never connected with a project. This one was co-written by Kyle Vincent, another journeyman pop music maker.

I can remember getting the email with the demos attached from Tommy, and listening to the three songs on my phone, and Juniper immediately picked “Best Kept Secret.”

One thing I realized is that the subject matter that’s appropriate for a fifteen year old to sing about is very finite. We didn’t want anything too racy, or anything too trite. This was perfect timeless romantic pop.

It should be noted that the demo featured a very 80s drum machine, and sounds like it could have been a huge 80s hit with a small polish – our arrangement varies only slightly from their excellent demo, we mostly just adjusted the groove.

Another one with basics cut at Storybook. There’s an exciting moment at the end of the bridge – the chord chart said “E/F#” for the last four bars of the bridge, and after some experimenting trying to figure out what this notation meant, bassist John Lee suggested that after the line “keeping it inside” the guitar would switch to E, while the bass stayed on F#. The first time we tried it, it kind of blew our minds.

One of the acts Tommy said he had pitched songs to around this time was Belinda Carlisle, and the idea of a lost Belinda Carlisle song was definitely in my mind as we put this recording together.

I'd know Chris Geddes from the Glasgow band Belle & Sebastian since the late 90s when he played on my "Too Many Movies" lp and we did some U.K. gigs. A great guy with a great vintage keyboard collection, and his bubbly synthesizer on the choruses was the first overdub, and really got the track moving in the right direction.

Then neighbor and musician/children's book author Daniel Kirk came over and laid down some acoustic guitar. Sometimes you get sick of the sound of yourself and it's nice to hear how someone else would do the part.

I wasn't sure what to do about the hole left for the solo, and was thinking Marshall Crenshaw (who I'd met when I opened a tour of Japan for him in 2000) would be the right guy for a super melodic pop solo. I was quite pleasantly surprised when he returned four guitar parts that come out of nowhere and take the melody for a ride. When I was having trouble balancing the parts, he send me a screen shot of his mixing board, so I could get it right.

Dave Amels is true musical genius, and I've been lucky to have him playing with me for so long, in fact he's the only musician who plays on all of my albums. He brought a car full of vintage keyboards to my basement and knocked out all his parts in an afternoon. So much of the collaboration on this project was done remotely, and it was a real pleasure to have Dave here in person. Besides the synth on the choruses, Dave plays the organ on the bridge – which (due 100% to my error) was not noted in the credits on the cd/lp. (Sorry Dave!)

A lot of the background vocals were suggested by Tommy & Kyle's demo, but Juniper took a special interest in helping arrange the background vocals for the album, and the night before April, Megan & Rebecca came over to sing, Juniper and I sat together and plotted out all the background parts she was hearing.

The background vocal session was a lot of laughs, with many good arrangement and harmony ideas contributed by the singers, who all sang around one mic, double (and triple and quadruple) tracking their parts. The session went quick with seven songs learned and recorded in an afternoon. The backgrounds were

one of the last things we added and they really made the tracks sound finished and full and became one of the signature elements to the album.

I'm pretty sure this is the recording with the most tracks on the album. As the list of musicians below will bear out, there's a lot going on in this recording.

I'd love to make an 80's Ah-Ha style video for this one.

Hear it here:

<https://open.spotify.com/track/5l7lpa9rl2BuJSAjUdSGBF>

The Rubinoos:

<https://open.spotify.com/track/5vCLmuAzXx1XecQYYUumKO>

Some of my favorite of Chris' Belle & Sebastian keyboard work:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4t0w2Z7uHs>

Daniel Kirk:

<http://danielkirk.com/>

April March:

<https://www.instagram.com/aprilmarch.official/?hl=en>

Megan Reilly:

<https://www.meganreilly.com/>

Rebecca Turner:

<https://rebeccaturner.net/>

Interestingly, in the 90s The Rubinoos released a completely different song by the same title.

