



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

01 TODAY TODAY TODAY 02 YOU AND I AGAIN 03 ANGELS OF FENWAY 04 STRETCH OF THE HIGHWAY
05 MONTANA 06 WATCHIN' OVER ME 07 SNOWTIME 08 BEFORE THIS WORLD/JOLLY SPRINGTIME
09 FAR AFGHANISTAN 10 WILD MOUNTAIN THYME PRODUCED BY DAVE O'DONNELL



CONCORD RECORDS

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It's been a while. I guess we started this project in January 2010 when Jimmy Johnson and Steve Gadd 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 Gadd, Drums — to our home, where Eilyn 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.

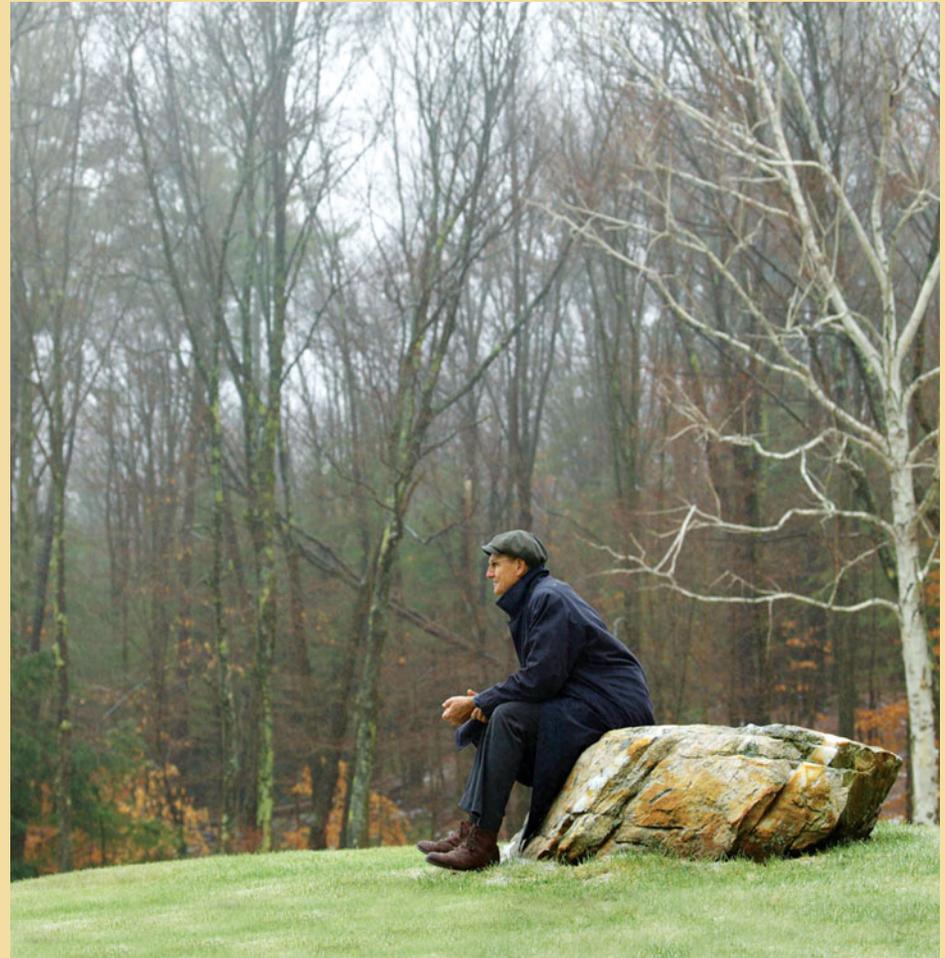
This is the 16th time I've taken a batch of songs into the studio; recently with these same musicians. I can't describe how delightful a thing it is to do this kind of consensus collaboration; we'd choose the best take and overdub repairs, improvements and solos. Dave and I flew to Los Angeles in March 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 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

MONTANA (3:26)

I'm not smart enough for this life I've been living • 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 thousands 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 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 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 home-sick, 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;
 MilkBoy the Studio, 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
 Justin Shturtz (Sterling Sound),
 Matt Agaglia (The Ranch)

Senior Production Coordinator: Elyn 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;
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Elektroakustik; Stephen Jarvis Audio, San Francisco;
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Mixed using the Aqueduct 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
appear courtesy of Compass Records

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Sam Feldman, Macklam Feldman Management
Michael Gorfaine, Gorfaine/Schwartz Agency
Executive Assistants: Cynthia Calley, Jane Muckle
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