

## The Golden West

Laurie Lewis & The Right Hands, HighTone Records HCD 8194

Laurie Lewis- fiddle; Tom Rozum- mandolin, mandola; Craig Smith- banjo;  
Scott Huffman- guitar; Todd Phillips- string bass

Notes by Laurie Lewis

### Your Eyes

(Laurie Lewis/Spruce and Maple Music, ASCAP)

A sort-of Roger Miller-inspired number. I'm always saying that music needs to make me either laugh or cry, and this one makes me laugh. Our friend, master mandolin builder Stephen Gilchrist, said it sounded like "Leonard Cohen Sings Bluegrass". I choose to take that as a compliment.

Hey! What're you trying to do?  
Don't look at me when I'm talking to you  
Turn away, close your eyes,  
Don your shades- don't you realize  
You can't look at me the way you do  
And not expect me to fall for you

Chorus:

I was in the lead, but I stumbled at the rail  
I was flying high, but I'm a kite with no tail  
I'm gonna fall, and I was doing so well  
Until I looked into your eyes

Hey! What're you trying to pull?  
They say the eyes are the gateway to the soul  
Posted signs mean nothing to you  
You just push that gate and you walk on through  
I guess you called this little girl's bluff,  
You know I'm really not all that tough

(Chorus)

Nobody told me about your power  
To transform this hole into a field of flowers  
I'm a deer in the headlights, totally absorbed  
By the brilliancy of your luminous orbs  
Take it from me, there's no disputin'  
You're some kind of Svengali, or somethin'

(Chorus)

### Burley Coulter's Song For Kate Helen Branch

(Wendell Berry-lyrics [from **Given: New Poems**, published by Shoemaker and Hoard, © 2005 by Wendell Berry], Laurie Lewis-music/Spruce and Maple Music, ASCAP)

Wendell Berry sent this poem to me and asked me to put it to music. It sat around for awhile, until I read his beautiful collection of stories, **That Distant Land**, and got to know some of the history of Burley and Kate Helen. Burley wasn't the sort of person to do the conventional thing, if it wasn't in his heart. He would disappear for days on end into the woods, knew how to work and knew how not to, and was always singing little snippets of songs. Kate Helen was the love of his life. I won't tell you any more than that. You'll have to read the book. Scott seems typecast to play the part of Burley.

The rugs were rolled back to the walls  
The band in place, the lamps all lit  
We talked and laughed a little bit  
And then obeyed the caller's call  
- light-footed, happy, half-entranced -  
To balance, swing and promenade  
Do you remember how we danced,  
And how the fiddler played

About midnight we left the crowd  
And wandered out to take a stroll  
We heard the tree frog and the owl-  
Beside the creek was running loud  
The good dark held us as we chanced  
The joy we two together made  
Remembering how we whirled and pranced  
And how the fiddler played

That night is many years ago, and gone,  
And still I see you clear-  
Clear as the lamp light in your hair  
The old time comes around me now  
And I remember how you glanced at me  
And how we stepped and swayed  
I can't forget the way we danced  
The way the fiddler played  
Oh, how the fiddler played

### 99 Year Blues

(Jimmie Rodgers, R. Hall/Peer International Corp./ASCAP)

In the true spirit of Big Mon, Tom takes this old Jimmie Rodgers song and has his way with it. We never do find out what the protagonist is in for, but he doesn't deny the justice, just kvetches about the time. He must be a pretty bad guy.

These 99 years ain't no fancy dream  
If you had two lives to live,  
you'd know just what I mean

When the judge read the verdict,  
it nearly knocked me down  
He said, "Boy, you got two sixes,  
but they're upside down

When they carried me to the jail house,  
I fell down across my bed  
I couldn't keep from crying,  
I wish to the Lord I was dead  
My good gal done told me  
the day I hit this can  
She said "you've made your bed in sorrow,  
now sleep in it like a man."

