



J A M E S  
T A Y L O R  
B E F O R E  
T H I S  
W O R L D



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09 FAR AFGHANISTAN 10 WILD MOUNTAIN THYME PRODUCED BY DAVE O'DONNELL



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[jamestaylor.com](http://jamestaylor.com)  
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It's been a while. I guess we started this project in January 2010 when Jimmy Johnson and Steve Cadd joined me and Dave O'Donnell in the barn next to my house to record some demos: bass, drums & guitar. None of these tracks had any lyrics; I whistled the melody.

I took 2013 off, more or less, to write but it wasn't until September, with deadlines looming, that I really got down to it. These days, life is full and lyric writing needs empty time, so the only thing for it was to borrow Bee & Val's place in Newport for a week at a time; thanks, guys. After a few quiet days, the songs started to come through. I walked around town, I rowed around the harbor and I cooked my meals with one call to home at dinnertime. I had a different notebook for each song; written down on the right page and edited on the left. Bits of lyrics on napkins, and envelopes and little scraps of music recorded on my phone... In January 2014, I brought the band — Jimmy Johnson, Bass; Larry Goldings, Pianos; Mike Landau, Guitars and Steve Cadd, Drums — to our home, where Ellyn Kusmin and Dave O'Donnell had transformed the barn into a studio, "aqueduct for our porpoises"... Ralph and JP came down from Vermont to help set us up and we got started.

"Today Today Today" was the first: aptly enough as it's a song about beginnings and refers back to London in '68 "when first I cut my side"... Every day for ten days we cut a new song. Nothing was charted in advance because these are head arrangements: you listen to the other players and let the track happen.

This is the 16th time I've taken a batch of songs into the studio; recently with these same musicians. I can't describe how delightful a thing it is to do this kind of consensus collaboration; we'd choose the best take and overdub repairs, improvements and solos. Dave and I flew to Los Angeles in March to record the singers: Arnold McCuller, Kate Markowitz, David Lasley and Andrea Zonn. Andrea overdubbed her fiddle and Luis Conte added percussion on most of the new tracks.

The last two songs: "Angels Of Fenway" and "Montana" had no lyrics until May so it was impossible to deliver the finished album before the summer tour (which was supposed to promote the album) and which began in that same month. I didn't mean to ride the album into the tour, but that's what happened, and not for the first time. Still, we didn't want to wait until the tour ended in December to finish recording, so Dave came to San Francisco where he set up a mobile studio in our hotel. He did the same thing in LA, and we booked studio time in Buffalo and Philadelphia on days off. Rob Mounsey wrote excellent string and horn charts for "SnowTime" and "Stretch Of The Highway" which were recorded in New York. That's where Sting sang his harmony for "Before This World." I'm so grateful for his time and talent (he was up to his ears in his brilliant musical *The Last Ship* which Kim and I attended Opening Night in Chicago); deeply grateful also to dear friend, Yo-Yo Ma, for the afternoon he gave us last summer in the barn recording his fabulous cello on the same song and on my song for Kim: "You And I Again."

When I set out to record a new song, I have an idea, in my mind's ear, of how it should sound. It is rare that the finished product entirely measures up, indeed, sometimes I'm utterly surprised by where the session takes it. This time I'm completely satisfied that each of these ten songs is where it's meant to be.

My profound thanks to this band, the best players I know, for their collaboration, focus and enthusiasm; for their divine talent and their friendship. Their company is the joy of this musical life. This album of new songs could not have happened without the constant guidance and steadfast effort of its producer: the formidable, patient and ever-positive Dave O'Donnell. We had fun.

JAMES TAYLOR, MARCH 2015





#### **TODAY TODAY TODAY (3:09)**

Today, today, today • I'm finally on my way •  
The time has come to say • Goodbye, good-  
bye, goodbye • The bird is on the wing • The  
bell is about to ring • The big girl she's  
about to sing • Today, today, today • The  
world will open wide • And I'm running with  
the tide • It's time to cut this side • And I must  
not miss my ride • Somehow I haven't died •  
And I feel the same inside • As when I caught  
this ride • When first I sold my pride • The  
way ahead is clear • My heart is free from  
fear • I'll plant my flag right here • Today,  
today, today

#### **YOU AND I AGAIN (3:53)**

You and I again • These days go by • And I  
wish that I could slow the whole thing down •  
And have it back again • Just one more time •  
Then again, maybe we can • 'Cause I can't  
escape this feeling • That we've been this  
way together you and I • There you are  
again • I climbed so high • High enough to  
finally see your sign • Shining in the distance •  
You were tending your own fire • We were  
biding our time • We were both waiting for  
the moment • When our paths would come  
together you and I • I see how fierce you are •  
Whenever the world would drag us down •  
How serious you are • Standing on holy  
ground • And so although I know we're only  
small • In the time we have here • Surely we  
have it all • I see how fierce you are •

