

# "THERE'S MORE PRETTY GIRLS THAN ONE"

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## FEATURING

Robert Crumb  
Stephen Harrison  
Ian McCamy  
Ilan Moss

McCamy's  
Melody  
Sheiks

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ARHOOIE Records CD 519



McCAMY'S MELODY SHEIKS There's More Pretty Girls Than One

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## *Why I'm On This Record With McCamy's Melody Sheiks*

WHEN IAN MCCAMY asked me if I'd be willing to record with him, I readily agreed. I had played with these guys occasionally over the years and had genuinely enjoyed it. Sure, they could've gotten any number of accompanists, as good as or better than me, and it's entirely likely that he asked me because I'm a famous artist and perhaps my name would help sell some CDs. I have no problem with that. I derive great pleasure in playing this old-time music and in fact I feel honored to record with this band! It's a thrill to play a part in making this music, providing some rhythmic backup for them. Old-time music is very democratic that way. You don't need to be a professional musician or a virtuoso to participate. This kind of music is open to anyone with a halfway musical ear. This openness is what gives it its heart, and keeps it from becoming too cerebral. Music is meant to be a joyful, communal experience. Being a graphic artist is a lonely occupation. Playing music for me is the best kind of social recreation there is! If my name helps sell some CDs, okay, good! I'm happy to promote this music to the world.

*R. Crumb, April 2011*

## *“Home Sweet Home”*

**JUNE 2009.** On a starry night in the Cévennes Mountains in Southern France, four expats huddled around a 78 r.p.m. record player, saliva drizzling down their chins.

We weren't the only drooling expats around—the numerous American and English residents of this medieval town snored away in their stone houses, deep in red wine comas. But we were wide awake and sober. And it wasn't the copy of “Big Black Butts” on the coffee table that drove us to slobber. No, we were collectively lusty over the butt-loads of 78 records in Robert's study.

Throughout the night, record after record was meticulously selected, three-minute side at a time. Appalachian string bands from the 1920s like the Roanoke Jug Band, Romanian Lăutari bands, Persian instrumental ensembles, rare Klezmer tsimbl recordings from the Old Country and some long-dead chick from Chicago singing cowboy songs as if she was sitting right next to us. We were like time-traveling expats, tucked away in a stone townhouse on the banks of the Vidourle. Far away from home, the shellac sounds reminded us that we were far away from another era as well.

We had spent the day right up the street at Ian's house, recording some of our favorite tunes from 78s for this album. In a home studio set up in Ian's cavernous living room, Patrick, our recording

engineer, took great effort to not offend our anti-modernist sensibilities. Unobtrusive vintage microphones, chairs set up in a comfortable circle and a view onto Ian's garden. Add to that: home-cooked meals, no musical arrangements and daytime sessions topped off by nighttime 78 listening orgies. It was everything needed to make a bunch of old time musicians happy, if that is possible.

Put four American and English expats in a room in France and chances are they'll start to bitch about the French while simultaneously listing off reasons why they'll never go home (“the quality of life there is just fucking terrible”). During our weekend recording session, we instead bitched about modern music and singer-songwriters (“Bob Dylan is just fucking terrible”). At times Patrick looked bemused as we kvetched about modernity and waxed poetic about scratchy recordings. But I think he understood later on at night in Robert's study, surrounded by 78s.

One tune on the album, “Home! Sweet Home!” perfectly sums up that hot weekend in Provence. You can feel the four melancholic expats, nostalgic for the music of a period they never lived and homesick for an America or England that they were born too late to have seen.

After all, there's no place like home.

*Ilan Moss, May 2011*



## My Old-Time Fiddle Playing

LIKE MANY PEOPLE, my first encounter with old time American music was through Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*. I grew up listening to it and remember being struck by a ghost-like quality to the music, like a door to another time. It was honest and profound in its archaic quality and sounded nothing like modern music.

Many years later I dropped out of college to follow my heart and the dream of playing the fiddle. I became an itinerant street fiddler traveling around Europe and eventually found myself in Paris, France, where I met other like-minded people playing music and, true to legend, I also fell in love. I stayed longer than planned. It was while I was visiting my once future father-in-law in the South of France that I met Robert Crumb. Although I had a love for American music, my knowledge was limited, but Robert was kind enough to initiate me into his 78-rpm record collection. Burnett & Rutherford, Fiddlin' Doc Roberts, The Stripling Brothers, Shortbuckle Roarke & Family, Skip James, The Weems family string band, Eck Robertson, YZ Hamilton, Lowe Stokes, Taylor's Kentucky Boys, Clayton McMichen . . . the list goes on and all of

them had that haunting feel. Robert told me about the musicians, showed me photographs, record labels, recording archives and also made me tapes of what we listened to. When I finally moved down South, I learned many of these tunes and we started playing them together at informal social gatherings and, in very much the same informal manner, recorded this album sitting around my living room. Always a bit nostalgic for another time, we used old microphones and vintage equipment. This is us playing music how we do it—ain't no thrills or fancy stuff, just the music we like.

