

# PO' RAMBLIN' BOYS NEVER SLOW DOWN

- Missing Her Has Never Slowed Me Down 3:12 (Josh Rinkel/Keep It Lonesome Music, BMI)
- Where Grass Won't Grow 3:36
   (Earl Montgomery/Glad Music Publishing & Recording, LLP, BMI-Pappy Daily Music LLP, BMI)
- Lonesome 2:56
  (Wandell Smith-Ralph Stanley/Fort Knox Music, Inc., BMI-Trio Music
  Company, BMI)
- 4. Blues Are Close at Hand 2:39 (Glenn Alford/Roundhill Publishing, BMI)
- 5. When Are You Gonna Tell Me? 3:23
  (Josh Rinkel/Keep It Lonesome Music, BMI)

6. Take My Ashes to the River 3:22

(Mark Erelli-Jonathan Kingham/Hillbilly Pilgrim Music, ASCAP-Jonathan's Jams Publishing, ASCAP)

7. Little Glass of Wine 3:44

(Carter Stanley/APRS, BMI)

8. Ramblin' Woman 2:53

(Hazel Dickens/Happy Valley Music, BMI)

9. Woke Up with Tears in My Eyes 3:05

(Damon Black/Damon Black Music, BMI)

10. Mason's Lament 3:35

(William Christopher Brashear/House of Hollis Music, ASCAP)

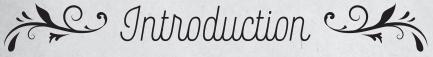
II. Old Time Angels 3:11

(Jim Lauderdale/BMG Cicada, SESAC-Ginger Dragon Music, SESAC-Daniel J. Smith, BMI)

Produced by the Po' Ramblin' Boys and Dave Maggard







#### STACY CHANDLER

A GOOD OLD TRUCK shouldn't be locked up in a garage, away from the road and the adventures it once had.

The red-and-white 1973 Ford F-100 that C.J. Lewandowski bought last fall was a good old truck indeed, needing only a new battery and a bit of a brush-up to get running again. And it came with a backstory too: in its heyday it was the hunting truck of the King of Bluegrass himself, Jimmy Martin.

Lewandowski remembered seeing the truck in old VHS tapes of Martin he'd pored over growing up. To say that the Po' Ramblin' Boys founder is a fan is an understatement: One Halloween in his youth, while other kids donned costumes of superheroes or princesses, Lewandowski dressed up like Jimmy Martin.

Lewandowski bought the truck not for a new set of wheels—truth be told, he's a GM guy, not a Ford guy—and not even for a collector's bragging rights. What he sees in this truck is a tangible way to share the bluegrass heritage he loves with a new generation.

He hopes to bring it to festivals and other events to let people sit in it. Maybe they'll notice the Jimmy Martin album that Martin himself kept in the 8-track deck. Maybe they'll put their hands on the steering wheel and take a moment to





soak in a bit of history. Maybe they'll create their own connections to Martin and other first-generation bluegrassers who provided the spark for the music that the Po' Ramblin' Boys play now.

Tradition, after all, is what the Po' Ramblin' Boys run on. In the spirit of Jimmy Martin and so many other bluegrass legends, big names and small, they've been barreling ahead since their founding in 2014, when they were a house band at the Ole Smoky Moonshine Distillery in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. They've toured all over the United States and Europe (but they still stop at Ole Smoky for a set every now and then). They were named the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA)'s Emerging Artist of the Year in 2018 and have earned several nominations since, including Entertainer of the Year. Their third album, Toil, Tears & Trouble (2019), marked their debut for Rounder Records and earned them a Grammy nomination for Best Bluegrass Album. It's hard to imagine a bluegrass band riding in a higher gear than this one by the time they took the stage for their Grand Ole Opry debut in fall 2019.

But, of course, a global pandemic a few months later put everything, for everyone, in park.

"The first three weeks I got a lot of stuff done around the house," Lewandowski recalls. "Everything was cool, but as it started getting longer and longer and longer, and then dates just kept falling apart, it was like, 'What are we going to do?"