It ain't the days I've been here,  
it's the days I gotta stay  
All the old friends I ever had  
done shook hands and gone away  
All these old bootleggers,  
they come here and done their time  
And left me here a-grindin'  
on the same old 99

Well, 99 and 99 make 198  
And that's more year's pretty mama,  
than you can figure up on your slate  
I don't know what else in the world to do  
'Cause I lost everything except these 99 blues

## Before The Sun Goes Down

(Jimmy Martin, Harold Donny/Songs of Universal, inc.)

*This seems to be a song that every bluegrass enthusiast is familiar with, but almost no-one sings. Maybe it's too chauvinist for today's sensitive men of 'grass? I thank Craig for suggesting it for me. Here's to the King of Bluegrass! We miss him.*

Well, pack up your clothes, go on and leave  
Tell your folks that we are through  
Honey, that ain't a-gonna make me grieve  
'Cause I know just what you'll do  
You'll pout and cry and swear that I  
Am the meanest thing in town  
But I'll bet money that you'll be back  
Before the sun goes down

Chorus:  
Before the sun goes down,  
You'll be home ready for some lovin'  
You'll run to your mama for some kissin' and  
a-huggin'  
And I'll be a-waitin' around  
'Cause I know you'll be home  
before the sun goes down

Honey, there ain't nothin' else in the book  
That you ain't said to me  
All kinds of names and low-down things,  
I've heard 'em all from A to Z  
And when you've had your say,  
you'll up and run away  
And swear you're leavin' town  
But you'll come off it, come a-draggin' it back  
Before the sun goes down

(Chorus)

## Live Forever

(Billy Joe Shaver, E. Shaver/ Warner-Tamerlane Pub. Corp.; Eddy Shaver Publishing; Songs of Universal, inc./ BMI)

*Scott's brother suggested this Americana classic as a good one for him to sing. He was right.*

I'm gonna live forever  
I'm gonna cross that river  
I'm gonna catch tomorrow now  
You're gonna want to hold me  
Just like I always told you  
You're gonna miss me when I'm gone

Nobody here will ever find me  
'Though I will always be around  
Just like the songs I leave behind me  
I'm gonna live forever now

You fathers and you mothers  
Be good to one another  
Please try to raise your children right  
Don't let the darkness take 'em  
Don't make 'em feel forsaken  
Just lead them safely to the light

If this old world is blown asunder  
And all the stars fall from the sky  
Remember someone really loves you  
We'll live forever, you and I

I'm gonna live forever  
I'm gonna cross that river  
I'm gonna catch tomorrow now

## Rank Stranger

(Albert Brumley/Bridge Building Music/BMI)

*I first sang this song with the Bluebirds, a vocal trio including Maria Muldaur and Linda Ronstadt, at the Wintergrass Festival in Tacoma, WA, in 2005. Linda had suggested it, saying she had always wanted to have a go at singing Ralph Stanley's blistering tenor. It was an unbelievable thrill to hear Linda come in on the chorus, busting loose with that Voice From The Radio. I am grateful that she wanted to join us on record.*

I wandered again to my home in the mountains  
Where in youth's early dawn I was happy and free  
I looked for my friends, but I never could find them  
I found they were all rank strangers to me

Chorus:

Everybody I met seemed to be a rank stranger  
No mother nor dad, not a friend could I see  
They knew not my name,  
and I knew not their faces  
I found they were all rank strangers to me

"They've all moved away," said the voice of a stranger  
To a beautiful home by the bright crystal sea  
Some beautiful day, I'll meet them in Heaven  
Where no-one will be a rank stranger to me

(Chorus)

## Bury Me In Bluegrass

(Kate Campbell, Ira Campbell, Johnny Pierce/  
CedarSong, Large River Music, Lehsem Songs, Music in  
Two/BMI)

*We send this song out to Stan Dickson of Louisville, who grew up on a farm outside of Lexington, Kentucky. On my guitar case, there's a bumper sticker he gave me that says "Growth Destroys Bluegrass Forever". It's a delicate balance, for sure.*

Hughey was a captain with Andy Jackson  
Settled in Kentucky on a soldier's pay  
It was two hundred acres,  
and for almost as many years  
That land has borne my family's name

