

LOOK OUT HERE IT COMES

TRACY SCHWARZ



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Side A

1. FREIGHT TRAIN MOAN (Fiddling Arthur Smith)
2. FIDDLER'S BLUES (Fiddling Arthur Smith)
3. GRAVEYARD (Cousin Emmy)
4. LITTLE DOVE (Traditional)
5. SIDELINE BLUES (Gwen Foster)
6. CLAUDE ALLEN (Adapted by T.C. Ashley)
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(Tracy Schwarz, Wynwood Music)
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INTRODUCTION

This album is entitled "Look out! Here it comes" for a good reason: when I play music I find it very difficult not to hit everything hard. Personally I feel that the music I like best is that which most clearly states an emotion. It's no accident that some of the best musicians tend to be moody—when they want to play you hear some real soul, but there's no getting anything from them if they don't feel like picking.

You can be sure that on this record I've recorded some music that I've wanted to play very much for a long time.

Why record music that someone else has already done, anyway? Well, I believe that a person can always make learned music their own as long as that person is personally involved with it—committed to it—and doesn't treat the music as a one-time glass-encased phenomenon. I could never have made this album if I had fallen prey to the hazard of the occupation, and I'm speaking of "collector's iconalty." This is my favorite music and I'm committed to it for life.

A word about the recording: it was done in a friend's basement on a Sony TC-850, with 2 Electro-Voice 674 microphones. And that's it! No splicing, no echo, no 16 tracks. What you hear is the real thing.

June 1975

SIDE A

FREIGHT TRAIN MOAN (Fiddling Arthur Smith): Fiddling Arthur Smith was one of the first recorded fiddlers in the South to synthesize the White and Black musical traditions with a large degree of commercial success. The raw power and expression of his compositions has captivated fiddlers everywhere, including me. The Freight Train Moan was a natural choice to begin the album—it says a lot about how I like music to be. Eloise helps me on guitar here.

FIDDLER'S BLUES (Arthur Smith): Again, the clear statement of total commitment to the subject at hand makes this my kind of music. I've always like the blues sound and this is one of those tunes that I just had to learn the minute I heard it.

GRAVEYARD (Cousin Emmy): To me, this song means Kentucky. It comes directly from Cousin Emmy, a person I admire both for her direct statement and her excellent musicianship, a rare combination in such a consummate showperson. On her recording (Folkways FTS 31015, get it!) she tunes her banjo F#DEAD, but I can only get it in a C tuning: ECGCD.

LITTLE DOVE (Traditional): There haven't been too many years gone by since even the rich were subject to death by disease—how much more vulnerable mountain people have been is plainly stated in this old song learned from Aunt Molly Jackson's singing. I chose her version because the lonesome sound fits the subject better than any other way of singing it.

SIDELINE BLUES (Gwen Foster): Here's a tune that I've wanted to get down for a long time—ten years I guess. I can remember the mystery finger picking used to be—to me it sounded like two guitars. I finally saw a Bluegrass musician do it, found the thumb-bass secret, and drove everybody around me bats until I got it. This tune is a kind of small town uptown hot guitar number from 1930's musician Gwen Foster of North Carolina, who also played a fantastic bluesy harmonica.

CLAUDE ALLEN (Adapted by T.C. Ashley): A good old time mountain song, learned from the singing of Clarence "Tom" Ashley. The structure of the melody is classic old-lonesome-mountain, sometimes referred to as the "graveyard sound," and traces its roots back hundreds of years. An exhaustive discussion of the song can be found in the notes to "Old Time Music At Tom Ashley's" (Folkways 2355).

LIZA JANE (Traditional): A visit to friends Peter and Polly Gott in North Carolina was the occasion to learn this tune. I'd always been interested in old time banjo but despaired of ever achieving success in that direction, until Peter showed me how his neighbor George Landers went about picking "Liza Jane." It turned out to be quite complicated, with all kinds of pulling-off, hammering-on, crossing over, index-leading and what-have-you. At that point it was too late to turn back, so I've gone on to adapt plenty of other tunes to this technique.