Dave Amels - ARP Solus Synthesizer, Hammond Organ

Marshall Crenshaw - Guitar Solo

Chris Geddes - Roland Juno Synthesizer

Steve Goulding - Drums

Daniel Kirk - Acoustic Guitar

John Lee - Bass

April March - Background Vocals
Megan Reilly - Background Vocals
Juniper Shelley - Vocals
Michael Shelley - Acoustic Guitar, Electric Guitar
Rebecca Turner - Background Vocals

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Song 5 “Boys! Boys! Boys! Boys! Boys!” (Michael Shelley)

When Juniper was 8 or 9 years old I was recording the “Jimmy’s Corner” album in our basement, and she asked if she could record a Christmas song, which we did, and sent to family members. This started an annual holiday tradition, evolving from me playing all the instruments, to Juniper playing all the instruments.

After the Christmas of 2018 she asked “Can we record a non-Christmas song?” And shortly after I wrote “Boys! Boys! Boys! Boys! Boys!”

The trick to writing this was to sort of imagine it was already written, and asking myself how it went. I had the title and vividly remember thinking “It’s one of those songs that goes ‘Who starts all the trouble at the school? Boys! Boys! Boys! Boys! Boys!’ ” As if I was adding to an already existing well known genre of songs. Juniper’s stories about 8th grade were the inspiration for much of the lyrics.

The only hang up was coming up with the third part (the “So frustrating...” part), that came late in the process and until I had it, after the second part of the verse it went to what I thought was the chorus – the part that just says “Boys” about a million times, but with the addition of the third part that chorus became the bridge/extension at the end.

So, yet another song with an unusual and hard to describe structure. The verses each have three parts, ending in the refrain “Boys! Boys! Boys! Boys! Boys!” and there are three verses in a row (with the 1st part of the third verse taken by the solo) and then, at the very end, what I call the bridge. So, a refrain, but no real chorus, and a bridge at the end.

Steve Goulding laid down the drums in our basement (with two mics) while listening to a guide recording. Overdubbing tom toms that are low in the mix, but effective.

The bass on this track is me, and I'll say I do love playing bass, but what I hear in my head does not come naturally to my fingers. I recorded the first version of the bass for this in a very simple style, and the only parts I liked, upon further reflection, were the few parts where the bass moved off the root notes, so the next day I spend hours and hours figuring out how to add more movement to the part, and recorded that – which also (upon further reflection) seemed to need even MORE movement. I spent the entire next day working in it, without quite nailing a take. After a night's sleep, dreaming bass, I was able to cut the final part quite quickly – so the final product took almost three days. The chord changes aren't that tricky, and I'm sure a real bass player could have knocked out a bass line in no time, but there is something to be said for occasionally going for the outsider working hard approach. Note: this was recorded with a hard to tune Maya bass I bought in high school for \$25.00.

Juniper added the Farfisa organ tracks and I asked Chris Geddes specifically for a Mellotron solo. He sent one track of synth and one of Mellotron – both of which were absolutely fantastic stand-alone solos. The joy we felt listening to them was really unprecedented – they just elevated to song so high. How to mix the solo was something we went back and forth on, but in the end you hear the full Mellotron solo and the second half of the Synth solo. Also, Steve's decision to breakdown the drums during the solo, and his decision to build up on the "They crave attention..." part, were just wonderful spur of the moment creative decisions on Steve's part, they were not in the guide recordings.

The only thing missing were the low notes, which I was imagining below a guitar's range, and above a bass' range. I'd known Keith Yaun from his mesmerizing guitar work with The Bakersfield Breakers, and he brought his baritone guitar to the basement and added the missing piece of the puzzle.

The song was mixed and we started posting it and sending it to people in May 2019. I thought it captured something, but we didn't really have any expectations for it, except for pleasing our friends. But a bunch of WFMU DJs started spinning it, and then a bunch of other radio stations, and folks kept requesting we digitally release it so they could hear it on Spotify, etc. It was this overwhelming positive

reaction that inspired us to consider making a whole album, an idea that had not previously occurred to us.

Pre-pandemic Juniper did play one full band gig at WFMU's Monty Hall, and I will say one of my greatest on-stage moments happened that night. Juniper introduced "Boys!" and as we launched into it, there was a palpable and audible reaction from the crowd. It was an amazing moment.

When we were cutting the background vocals for the album, I had the singers add their harmonies, so the lp version is slightly different from the single version.