Whenever this world would drag us down •  
How serious you are • Standing on holy  
ground • And so although I know we're only  
small • In the time we have here • This time  
we have it all • You and I again

#### **ANGELS OF FENWAY (3:18)**

86 summers gone by • Bambino put a hex on  
the Bean • We were livin' on a tear and a  
sigh • In the shadow of the Bronx machine •  
Man, you could feel it smolder • Whole town  
had an attitude • Tend to get a little chip  
on your shoulder • Say something that's  
downright rude • Damn them Yankees •  
Outspending everybody 2 to 1 • Picking up  
on the cream of the crop • Stealing every-  
one's favorite son • Angels of Fenway – hear  
our prayer • We have been chastened • We  
have been patient • Grandmama was a  
Fenway fan • Even after Grandad died • I still  
remember her holding my hand • Takin' me  
along for the ride • She was born in 1918 •  
Last year that the Red Sox won • Back then  
when they sold the Babe • Something that  
they never should have ever have done •  
"Hey Nanna can I have another Coke • Here  
comes the hot dog man • Look at that • His  
bat just broke • Gee, that's got to kill his  
hand" • Riding home on the Green Line •  
Watching the town go by • Nanna made  
another Red Sox fan • 'Til the day I die •  
That was back in '65 • Doesn't seem like a  
long time ago • Grandmama keeping hope  
alive • Watched them win in '004 • Oh my





god, it was beyond belief • Down 3 needing  
4 in a row • Holding on by the skin of our  
teeth • Like a hungry dog on a bone •  
*Angels of Fenway – give them peace • They  
have been patient • Red Sox Nation • The  
whole world held its breath • People got  
down on their knees • Ready for the sudden  
death • Praying to heaven for hell to freeze •  
Nanna watched from her hospital bed • She  
was there 'til the end of the race • I couldn't  
hear the last words she said • But she was  
lying there with a smile on her face • Just a  
little smile on her face • Doesn't feel like a  
long time ago*

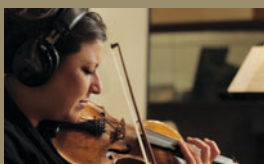
#### **STRETCH OF THE HIGHWAY (5:32)**

I was born singing yes I am • Grew up some  
kind of travelin' man • Sunday morning,  
pack my things • Say so long sweet potato •  
I'm on the road again • CHORUS: Oh it's a  
lovely stretch of the highway • Leading me  
on • And my favorite thing is to miss my  
home • When I'm gone, soon as I'm gone •  
Chi-Town baby, that's my town too • People  
pick it right on up, do the looma lamaloo •  
Just for example, look ye yonder over there •  
Chicago's got the finest high-test first-class  
poontang anywhere • CHORUS • I want to  
thank the man that plained the land • I want  
to thank the man that towed the load • In the  
burning sun and the freezing cold • I want to  
thank the man that made this road •  
Eisenhower • Mr. Dwight D. • General

Motors • Big Ol' GMC • They saw the future •  
Yes, indeed • Eternal combustion • That's  
what the country's gonna need • CHORUS •  
Tomorrow • Same as today • One more time •  
Mama that's ok • Shake your head "yes" •  
Shake your head "no" • Keep it straight and  
level • And steady as she goes

#### **M O N T A N A (3:26)**

I'm not smart enough for this life I've been liv-  
ing • A little bit slow for the pace of the game •  
It's not I'm ungrateful for all I've been given •  
But nevertheless just the same • I wish to my  
soul I was back in Montana • High on my  
mountain and deep in the snow • Up in my  
cabin, over the valley • Under the blankets  
with you • Over the ocean from here • Over  
the mountains from there • Who can imagine  
the scale of the forces • That pushed this old  
mountain range up in the sky • Tectonic  
creation, erosion, mutation • Something to  
pleasure God's eye • The world is a wonder of  
lightning and thunder • The green of the  
ground as we fall from the sky • The old and  
new faces the tribes and the races • The thou-  
sands of places to try • Over the ocean from  
here • Over the mountains from there • One  
sits and waits while the other one wanders •  
And squanders his time with a life on the road •  
Down from the mountain, across the wide  
ocean • The world is in motion and cannot be  
slowed • Enough for the day, the demands of  
the moment • The thing on my mind is the work



in my hand • Wood for the wood stove and water for coffee • Something I can still understand • We've got a few friends but not many neighbors • The trip into town takes us most of the day • And after "Hello" and "It's sure good to see you" • It seems like there's nothing to say • Over the ocean from here