My McCamy family ancestors were early settlers in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee and although I didn't grow up there I feel a strong bind to something that is deep in the soul of Old-Time American music. After all these years I am happy to have followed my heart. It has brought me to many places and to meet many great people, but one of the greatest is here: the music and people on this record. Enjoy!

*Ian McCamy*



## Tracks

### 1 HOME! SWEET HOME!

Robert Crumb *Tenor Banjo, Whistling*  
Stephen Harrison *Piano*  
Ian McCamy *Fiddle*  
Ilan Moss *5 String Banjo*

MUSIC WRITTEN BY HENRY BISHOP

When I first met Robert, he encouraged me to play simple tunes that didn't require any special virtuosity on the fiddle. As long as people dance, it doesn't matter if it's simple, he said. This one became a favorite at gatherings and I remember many a night that we wrangled long versions to waltzing, drunk dancers. No matter how often we have played this, it is still one of my favorite tunes. In France where the waltz remains the king of dances, it never fails to get people on their feet.

### 2 GOODBYE BOOZE

Robert Crumb *Guitar, Voice*  
Stephen Harrison *Double Bass*  
Ian McCamy *Fiddle, Voice*  
Ilan Moss *5 String Banjo*

When I first heard Charlie Poole and The North Carolina Ramblers, the beautiful magic between the fiddle and banjo captivated me. I was struck by something deep and archaic in the sound of Posey Rorer's fiddle playing that perfectly matched Charlie Poole's banjo and voice. This is the first song I tried to play and sing simultaneously. Its cynicism is never lost on a drinking crowd—by all accounts Charlie Poole was certainly no slouch either when it came to the smooch.

### 3 THE MINEOLA RAG

Robert Crumb *Guitar, Voice*  
Stephen Harrison *Double Bass*  
Ian McCamy *Fiddle*  
Ilan Moss *5 String Banjo*

From the legendary "East Texas Serenaders" of Mineola, Texas who had a uniquely pulsing sound with a bowed Cello, tenor banjo and syncopated fiddling. I often wonder what it would have been like to see them playing live. I imagine a throbbing unison of dancers packed in a hall on Saturday night with the heat and humidity of East Texas pressing down like a metal weight. From one of Robert's favorite bands, this is one of the more complicated tunes that I tackled and one of the great examples of beautiful Texas fiddling.

### 4 OLD MOLLY HARE

Robert Crumb *Guitar, Voice*  
Stephen Harrison *Double Bass*  
Ian McCamy *Fiddle*  
Ilan Moss *Fiddle*

Come on in and join the dance and put some pep in your step! From Clayton McMichen & Riley Puckett, another of the all-time great country fiddle and guitar duos. If you want to sing on top of us, the words are something like "Ol' Molly Hare, what you doing there, sitting on a stump and eating on a pear, step back, step back, daddy shot bear, shot him in the eye and never touched a hair."



## **5 THERE'S MORE PRETTY GIRLS THAN ONE**

Robert Crumb *Guitar, Voice*  
Stephen Harrison *Double Bass*  
Ian McCamy *Fiddle, Voice*  
Ilan Moss *5 String Banjo*

Inspired by a recording of Rutherford & Foster, this is our favorite song to sing. Although probably not the best one to try to pick a girl up with, it does have one of the most beautiful lines ever: "There's fish that's never been caught, furniture that's never been bought" not to mention the chorus. This comes from the hard to find label Challenger #423.

## **6 TAKE ME BACK TO GEORGIA**

Robert Crumb *Guitar*  
Ian McCamy *Fiddle*

The original version of this tune comes from a 78 rpm recording by

Lowe Stokes & Mike Whitten on Columbia Records #15486, which is in Robert's collection. Recorded in Atlanta, Georgia on October 30, 1929, it is an example of Stokes fiddling at his best, playing driving dance music.

## **7 THE MONROE COUNTY QUICKSTEP**

Robert Crumb *Guitar*  
Stephen Harrison *Double Bass*  
Ian McCamy *Fiddle*  
Ilan Moss *5 String Banjo*

One of the first tunes I learned, this is from the playing of Leonard Rutherford & Foster, who recorded it in Richmond, Indiana on January 4th 1929. The copy we learned this from is Supertone Records #9406, but it was also issued as "Taylor's Quickstep" on Gennett Records #6913. According to Robert, Supertone was a Sears Roebuck

label that used Gennett masters. Gennett farmed out its masters to several subsidiary labels including Champion, Challenge, Silverton, Supertone, Herwin and Superior. Some masters were issued on several of these subsidiary labels as well as on the Gennett label. Others were issued only on one of the subsidiary labels. The Gennett issues are generally the most rare, as Gennetts were more expensive, at 75 cents each, than the subsidiary labels which sold generally for less than half what the Gennetts cost.