Speaking of versions... there's also an instrumental version! During the drum sessions, as we were listening to the playback Steve started playing along in a Ska style (he loves this beat, and at rehearsals may launch into it at any moment). I quickly hit record and asked him to do it again. Though it follows the original version exactly, I think the only parts the two have in common are the bass (not quite the final version), a few bits of Mellotron, and some of the original drums.

Watch the video with art by Matthew Maley and animation by Greg Harrison:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSLO9aGu_hk&list=PLcH6AJQhTwB-Dcxgr9etQ0dO6D5tmX-Rt&index=5

The dub version:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOyl6JIWP84&list=PLcH6AJQhTwB-Dcxgr9etQ0dO6D5tmX-Rt&index=13>

Keith Yaun in action with The Bakersfield Breakers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8B1jHYEbnlQ>

Chris Geddes - Mellotron, Mini Korg Synthesizer

Steve Goulding – Drums

April March - Background Vocals

Megan Reilly - Background Vocals

Juniper Shelley - Farfisa Organ, Vocals

Michael Shelley - Bass, Electric Guitar

Rebecca Turner - Background Vocals

Keith Yaun - Baritone Guitar

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Song 6 “Sticking With My Henry” (Michael Shelley)

Before writing “Boys!” I hadn’t written a song I really liked in couple of years. But as soon as we started considering the idea of making a Juniper full length release thing started getting seriously inspired.

My most prolific time as a songwriter was when I was in my early 30s and had just been signed to my first record deal. I’d made some changes to my life and lifestyle, and in somehow started to tap into creative powers and inspirations that had previously eluded me. During that time I was regularly waking up in the middle of the night, struck with ideas, and working on songs... and writing lyrics in the back of books I was reading on the subway... and bringing a notebook to the bar I worked at, customers would have to wait while I scribbled. Not all the songs were good, but feeling that creative energy overtake you is really something. And figuring out how to take observations and emotions and make a song out of them was an amazing, helpful and healthy process for me.

And from the moment “Boys!” was written that same feeling was fiercely back. It is a bit like being possessed, and there were times when I think my wife was genuinely surprised at seeing heretofore unseen behavior from me.

Juniper and I wrote down a lot of song idea, and subject matter possibilities. And as the number of finished songs grew, many of the next songs were inspired by the idea of trying to figure out what would complement what we already had, or what kind of a song or message or story was missing from the album.

I can say with certainty that “Sticking With My Henry” would not have been written if we had not stopped while driving up to Cape Cod for a vacation to look for books at a Goodwill, and seen a small nylon string guitar for sale (\$14.99). I picked up that guitar and started strumming that G chord, and the vague idea I had for a song about a girl who sticks with a nice guy came pouring out.

Once again, no real chorus, but verses with a refrain. Verse, bridge, verse, bridge, solo (on ½ a verse and a bridge), then a ½ verse with two extra Henry refrains. The best part of the song (from a writing pop hooks point of view), is (in my mind) the D chord that comes out of nowhere at the end of the song (after the line “No trouble”).

Sam Elwitt (incredible musician/producer who also joined the live band) recorded the tremolo guitar at his home studio, and the drums were cut at the same basement session as “Kids On My Corner” with the kick drum and ride cymbal on the solo section overdubbed. Afterward, Steve hung around and added claps and assorted tambourines and percussion to a bunch of songs. Interestingly, when I made the guide track for Steve to drum along to, I did not use any metronome or drum machine, just me strumming that little guitar and Juniper singing.

Mark Spencer has been on my radar since he first blew me away with his guitar work with The Blood Oranges. Since then I’ve seen him working with an endless array of artists, and he’s always right on the money. I sent him the track and he send back four jaw dropping solos, the finished product features the best moments of each.

The piano is me answering the question “What would NRBQ’s Terry Adams play?” Though at least one review has referred to it as a Fender Rhodes, it’s actually a much less cool Yamaha P-95.

Juniper made the very charming (and Covid friendly) video at our kitchen table.