#### **WATCHIN' OVER ME (4:07)**

Watchin' over me when I was high • Holdin' my hand and wipin' my eye • Watchin' me cheat, watchin' me lie • Oh watchin' over me • Lookin' back over on the damage I done • Made no kind of plan to be carryin' on • Thought I might ought to been dead and gone • I said oh the damage done • How'm I gonna pay that debt I owe • Big red Jesus on the radio • Down on my knees after the show • I said oh the debt I owe • I learned my lesson again • Well, I learned my lesson again • Only one way to surrender • Learned my lesson again • Got to return it to sender • Leave a little light in the window • Got to remember my friend • Guess I got to say it's a lovely day • Nice enough to know it could ever be so • Ready man, steady man, here I'm gonna go • I said, oh, the lovely day

#### **S N O W T I M E (5:48)**

Oleana, Via del Norte, O Canada • It was snowtime, it was showtime, it was no time • To be lost in downtown Toronto • It was winter-time, 'round dinnertime • I'm beginning to see that the sunshine just doesn't want to • From a side street come a backbeat • Pulling on me like the moon pullin' on the tide • Ay caramba, one-note samba, la la la la bamba • Lighting me up inside • CHORUS: They had the heat of

the sun in the beat of the talking drum • The light of a tropical moon on a night to remember • Someone summoned up summer just strumming on an old guitar • And every note was the antidote to December • My first impression, some kind of procession • Pulling on a long line of fancy dancers • A band stuck up on a flatbed truck • They were raising a ruckus swinging for the fences • Exiled Mexican textile working • Punching two clocks, sending two paychecks home boys • Hard working law 'biding bus riding people • Celebration on wheels destination unknown • CHORUS • Rio Grande • Oleana • Via del Norte • O Canada • There was a life-line south in the song coming from her mouth • It swallowed me up and I followed it on downtown • In the light of dawn the message that life goes on • For the frozen man an invitation to live again • CHORUS • They were shakin' it loose with the juice from the mambo man • Long lanky Yankee boy, Buckwheat and Spanky my my • Santiago de Cuba • Belo Horizonte • Cartagena • Guaguancó Canada • Guaguancó Canada

#### **BEFORE THIS WORLD / JOLLY SPRINGTIME (5:34)**

Before this world was as we know it now • Before the land and sea were formed at all • Before the stars were made to burn and shine • Little love of mine, darling one • Who can pretend to understand at all • No one can both inside and outside be • Who can suppose he knows the way this goes • Little lamb, never mind • So let us love and let us not delay • The world is old and it will never last • Our share of joy is in this moment past • Will you come away, come away • Fall into Jesus baby child •



Give up the love that takes and breaks your heart • Let go the weight of all that holds you here • Little love of mine, darling one • JOLLY SPRINGTIME • Oh the jolly springtime • In the merry month of May • Oh the heavenly hours • Oh the come again day • Let the day run long • Let the river run high • That tomorrow may live • So must yesterday die • Let the resin risin' up in the tree • Make the green leaf bud • The bird and the bee and the fish in the sea • Feeling it in my blood • Oh the jolly springtime • All in the merry month of May • Oh the heavenly hours • Oh the come again day • Yes the winter was bitter and long • So the spring'll be sweet • Come along with a rhythm and a song • Watch creation repeat • Thin thin the moment is thin • Ever so narrow the now • Everybody say got to live in today • Don't nobody know how • Oh the jolly springtime • In the merry month of May • Oh the heavenly hours • Oh the come again day

#### FAR AFGHANISTAN (4:04)

Back home Indiana, we just learn to get along • Civilized and socialized they teach you right from wrong • How to hold your liquor and how to hold your tongue • How to hold a woman or a baby or a gun • But nothing will prepare you for the far Afghanistan • You can listen to their stories and pick up what you can • You listen to their stories maybe read a book or two • Until they send you out there, man you haven't got a clue • Oh the Hindu Kush, the Band-e Amir, the Hazara • They tell you a tradition in the hills of Kandahar • They say young boys are taken to the wilderness out there • Taken to the mountain alone and in the night • If he makes it home

alive they teach him how to fight • They fought against the Russians, they fought against the Brits • They fought old Alexander, talking 'bout him ever since • And after 9/11 here comes your Uncle Sam • Another painful lesson in the far Afghanistan • I was ready to be terrified and ready to be mad • I was ready to be homesick, the worst I've ever had • I expected to be hated and insulted to my face • But nothing could prepare me for the beauty of the place • No matter what they tell you all soldiers talk to God • It's a private conversation written in your blood • The enemy's no different, badass holy wind • That crazy bastard talks to God and his God talks back to him