## **8 THE DILL PICKLE RAG**

Robert Crumb *Guitar*  
Stephen Harrison *Double Bass*  
Ian McCamy *Fiddle*

There are many sources for this tune; I think this is a distillation of different ones. Probably dating

back to the first decade of the 20th century, several country string bands recorded it in the 1920s including the Kessinger Brothers, The Corncob Crushers, McLaughlin's Old-Time Melody Makers, Smith's Garage Fiddle Band and Dr. Humphrey Bate's Possum Hunters.

## **9 SAINT JOBE'S WALTZ**

Robert Crumb *Guitar*  
Stephen Harrison *Double Bass*  
Ian McCamy *Fiddle*  
Ilan Moss *5 String Banjo*

This one was originally recorded by The Redheaded Fiddlers from Dallas, Texas on Brunswick Records, October 27, 1929. The haunting fiddle playing of "Red" Steeley is astounding on this recording. It seems like we never play it the same way and yet it is always great; that must be a sign of an outstanding tune.



## 10 BILLY IN THE LOWGROUND

Robert Crumb *Guitar, Voice*

Stephen Harrison *Double Bass*

Ian McCamy *Fiddle*

Ilan Moss *5 String Banjo*

Inspired by the great Kentucky duo of Dick Burnett & Leonard Rutherford, whose 1927 version on Columbia Records features their beautiful banjo/fiddle playing. Rutherford's fiddle is full of swing on this recording and it is thought that African-American fiddler Cuje Bertram taught him this tune. Burnett was known as "the blind minstrel of Monticello" and he is credited for composing "Man of Constant Sorrow." The two of them played for over thirty years together and have greatly influenced American music. We try our best!

## 11 DRUNKEN HICCUPS

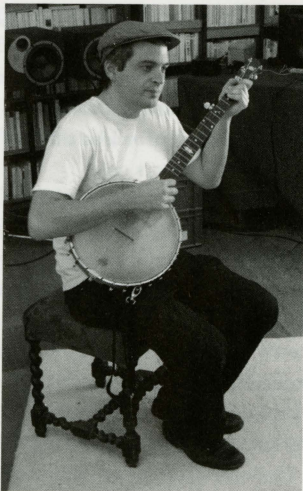
Robert Crumb *Guitar*

Stephen Harrison *5 String Banjo*

Ian McCamy *Fiddle, Voice*

Ilan Moss *Fiddle*

If there ever was a tune about drinking, it's this one!



## 12 BUFFALO GALS MEDLEY

Robert Crumb *Guitar*

Stephen Harrison *Double Bass*

Ian McCamy *Fiddle*

Ilan Moss *5 String Banjo*

Another set of tunes from the playing of Clayton McMichen and Riley Puckett. We were distracted when starting this one—but then all of a sudden it came together.

## 13 THE PIG ANKLE STRUT

Robert Crumb *Guitar*

Stephen Harrison *Double Bass*

Ian McCamy *Fiddle*

Ilan Moss *5 String Banjo*

Probably from Gus Cannon's Jug Stompers, I have been playing this tune for years and like a lot of rags it gets passed around. "Shake it but don't bake it."



## 14 SAIL AWAY LADIES, SAIL AWAY

Robert Crumb *Guitar, Voice*

Stephen Harrison *5 String Banjo*

Ian McCamy *Fiddle*

Ilan Moss *Fiddle*

Somewhat based on the recording by Uncle Dave Macon from 1927. One of the earliest recordings is by Uncle Bunt Stephens (1926) from Tennessee. Uncle Bunt won the title of "World Champion Fiddler" at Henry Ford's fiddle contest playing this tune. The award included \$1000 in prize money, a new car, a new suit and a new set of teeth.



## 15 QUÉBEC QUICKSTEP

Ian McCamy *Fiddle*

Stephen Harrison *Double Bass*

Relaxing after a hearty dinner, Stephen and I suddenly struck up this tune. I heard it originally from a recording by Québec fiddler Jean Carignan.

## 16 RAGTIME ANNIE

Robert Crumb *Guitar*

Ian McCamy *Fiddle*

Another composite of various versions, I've heard this tune played so often that I cannot remember where all the pieces may have come from except that I first heard the recording by Eck Robertson. Eck preformed in medicine shows, fiddle contests, silent movies, veterans'

reunions and much more. He was also the first country musician to be commercially recorded. This tune was recorded on the second day of those sessions at the Victor Talking Machine Company in New York City on July 1, 1922.

## 17 WALK ALONG JOHN TO KANSAS

Stephen Harrison *Guitar*

Ian McCamy *Fiddle*

Ilan Moss *Fiddle*

Ilan showed me this tune recently. He learned it from "some dude" at a fiddle festival in West Virginia. The 78 era might be over but it's good to know that this music is still being passed down the way it should be—by ear.

## Credits

All songs arranged by  
McCamy's Melody Sheiks

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Patrick Jauneaud

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& Ian McCamy at Studios La Fabrique,  
Saint Rémy de Provence, France

Produced by Ian McCamy

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