Watch Juniper’s video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s74a2PCNsYA&list=PLcH6AJQhTwB-Dcxgr9etQ0dO6D5tmX-Rt&index=6>

Mark Spencer:

<https://sonvolt.net/bio/>

Sam Elwitt:

<http://www.nutleybrass.com/>

Sam Elwitt - Tremolo Guitar

Steve Goulding - Drums

Juniper Shelley - Vocals

Michael Shelley - Bass, Acoustic Guitar, Piano

Mark Spencer - Guitar Solo

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Song 7 "Girls Just Want A Boy To Rest Their Head Upon" (Juniper Shelley & Michael Shelley)

This one is definitely a favorite of both mine and Juniper's. She came up with title and the idea "Brian Wilson style ballad" immediately came to mind. The bulk of the music came pretty fast, but sorting out the trickier chord changes took a while. Once again, what I heard in my head took a bit of time to find on the guitar. I've always felt that one thing that sets some songwriters apart is their ability to hear very subtle differences in complex chords, or voicings, and to use those juxtapositions to set off the melody and make the sound richer. So, that's what we were attempting here. As always with this project, refining the lyrics so they were neither too mature nor too naive took some care, and Juniper was helpful with that.

Once again, no chorus, just a refrain at the end of the verse.

The harp is a straight up Beach Boys steal, and the Argentinian harpist, Mercedes Bralo, was one of the first musicians I found on-line (on fiver.com). We emailed, I sent her a rough mix, she sent back a bullseye harp part. It turned out that use of worldwide on-line collaborators became another of the defining traits of this album.

Dave's incredible organ and the background vocals (which just come in for the bridge) are from previously mentioned basement sessions, and Keith brought his baritone back as well - it can be hard to identify, but it comes in with the harp solo & I think really sets that section off. Also, Juniper deserves special mention for nailing the lead vocals on this one.

Hear it here:

<https://juniperssongs.bandcamp.com/track/girls-just-want-a-boy-to-rest-their-head-upon>

Dave Amels - Hammond Organ

Mercedes Bralo - Harp

Steve Goulding - Drums

John Lee - Bass

April March - Background Vocals

Megan Reilly - Background Vocals

Juniper Shelley - Vocals

Michael Shelley - Acoustic Guitar, Electric Guitar
Rebecca Turner - Background Vocals
Keith Yaun - Baritone Guitar

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Song 8 “Poke Your Eye Out” (Kim Shattuck & Lisa Marr)

When I was reaching out to songwriters, asking them to write a song for Juniper, I wrote to both Lisa Marr and Kim Shattuck. I’d loved Kim’s band The Muffs since the first time I heard them and always considered her a very special songwriter, and Lisa’s wrote great songs with Cub and her co-writes with Joe Queer for The Queers are among my favorite pop songs ever created.

Lisa wrote me back and said that she and Kim would be working together, which was not a total surprise, since they had been in a band, The Beards, together.

What I did not know was that Kim had ALS, and though her body was slowly shutting down, her mind was as creative as ever. In the summer of 2019 Lisa and Kim wrote two songs for Juniper, which Lisa sent us demos of, with just her voice and a ukulele.

Juniper immediately zeroed in on “Poke Your Eye Out” and because the demo was so spare, it was the only song that we were not sure of what the basic feel would be until we were in the studio recording it. We quickly ran through a few different approaches, but when Steve started playing that beat on the tom toms, and I put down my electric and picked up that \$14.99 acoustic, it all fell into place immediately. With bass, drums, guitar and lead vocals all recorded live there was not too much else to do to this one minute and forty nine second song.

We had left a hole for a solo, and it took me a while to imagine what should fill it. The answer was a super talented requinto player from Ecuador, Jose Luis Ushina, who just brought something spectacular. Again, I felt like I was lucking out.

Brazilian conga player Vinas Peixoto added some spice to the bridge and outro and after repairing our ailing Farfisa Dave Amels added some great counter melody organ parts, and the combination of that beat and that guitar and bass with that unexpected organ sound really wakes the song up.

The more songs we recorded the better Juniper got at hearing, creating and recording harmonies with herself, and on this one she harmonizes just a few lines, but to my ears those small touches go a long way.