You can count the generations like circles in a tree

On tombstones you can barely read

Will you walk with me across the blue-green pastures?  
I want to see the horses run one more time  
You can lay me down beside the ones gone before me  
Bury me in bluegrass when I die

Uncle Henry sells computers, he never learned to farm  
He sold his half to Daddy when Grandpa died  
Mom and Dad are old now,  
they say they're gonna move  
To where the weather is always warm and dry  
The buyer signed the note today,  
they're gonna build a mall  
With plans to break ground before the Fall

Will you walk with me through the fields of burley?  
I want to see leaves of gold one more time  
You can lay me down beside the ones gone before me  
Bury me in bluegrass when I die

They nailed the sign up yesterday  
and I just don't understand  
To me it's more than just a piece of land

Will you walk with me through the peaceful valley?  
I want to see the harvest moon one more time  
You can lay me down beside the ones gone before me  
Bury me in bluegrass when I die

## The Golden West (instrumental)

(Bill Monroe)

*Craig and I met at the Golden West Bluegrass Festival in Norco, CA, in the early 1970's. I like to imagine that Bill wrote this tune to commemorate that historic event. Seriously, though, the Father of Bluegrass Music was always very proud of the fact that his Kentucky home-grown music had spread all over the world. He readily embraced players from California, Massachusetts, Iowa, North Carolina, Florida, etc., always introducing them as being from "The Great Bluegrass State of \_\_\_\_\_."*

## A Hand To Hold

(Laurie Lewis/Spruce and Maple Music, ASCAP)

*For my dear pal, Charles Sawtelle.*

The thrush in the forest, the lark in the field  
Sing like their lives depend on the song  
My mind has been full, but my voice has been still  
In all this time since you've been gone

Chorus:

'Cause you and I, we shared a rocky road  
You and I shouldered a heavy load  
Ah, but you and I, we had something gold  
You and I, we had a hand to hold

There's an empty room behind my heart's door  
And I've tried to fill it by calling your name  
But the echoes subside and I know what's in store:  
Only the emptiness remains

(Chorus)

I went out walking, thinking of you  
I was filled with self-pity that we had to part  
So I picked up a pebble of a pale rosy hue  
And I carried it next to my heart  
And it's strange, though I know that stone isn't you  
It's a talisman that I hold dear  
I clasp it tightly, and I don't feel so blue  
And somehow, it brings you near

(Chorus)

## River Under The Road

*(Ana Egge, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Sarah Brown/ Irving Music, inc.; Jade Eg Music; Two Bagger Music; Lew Bob Songs/BMI)*

*We've loved this song ever since we first heard Ana Egge sing it a decade ago.*

I dreamed of water running under my wheels  
The kind of dream you remember just how it feels  
I wondered what it was meant to be  
Until I saw what was sent to me

Chorus:

I found a river under the road  
Been there forever but I'd never been told  
It goes much farther, deeper and darker  
Than the road above will ever go

The river whispered so softly, so sure and so deep  
You'll travel farther cradled, covered, asleep  
And when your dreams trade the day for night  
The river's tears turn the darkness to light

(Chorus)

Moonlight shining on shades of green and black  
I heard the water and the pavement began to crack  
Dream river singing that highway sound

I watched the blacktop tumbling down

(Chorus)

## Hard Luck In Heaven

*(Scott Huffman/Spruce and Maple Music/ASCAP)*

*What if our "pie in the sky" is burnt?*

While on this old Earth, Lord, I've suffered, I've cried  
Things don't work out, Lord, as hard as I've tried  
I'll have up in Glory a crown for my prize  
But knowin' my luck, Lord, it'll be the wrong size

Chorus:

Hard luck in Heaven, please say it ain't so  
'Cause down here on Earth Lord, it's all that I know  
When I'm in my mansion, will the roof leak there too?  
Hard luck in Heaven, please say it ain't true

