

About the songs on *The Craig Demos*:

Woodland Street - This is a tune I wrote for my partner, Sue Griffiths, who is a claw hammer banjoist from Cleveland, Ohio. We met in 2015 at a library near Tampa where Sue was a managing librarian. After several years of much conversation about music, Sue came to Nashville to visit me in May of 2017. I took pictures of my neighborhood to show Sue where I lived, prior to her visit. Many of those photos were on Woodland Street in East Nashville. I put together a slide show and wrote this banjo tune for Sue to accompany the images. We went to the Country Music Hall of Fame on that visit and then three days later, she took me to the Rock-n-Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. I scored points with Sue when she saw Earl Scruggs' banjo in Nashville.

I'm A Painter Too - This song was written in 1989 after I moved back to Baltimore in 1988, after living in Nashville for six years. When I got back I needed work and painting houses presented itself. Though I only did this for six months, it inspired the song. It is dedicated to every guitar player who isn't making quite enough money slinging their ax. - Billy Kemp

Billy had the title couplet, "I'm a guitar player, but I'm a painter too," as well as that terrific guitar riff. As I started in on the lyrics, I wondered what I could add to the many songs about musicians' day jobs. So I added not only vivid details (the 12-foot ladder and the smell of turpentine) but also the psychological drama of a sister who's embarrassed by her brother painting houses and a wife who defends him. That set up my favorite line in the song, when the wife says, "I'd rather have a lover on a ladder than a crush on a star on TV." --Geoffrey Himes

Janesville - A song about a farmer named Roy Pollock who farmed during the 1920s, who moved his family often to find "*the promised land.*" Roy was the father of abstract expressionist painter, Jackson Pollock. - Billy Kemp

Billy and I were both admirers of the abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock, and after we both read his biography, we resolved to write a song cycle about Pollock by focusing on each of the geographic locations that were

important to his life. This one is about Janesville, California, where Pollock's father Roy moved the family in futile hope of transforming their lives. I focused the lyrics on that irrational belief held by Roy, by my protagonist in "I Wish I Were Back Home," Bruce Springsteen's protagonist in "Born To Run" and so many of us that a mere change in geography can solve all our problems. --Geoffrey Himes

Kings of the Grandstand - When I was growing up, my Dad would take me and my brother to the horse racing tracks in Baltimore, beautiful Bowie, lovely Laurel and pretty Pimlico. I was always struck by the horses, the jockeys, the colors, the sounds, as well as the gamblers themselves. There were two areas for the horse players, the clubhouse and the grandstand. The clubhouse was enclosed with heat in the winter, air in the summer and fine dining. The grandstand was open air, exposed to the elements. There were bleachers you could stand on and cheer your horse on to the finish. Between the clubhouse and grandstand was an area called the paddock, where the horse players could take a close look at the horses. This was where the jockey, the trainer and the owner would go over last minute strategies and the jockeys would mount up. They're off...

One of my favorite people I've met in my life is Billy's Dad, Billy Kemp Jr. Bill and I share a love of old movies, Frank Sinatra, pizza, and good stories. Billy often told me about going to the races with his brother and his Dad. And he also told me about the ups and downs of waiting to see if your horse would win. Billy learned all kinds of racing lingo from Bill Jr and I loved to hear Bill Jr talk about the horses, jockeys, and trainers that he'd known over the years. Bill Jr has tremendous verve and, as I was helping to write the lyrics of this song and to distill all of the stories and emotions I'd experienced in spending time with Bill Jr, my aim was to celebrate Bill Jr's dynamic legacy amongst the Kemp family.

Natty Don - In June of 2016 I was in the UK touring. On June 16, I read the news about the passing of Don Young. Don was the co-founder of the National Resophonic Guitar Company, started in 1989. I got to meet Don in 2010 in San Luis Obispo, in the central coast of California, where the National

guitars are made. A composer friend, helped set up a tour of the guitar factory. Don gave us a personal tour on a Monday, when the factory was usually closed. I must have played ten guitars that day and found one I wanted to buy. But Don's policy was, you had to buy one of his guitars from a retailer, even if you were an endorsed artist, because he didn't want to undercut the folks that kept him in business. He also pointed out on the tour how important safety was to him and how he made sure that the safety of his employees always came first. He was gracious, courteous, passionate, colorful and a fan of life and music. This tune is dedicated to the spirit and memory of Donald "Don" Young, aka, Natty Don.

In Times Like These - A month ago, mid-April, I was sitting on the futon in the basement early in the morning having a guayusa tea when I saw a Facebook post about a new Randy Newman song, "Stay Away," written about the Coronavirus. There was a line in his song, "Words of love in times like these." He was borrowing from the Buddy Holly song, "Words of Love," but what struck me was, "in times like these." I thought, now there's a good title. Then I started writing my own Coronavirus song. We had just lost John Prine to the awful virus and there were so many posts and stories about him. I heard the song, "Paradise," on Facebook and was reminded how much I liked the line about, "empty pop bottles was all we would kill." I thought about folks in the world dealing with so much stress and how guns sales had been going up. Then a line came to me, "don't shoot your neighbor, shoot the breeze." It had to go into my Coronavirus song.

In Your Arms - There's a Roger Miller song that I like to sing called "Reincarnation." It's a very funny song about the problem of being in love between two beings from different species. In the song he sings about being a bird, a fish, a tree and a flower. Sue Griffiths was struck by the idea and wrote a heart lyric about those very beings. "If I was a bird I'd fly into your arms dear, in your arms, I can't imagine where I'd rather be."

Is This Called Falling In Love - In 1983 I was living in Nashville and touring with a country music singer named Tommy Overstreet. Tommy's uncle was a singer named Gene Austin who had the first million selling record for the song, "My Blue Heaven." Tommy did a record called *Memories Old & New*,

which featured songs that his uncle sang from the Great American Songbook and Tin Pan Alley. I was one of the session musicians on that record. Up to that point in my career, I knew three chords. That enabled me to play folk, country, rock-n-roll and blues. I learned chords 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8 doing that record with Tommy. One chord in particular that I learned and grew fond of at the time was the diminished chord. It features several times in the music for this song. My songwriting collaborator, Geoffrey Himes, wrote this story about the puzzled lover. - Billy Kemp

I've always loved the Great American Songbook, and I had long wanted to write some songs in that vein. When Billy gave me the music for this song, I knew this was my chance. I decided to have some fun with the whole idea of falling, as my heroes Ira Gershwin and Cole Porter might. I described different kinds of falling on the bridge, and on the final stanza I had the narrator admit that he had once "obeyed all the laws of gravity," but now his new lover has "made an outlaw out of me." --Geoffrey Himes