When I started mixing the record I was doing it on my old home stereo speakers, and after taking rough mixes up to our kitchen's boom-box and my car's cd player, I quickly realized that my speakers were not accurate or reliable, and so 99% of this record was mixed on headphones. Not ideal, but at least they were consistent, but it's songs like this, with a lot of drums and no electric guitar to eat up the frequencies, that I do wish I'd had a chance to mix on a huge set of very loud studio monitors.

Kim Shattuck died in October of 2019. I sent her a rough mix of this, but I'm not sure if she had a chance to listen to it, but I like to imagine it gave her a reason to be happy during tough times.

We recently started recording the other song that Kim and Lisa sent us, "Taste The Soup," and we hope to release it at some point.

Poke your eye out here:

<https://open.spotify.com/track/3ZKCraX4CcrilY0pK3Qmi2>

Jose Luis Ushiña Equador in action:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aev5wwoyZtw>

Dave Amels - Farfisa Organ

Steve Goulding - Drums

John Lee - Bass

Vinas Peixoto – Congas

Juniper Shelley - Vocals

Michael Shelley - Acoustic Guitar

Jose Luis Ushiña - Requinto Guitar Solo

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Song 9 "Gotta Draw The Line" (Richard Barrett)

As I said earlier, we were originally planning to have four covers of 1960s songs on this album, but we ended up with just this one.

We did record versions of “Little Miss Stuck-Up” an amazing pre-Bread David Gates song which he released as Del Ashley, and “My First Heartbreak” a 1966 B-side by little know Cincinnati duo 2 of Clubs.

The better of the two was “Heartbreak” and Juniper REALLY wanted to include it on the album. It’s ferocious and unique sounding, and I hope it comes out somewhere eventually, but (to me at least) “Gotta Draw The Line” just fit on the album better. I guess we could have had 13 songs, not 12, but I just thought it worked better with 12.

“Gotta Draw The Line” was written by Richard Barrett who might be best known for recording the first version of "Some Other Guy," (a co-write with Leiber & Stoller) which was cover by many bands, including The Beatles.

Our arrangement of “Gotta Draw The Line” combines ideas from three very different versions. The Barrett produced 1965 version (a B-side) by The 3° Degrees, in which the antagonist is referred to as “Honey,” and two varied takes on it by The Swinging Blue Jeans (one acoustic, one Beatles-y), who sing to “Sidney,” which luckily is also a common name for females.

The drums were recorded by Scott at Storybook in September 2019 by The Smithereens' Dennis Diken who played along to a guide tape I’d prepared. Frank Caira of the groovy Brooklyn band The Above added the bass, Juniper added the organs and the vibes on the final verse were another easy on-line hire, Andrew Nittoli of Pennsylvania, USA, and once again the background singers really add so much likability.

This one was mixed a few different ways, and in the end I took a less is more approach, not using most of the electric guitar tracks I'd recorded, trying to make it sound like one of those not too fussed over 60s album tracks by some obscure band.

Hear it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyL6EDAZBJQ&list=PLcH6AJQhTwB-Dcxgr9etQ0dO6D5tmX-Rt&index=9>

by The 3° Degrees

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODaf-Bn25O8>

The Swinging Blue Jeans Later:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQ8PYdP2mH8>

The Swinging Blue Jeans early:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BByb74RJ74c>

Frank Caira - Bass

Denis Diken - Drums

April March - Background Vocals

Andrew Nittoli - Vibraphone

Megan Reilly - Background Vocals

Juniper Shelley - Farfisa Organ, Lowrey Organ, Vocals

Michael Shelley - Acoustic Guitar, Electric Guitar

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Song 10 "How Long She Gonna Stay In That Room?" (Michael Shelley)

This was the second song I wrote for this project. Though it only has three chords and a pretty standard format (verse/chorus) and a very repetitive bass line, there is something about how this one moves, and the way the instrumentation comes in and out that makes you not realize how simple it is.

I remember playing it for Juniper and Jordon (my wife), just me and an unplugged electric guitar, and them liking it, but there was a look on their faces like they were not sure I was serious, maybe because the simplicity, and maybe because the idea of an album was completely hypothetical at that time, and with only "Boysx5" as a starting point, none of us has any really had any idea of what the songs would sound like or be about.