What they did is what artists always do, in good times and bad: they got creative. In August 2020, the Po' Ramblin' Boys assem-





bled in the studio and recorded a handful of songs, reigniting their spark and remembering how to be a band again. They also used the downtime to rethink their plans and their path, signing with Smithsonian Folkways, the label behind landmark releases by Bill Monroe, the Country Gentlemen, Doc Watson, Hazel and Alice, and other pioneers in bluegrass and country music history. Folkways, in fact, released the first-ever bluegrass LP, American Banjo Tunes & Songs in Scruggs Style in 1957, and maintains the legacy today with the release of Industrial Strength Bluegrass (2021), named the IBMA's album of the year—to cite just one example.

With that, the band was rolling again, stronger than ever with original members Lewandowski, Jereme Brown, Josh Rinkel, and Jasper Lorentzen, and the addition of fiddle player and singer Laura Orshaw, which made an old friendship and frequent musical collaboration official.

Never Slow Down shows a band celebrating being out of the garage and back on the road, joyfully driving an old tradition forward. Orshaw's fiery fiddle and powerful voice bring fresh energy to the Po' Ramblin' Boys' sound, her talents on full display on the aptly titled





Hazel Dickens tune "Ramblin' Woman." Rinkel's two original songs and the band's instrumental and vocal arrangements of those written by others blend perfectly, and that's because they have something in common: a commitment to tradition but an understanding that time marches on. A truck stashed in a garage, a song stuck in the past, will rot, sooner or later. But when the wheels are back on the road, look out.

"It's somebody else's truck that was important," Lewandowski says of his Jimmy Martin treasure, keeping music always in mind, too. "It's somebody else's song that was important. But in order for it to survive and for that story to continue, someone has to continue it. You can't just let it rest there. I'm not gonna put different wheels on it; I want to leave that truck the way it is. It's just like the songs: You take the songs, and you don't change them enough to make them different, but you just add your touch to it. And it makes it new and fresh again."

As they roll, the Po' Ramblin' Boys are committed to making sure everyone can come along for the ride. Tradition isn't about shutting people out, though some have used it that way. But music has a long







history of bringing people together, and that's something the Po' Ramblin' Boys are tapping into just as much as the sounds they so admire from the past.

"I think there's this rebirth of when the folk scene came out, when the hippies and the old folks were getting together and they didn't care, they were there for the music," Lewandowski says. "So the music is stronger, I think, than it's ever been. And it's bridging those gaps, and I hope that we can continue to do that."

Then and now and at all points along the road, Lewandowski says, "bluegrass is for everyone."









# The Songs C.J. LEWANDOWSKI



# 1. Missing Her Has Never Slowed Me Down

"Missing Her Has Never Slowed Me Down" marks the change of seasons for the Po' Ramblin' Boys. It marks us taking our music back into our own hands and going out on a limb by originally self-releasing this as a single, now a part of this Smithsonian Folkways album. Josh laid the pen to the paper on this one, which sounds like a straight-ahead bluegrass song, twin fiddles and all.

#### 2. Where Grass Won't Grow

We all love George Jones. His catalog is an endless bank of beautiful material. We have had a Jones song on every album thus far, so why wouldn't we put one on this album? Laura steps up and pours her heart into "Where Grass Won't Grow."

#### 3. Lonesome

Ralph Stanley has to be the biggest influence on the Po' Ramblin' Boys. His music is the foundation on which we built PRB's music. Here, with "Lonesome," we dig up an overlooked song from Ralph's repertoire. The original Clinch Mountain Boys recording left the lyrics somewhat questionable as to what was being said. Josh did his research to bring the lyrics to the front.

#### 4. Blues Are Close at Hand

Tommy Brown is a huge influence on PRB. He is not only Jereme's father and the transportation technician for the band, but also a seasoned veteran of the road and bluegrass music world. Tommy recorded this song several years ago with his band, the County Line Grass. Jereme takes the wheel on this one and makes the song his own, while paying homage to his dad.

## 5. When Are You Gonna Tell Me?

This band original, written by guitarist Josh Rinkel, is the classic subject of love falling apart, but with a different take. The husband sees his wife upset and crying all the time. It turns out she is cheating and no longer in love with her husband, who has always been true.