FORKS OF SANDY (Traditional): An old time fiddle tune that Clark Kessinger's playing inspired me to learn. His drive and execution appeal to me a great deal.

SIDE B

WAITING BY THE GATE (Tracy Schwarz, Wynwood Music): Sometimes I sit down to play the fiddle and nothing seems to hit the right spot until I wander off on some side track, and that's exactly how this tune came to life. For a while I considered naming it "We've Never Known Times Like These," but then I figured maybe I'd better wait. The fiddle is crosstuned DDAD (Bonapart's Retreat Tuning).

LITTLE ROSEWOOD CASKET (Traditional): Although several tunes that the Carter Family recorded have words that I don't particularly care for, they do have beautiful melodies well worth playing. The solution here was to put the guitar into an open tuning and out comes a nice, easy feeling and a catchy tune. A version of the Little Rosewood Casket was published in 1870 by White and Goulland in Boston, and was dedicated to the Lynn Light Infantry Glee Club by W. F. Norcross.

THE BALLAD OF A FEW SHORT DAYS (Tracy Schwarz, Wynwood Music): Here the same open tuning is used on the guitar as for "Rosewood Casket," but with a completely different result. I got this kind of picking from listening to Roscoe Holcomb, of Daisy, Kentucky. His music had a profound effect on me, and so this style seemed to work out the best with this original composition of mine. About the theme of the song—you can sure get good song material playing in bars.

HOSANNA, JESUS REIGNS (Words by Elder Wilson Thompson, Music by Elder Walter Evans): Most of the sounds contained in Country Music in general that have intrigued me are concentrated in an old style of hymn singing without accompaniment, sometimes called "Primitive Baptist" or "Lining-out" style. An entire congregation can sing a melody line in unison that abounds in dwelled notes, slides, and if the tune is in a modal scale, in lonesome sounds like none other heard today. Elder Walter Evans of Sparta, North Carolina values this style of hymn so much that he has made two LP's of his congregation, where this song can also be heard. The records can be ordered from The Baptist Bible Hour Inc., Cincinnati, Ohio 45217, and they're worth whatever price asked.

SATAN, YOUR KINGDOM MUST COME DOWN (Traditional): Much of the music of Western North Carolina, in particular the unaccompanied ballad singing and index-lead banjo playing prevalent there, has been a favorite of mine for a long time. I learned this song from a tape that John Cohen made of Frank Proffitt some years ago. Its haunting, modal sound left little doubt in my mind that I should learn it.

I KNOW YOU'LL UNDERSTAND (Charlie Monroe): I like very much to sing with just a guitar, and there's no better way to do it than to pick a song with a pretty melody like this one here from Charlie Monroe. His music remains distinct from his famous brother Bill's, yet there's always that unmistakable Monroe family lilt and drive to it. His turning of the voice is an outstanding characteristic of Country Music, and without it I think life would be awful dull.

WEDDING BLUES (Chris Bouchillion): One of the talking blues numbers that made Chris Bouchillion a commercial success. I used a song learned from a tape of Lonesome Pine Fiddler Larry Richardson of North Carolina to provide relief and musical background. (Eloise didn't help me on this one, for some reason or other.)

DOGHOUSE BLUES (Moody-King-Franks): An up tempo number, good for blowing off excess energy. Bill Monroe's recording stands as a classic version of this much-used melody. Hope your dog likes it too.

HICKORY LEAF (Traditional): For many years in the past, on WSM, Nashville, Tennessee, at 6:45 Eastern Time, a 15 minute morning show was broadcast that featured Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs. Fiddler Paul Warren played "Hickory Leaf" one morning, I taped it and learned it, and here's my version. Paul has always been one of my favorite Bluegrass fiddlers because of his loyalty to the old time tunes, which definitely helps to keep them alive. This rare tune came to him directly from his association with Fiddling Arthur Smith. According to Kirk McGee the tune may be 150 years old.

CREDITS:

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