So, I started to make a demo to flesh the song out and see what instrumentation would work, and in doing so went internet searching for a tom-tom heavy drum beat to use for the demo. There are many web sites with free drum loops that I've used for this purpose in the past, but I was having trouble finding a loop with the right feel at the 134bpm tempo I needed, so I ended up buying (from drum-drops.com) one song's worth of loops from a collection called "60s Motown Drops." The beat is based on Barrett Strong's "Money" and it was recorded in a U.K. studio and played by a human drummer named Timmy Rickard.

The drum loops came in folders titled "Intro," "Chorus," "Middle Eight," etc., and they are recorded with the idea that what made the Motown drums sound

unique was leakage, so these drums were recorded with a "brass section" and a "vocal" mic, etc. It took me a while to figure it all out, but eventually, with a steep learning curve, I was able to edit together a whole drum part that fit the arrangement I had in mind. All along I was thinking I'd replace the drum loops with "real" drums, but in the end I kept Timmy's fine (and excellently recorded) tracks, and not one person who heard them (including Steve Goulding) noticed that the drum part was constructed.

I added most of the rest pretty quickly in the basement (thankfully this one is in a key I'm decent at on the organ) and played a rough mix for a friend who suggested girl-group style background vocals. That suggestion turned a light on, because it opened up a whole world I had not previously considered, and I invited neighbor and girl group sound authority April March over to sing some background parts. We eventually fleshed those parts out with the trio, but April's suggestions really helped wake me up to the big part that the background vocals would play on the rest of the recordings. And, special note must be made of Juniper's harmonies, which are pop perfection.

I never intended the solo to be the wah-wah guitar, but while recording the wah-wah parts on to the verses, after a few bars of waiting for the solo section to pass I got bored and played a few figures, assuming they would be replaced with a proper solo. But, everyone who heard rough mixes said they loved the non-solo solo, and so it stayed.

In some ways I think this is the most catchy song on the album.

Hear it here:

<https://junipersongs.bandcamp.com/track/how-long-she-gonna-stay-in-that-room>

Check out this promotional video for the drum loops I used, you can see the see & hear the exact drum track I used:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wpgyE-dJoc4&feature=youtu.be&t=127>

April March - Background Vocals

Timmy Rickard - Drums

Megan Reilly - Background Vocals

Juniper Shelley - Vocals

Michael Shelley - Bass, Electric Guitar, Farfisa Organ
Rebecca Turner - Background Vocals

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Song 11 “Punk Rock Boy” (Francis Macdonald & Michael Shelley)

Francis Macdonald is a multitalented musician who drums for one of my favorite bands, Glasgow’s Teenage Fanclub. Francis and I have written a bunch of songs together, including many on the 1998 album “Four Arms To Hold You” that we released as the duo Cheeky Monkey. Recorded and mixed in four days, it is a fun pop lp that I would not hesitate to recommend to Juniper fans.

I had a feeling Francis might have a great song up his sleeve for Juniper and as soon as we heard his demo for “Punk Rock Girl” we knew it was perfect for the project, and stylistically it filled a missing genre slot the album, but one that meshed perfectly with the existing songs. Francis made it clear that we were free to rewrite and rearrange as needed, and in the end he graciously called our lyrical additions a co-write.

This was the first tune we recorded at the Storybook Sound session. I used the theory that I sometimes use when constructing set lists for live gigs: pick an opening song with a very easy to grasp feel that has a lot of arrangement bits in it – the idea that even if the band has not quite warmed up and acclimated to the space or the sound, an arrangement heavy song is more likely to sound tight and together than something requiring a more subtle groove.

A few seconds before we started recording Steve suggested we stop after every line in the first verse, the last hook added to this hook filled arrangement that someone in the press labeled “Bubblegum Punk.”

So, once again we had a very solid bass, drums, guitar and live vocals as a base. The first thing I added was Don Fleming’s guitar. Don has made, produced and played on a ton of records and I knew he was just the guy to beef up the rhythm track. He brought his vintage (and beat up looking) Big Muff pedal to the basement and did just that. Matt Clarke, also from The Above (and a WFMU DJ) added the 12 string guitar that comes out of nowhere on the broken down third verse, and Fountains of Wayne front man Chris Collingwood (one of Juniper & my favorite bands) added some great (and out of nowhere) background vocals.