#### WILD MOUNTAIN THYME (2:57)

Oh the summertime is coming • And the trees are sweetly blooming • And the wild mountain thyme • Grows around the purple heather • Will you go, lassie, will you go • And we will all go together • To pick wild mountain thyme • All around the purple heather • Will you go, lassie, will you go • I will build my love a bower • By yon pure and crystal fountain • Yes and on it I will lay • All the flowers of the mountain • Will you go, lassie, will you go • And we will all go together • To pick wild mountain thyme • All around the purple heather • Will you go, lassie, will you go • If my true love won't come with me • I will surely find another • To pick wild mountain thyme • All around the blooming heather • Will you go, lassie, will you go • And we will all go together • To pick wild mountain thyme • All around the purple heather • Will you go • Will you go, lassie, will you go









Produced by Dave O'Donnell  
Recorded and Mixed by Dave O'Donnell  
Additional Engineer: Rick Kwan  
Assistant Engineers: Tyler Hartman, Scott Moore,  
Fernando Lodeiro, Tommy Joyner, Justin Rose,  
Jay Zubricky

Recorded at TheBarn, Washington, MA  
Additional Recording at Ocean Way Recording,  
Hollywood, CA;  
Avatar Studios, New York, NY;  
Milkboythstudio, Philadelphia, PA;  
GCR Audio, Buffalo, NY;  
The Ritz-Carlton, SF and Four Seasons Hotel, LA  
Mixed at TheBarn and Studio D  
Mastered by Ted Jensen at Sterling Sound  
Additional Mastering by  
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Matt Agaglia (The Ranch)

Senior Production Coordinator: Ellyn Kusmin  
Production Coordination: JoAnn Tominaga

James Taylor: Vocals, Acoustic Guitar,  
Harmonica, Hi-Strung Guitar, Synth Guitar  
Jimmy Johnson: Bass  
Steve Gadd: Drums  
Michael Landau: Electric and  
Nylon-String Guitars  
Larry Goldings: Piano, Wurlitzer, Fender Rhodes,  
Organ, Accordion, Harmonium  
Luis Conte: Percussion  
Andrea Zonn: Fiddle  
Arnold McCuller, David Lasley, Kate Markowitz,  
Andrea Zonn: Vocals

Yo-Yo Ma: Cello on "You And I Again"  
and "Before This World"  
Sting: Vocal on "Before This World"  
Caroline Taylor: Vocals on "Angels Of Fenway"  
and "Wild Mountain Thyme"  
Henry Taylor: Vocals on "Angels Of Fenway"  
and "Wild Mountain Thyme"  
Walt Fowler: Handclaps on "Watchin' Over Me"  
Rajendra Prasanna: Shehnai on "Far Afghanistan"

Strings, Brass and Horns arranged and  
conducted by Rob Mounsey  
Brass and Horns Coordinator: Andy Snitzer

"SnowTime"  
Contractor: JoAnn Tominaga  
Concertmaster: Antoine Silverman  
Violin: Jonathan Dinklage, Rachel Golub,  
Hiroko Taguchi, Entcho Todorov, Orlando Wells  
Viola: Katharine Kresek, Philip Payton  
Cello: Emily Brausa, Peter Sachon

"You And I Again"  
Euphonium: Michael Davis  
Flugelhorn: Tony Kadleck  
French Horn: Larry Di Bello, David Peel

"Stretch Of The Highway"  
Tenor Sax: David Mann, Lou Marini  
Baritone Sax: Roger Rosenberg  
Trombone: Randy Andos, Michael Davis

Cello arrangements for  
"You And I Again" and "Before This World"  
by Rob Mounsey



Band Crew:  
 Tour Manager: Chip Johnson  
 Assistant Tour Manager: Rikki Cameron  
 Band Production Manager: Ralph Perkins  
 Assistant Band Production Manager: Aaron Gingras  
 Band Technical Director: Jonah Lawrence  
 Guitar Technician: Jon Prince  
 Keyboard Technician: Mark Konrad  
 Drum Technician: Scott Hoffman  
 Maintenance Engineer: Andy Sottile  
 Assistant to James Taylor/Studio Manager, TheBarn: Ellyn Kusmin  
 Production Assistant, TheBarn: Sean Fay

Gear provided by Jim Flynn Rentals, NYC;  
 Alto Music, New York; Telefunken  
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 Advanced Audio, Los Angeles; Ron Sweet

Mixed using the Aquaduct reverb chamber

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 Country Road Music, Inc. (ASCAP)  
 Except: "Wild Mountain Thyme"  
 by Francis McPeake, Chappell & Co. (PRS),  
 Arranged by James Taylor

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 Kate Markowitz and Andrea Zonn  
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