I've always been hard luck, it's always been true  
So I'm not expecting any different from you  
When I get my wings, Lord, they won't fit me right  
I'll be flappin' in circles o'er the City of Light

(Chorus)

Now, Lord, please forgive me for thinkin' this way  
But hard times just haunt me each night and all day  
When the angels start singin' and they pass out the harps  
Knowin' my luck, Lord, mine'll be tuned too sharp

(Chorus)

## The Mourning Cloak

*(Karah Stokes/Spruce and Maple Music/ASCAP)*

*This is a song about love, betrayal, murder, and butterflies. Hearing it for the first time sent me to the dictionary to look up "mourning cloak," which is, indeed, a butterfly. Since then, I have seen them everywhere, especially in August on the banks of the Tuolumne River in California, with their dusty black wings "bound in gold and sapphires rare." Scott says, "there's nothin' like a good killin' song."*

One fair morning late in June  
The sun shone on the daisies white  
When a messenger of sorrow deep  
Came into my garden bright  
Wings of deepest velvet black

Bound with gold and sapphires rare  
A butterfly, a Mourning Cloak,  
Like one a wealthy widow'd wear

He promised me a golden ring  
But he gave it to a rich man's child  
He craved the ease wealth would bring  
Above a love both true and wild

So I called him to our trysting place  
"Since there's no help, let's kiss and part"  
He took me in a sweet embrace  
And he felt a penknife in his heart

He looked at me with fading eyes  
I left him there as he left me  
The dawn next morning brought the news  
That he'd been set upon by thieves

Oh, butterfly, why do you haunt?  
Know you the secret in my breast?  
I pierced his heart as he pierced mine  
I slew the one I loved the best

One fair morning late in June  
The sun shone on the daisies white  
When a messenger of sorrow deep  
Came into my garden bright

## Goodbye Waltz

*(John Hartford/ John Hartford Music/BMI)*

*Tom and I worked up this song when we were asked to take part in a memorial riverboat cruise for John on the Ohio Rivera few years back. It's a song that just got under our skin, and we have been singing it ever since.*

See that boat go down the sky  
Goodbye, goodbye  
See that boat go down the sky  
Goodbye, goodbye  
See that boat go down the sky  
Till it's just a speck at the edge of my eye  
It is so hard to say goodbye  
Goodbye

See that boat go down the sky  
Goodbye, goodbye  
See that boat go down the sky  
Goodbye, goodbye

See that boat go down the sky  
Till the shades of night are drawing nigh  
And the wind dies out in the western sky  
Goodbye

*For three days in July of 2005, we five lived together in the guest house at Sage Arts Studio outside Arlington, WA and recorded these songs.*

*We had intended to be more prepared when we got there, but life in the twenty-first century being what it is, we just showed up with a general idea of what songs we could do and no arrangements to speak of.*

*Over the course of the three days, we played, recorded, cooked and ate together, walked in the woods, stared at the nearby Stillaguamish River, and played some more. Everything seemed so fresh and enticing to us, hearing and playing the majority of these tunes for the first time as a group.*

*When we left, we could barely remember what we'd done on that first day, and a very busy touring schedule for the remainder of the season made it so that we couldn't get back to really listening and putting the finishing touches on the tracks until the following spring. By then, it was like opening a bunch of presents. Everything was a treat to the ears.*

*When I played the roughs for Linda Ronstadt, she was so taken with "A Hand to Hold," that she asked if she could sing harmony on it. Of course, I said yes. She came over to Berkeley one day and laid down her harmony parts at my house.*

*Craig and Scott make their homes in North Carolina, and Tom, Todd and I live in California. For Craig, Todd and me, that's where we were born and raised. Tom originally hails from the great bluegrass state of Connecticut, but has now lived in the Golden West longer than he's lived anywhere else. Scott, on the other hand, is a Tarheel born and bred. I thank the combination of luck and circumstance that has brought us all together.*

*~ Laurie Lewis  
[www.laurielewis.com](http://www.laurielewis.com)*

*PS The cover photos were taken at Mortar Rock Park, very close to where I grew up here in Berkeley.*