Dave's organ drops in only for the second verse, and if you listen carefully you can hear me playing one note over and over on a Casio I got for \$2 at a yard sale during the bridge.

Yo La Tengo's Ira Kaplan seemed the perfect candidate to tackle Punk Rock Boy's solo section. We traded emails and my only guidance was that the solo begin with an A note (though the key of the solo is B) and Ira wrote back "Expect a solo that starts on A!" We met one night in WFMU's Studio B in Jersey City, NJ where Ira recorded his wonderful contribution.

As the song fades you can hear Steve doing some great long drum fills. I employed a "no crash cymbal" rule on the recording of this album, and nowhere is that lack of crash more evident than at the ends of those long fills.

Hear it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rv4DTSHoZQE&list=PLcH6AJQhTwB-Dcxgr9etQ0dO6D5tmX-Rt&index=11>

Francis Macdonald:

<https://www.francismacdonald.com/>

Dave Amels:

<http://daveamels.com/>

Yo Lo Tengo:

<https://yolatengo.com/>

Chris Collingwood:

<http://lookparkmusic.com/band>

Dave Amels - Farfisa Organ

Matt Clarke - 12 String Guitar

Chris Collingwood - Background Vocals

Don Fleming - Electric Guitar

Steve Goulding - Drums

Ira Kaplan - Guitar Solo

John Lee - Bass

April March - Background Vocals

Megan Reilly - Background Vocals

Juniper Shelley - Vocals
Michael Shelley - Electric Guitar, Casio MT 36
Rebecca Turner - Background Vocals

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Song 12 "I Don't Want To Dream About You" (Michael Shelley)

I was thinking of possible subject matter for songs for Juniper and that lead me to the reviewing great teen songs that have stood the test of time, which lead me to The Everly Brothers' "All I Have To Do Is Dream."

A lot of the songs on the album mention experiences, or come from a point of view, that do not mirror Juniper's experiences and point of view completely, and it took her a while to be at ease with that, and to embrace the concept that the character telling the stories in the songs, was not necessarily her.

As a writer I definitely saw Juniper (the character, not the person) developing, song by song, in a certain direction, and that character would never sing "All I Have To Do Is Dream." As a songwriter, that kind of information is uniquely inspiring. To me, there was no choice but to turn the idea around, and write a song about an independent minded girl who had no desire whatsoever to dream about some jack-ass guy.

This all struck me while saying goodnight to Juniper in her room one night. I remember speeding down the stairs and starting work on the music and lyrics. I was doing well on the verses but I had the idea that the bridge would be a dream sequence and I was stuck musically, I kept writing chords that moved so far from the verses that I could not figure a way to get back. I finally realized, if I ended the second verse with a different chord than I ended the first one verse on, I'd have a head start on getting back, and it all worked out. There's nothing for me as satisfying songwriting-wise as a bridge that gets you back safely, but in an unexpected way.

Note: once again we have a song with no chorus, just a refrain. So: verse, verse, bridge, verse.

This track is another good example of this album's balance of fairly consistent and simple basic track instrumentation with less predictable overdubbed parts.

Augmentation started with Jay who sent in his electric piano part for the verses, and Mellotron for the bridge. Keith recorded his great sitar part for the bridge in his basement session, (I'll never forget Greg Calbi's reaction when that sitar popped up, "Is that a sitar?!") and Juniper added some organ and flute to the bridge.

I started these notes observing that I'm still second guessing my choice for the album's opening song, but pretty much every person I solicited an opinion on the album sequence from choose this song to finish the record. It's a nice way to wrap the whole thing up.

Hear it here:

<https://open.spotify.com/track/1mz4ps4I2z67X245HVH3KG>

Jay Gonzalez - Wurlitzer Electric Piano, Mellotron

Steve Goulding - Drums

John Lee - Bass

Juniper Shelley – Farfisa Organ, Flute, Vocals

Michael Shelley - Acoustic Guitar

Keith Yaun - Electric Sitar