# 6. Take My Ashes to the River

Ken Irwin presented this song to me a few years ago and we are sure glad he did. The arrangement complements the subject matter with the female voice of Laura echoing the sick and dying woman's last wishes to her partner. We really appreciate Ken putting this song on our radar.

### 7. Little Glass of Wine

"Little Glass of Wine" is a timeless bluegrass evergreen written by Carter Stanley, which goes back to the earliest live recordings of the Stanley Brothers on WCYB Radio in Bristol. As you listen, remember the innovation of Carter's songwriting and the harmonies of





the Stanley Brothers. We wanted to take a classic and put our own spin on it. I believe we hit the nail on the head with "Little Glass of Wine," thanks to Josh and Jereme's chord arrangement.

#### 8. Ramblin' Woman

This song seems a perfect introduction for Laura Orshaw joining the Po' Ramblin' Boys. The lyrics penned by Hazel Dickens could have been written specifically for this project. Laura joined the band in January 2020 and this is the first project to really showcase her vocal talents. We are glad to have her as the fifth member and Po' Ramblin' Woman. Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard were two of the first women to lead a bluegrass band.

# 9. Woke Up with Tears in My Eyes

This song comes from a group that I have always looked up to. Don Brown & the Ozark Mountain Trio was, most likely, the most popular bluegrass act of the Midwest. I found a copy of the 1971 *Tall Pines* when I was about 14 years old. Right then, I wanted to sing and play just like Don Brown. The stars aligned somehow and I grew up







in Missouri singing Ozark Mountain Trio songs with the original tenor on almost all the Trio's recordings. Ray was the only surviving member of the classic lineup of Don Brown & the Ozark Mountain Trio and I have been blessed to sing with him for the past 20-plus years. Another fun fact: on this recording, I play Don Brown's 1924 Gibson Lloyd Loar signed F-5 mandolin—the same mandolin that cut the original recording in 1971 in Don's hands.

#### 10. Mason's Lament

Laura brought "Mason's Lament" to light with the idea of Jereme Brown singing and that's exactly how it played out. The mandolin turnarounds harken back to the early radio acts gathering around one microphone to sing quartets for the folks listening on the airwaves. This marks the first time these four voices come together. Chris Brashear of the band the Canyoneers wrote the song, which comes from his solo album, Wanderlust on Copper Creek.





### II. Old Time Angels

"Old Time Angels" comes from the King of Broken Hearts himself, Jim Lauderdale. Jim has become a friend of the band and he has pushed this song for a couple of years. But it never felt right until Laura entered the picture to add a female perspective and arrangement. Contrary to most old murder ballads, this time the woman comes out on top; she makes listeners believe that those Old Time Angels are truly coming back to get some kind of revenge.



# Discography

Back to the Mountains (2016) Randm 064 God Is Love So Divine (2018) Sound Biscuit SBP03 Toil, Tears & Trouble (2019) Rounder 1166100611







#### Credits

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Track annotations by C.J. Lewandowski
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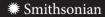
Deep-rooted bluegrass troupe the Po' Ramblin' Boys kick it into high gear on Never Slow Down, their newest collection of classic songs and soon-to-be-classic originals. The GRAMMY-nominated group pours every ounce of passion they have into these recordings as they always have, this time with even more fervor and zeal with the addition of new band member Laura Orshaw. Taking on material by their heroes the Stanley Brothers, Hazel Dickens & Alice Gerrard, George Jones and more, the Po' Ramblin' Boys bridge the gap between the past and present, proving the eternal importance of bluegrass and making it accessible to all.

# Produced by the Po' Ramblin' Boys and Dave Maggard

- MISSING HER HAS NEVER SLOWED ME DOWN
- 2. WHERE GRASS WON'T GROW
- 3. LONESOME
- 4. BLUES ARE CLOSE AT HAND
- 5. WHEN ARE YOU GONNA TELL ME?

- 6. TAKE MY ASHES TO THE RIVER
- 7. LITTLE GLASS OF WINE
- 8. RAMBLIN' WOMAN
- 9. WOKE UP WITH TEARS IN MY EYES
- 10. MASON'S LAMENT
- 11. OLD TIME ANGELS





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