



Cover Photo: John C. Englehardt
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MYSTERY STREET

Recordings 1998 – 2018

Johnny Pierre – Lead Vocals, Guitars, Bass, Keyboards

Jeff Goldstein – Bass Guitar (tracks 4, 6, & 8)

Raymond Finch – Vocals, Lead Guitar (track 3)

Chuck Ciany – Vocals (track 3)

Dave Filloramo – Lead Guitar (track 5)

Don Reintier – Acoustic Bass (track 5)

Rudy Schnee – Drums, Percussion (tracks 5 & 6)

Al Speed – Keyboards (track 4)

Victor Maes – Saxophone (track 7)

Adele Gillard – Drums (track 7)

Producer: The Mad Turk

The Stories Behind the Songs – Johnny Pierre



Track 1 > MYSTERY STREET - Mystery Street is a tune I wrote and recorded right before I journeyed back to The University of Dayton for my 35th college reunion back in 2009. I hadn't really thought about my college years for quite a long time but this reunion opened up a floodgate of memories. The process of writing this song brought back a host of faces, places and moments in time. I don't think I could have written this song when I was younger. Back then, everything was about the here and now: As time rolls on, it always gives a person perspective. Time is a river and the music lasts forever.

Track 2 > DANGEROUS THING - This is a track from 2007 that I recorded and then completely forgot about. The song takes a look at the daily uncertainties of modern life, choices one makes, being in the moment and living with the past. For me, this recording was a good example of being in the moment. I had been working on Mystery Street for a couple of months but couldn't seem to come up with a set of lyrics that worked so one day I just set up some microphones, hit record on the computer and played the song while improvising the lyrics. As a songwriter, I've found that on occasion

songs just appear in thin air and it's your job to find a home for them.

Track 3 > MAGIC LANTERN - Magic Lantern is a pretty little tune that I wrote back in 1971 when I was a student at the aforementioned University of Dayton. Early on in my Sophomore year, I had struck up friendships with Ray Finch and Chuck Ciany, and we had started playing music together. I wrote Magic Lantern shortly after meeting the both of them and within a short space of time added Jim McCutcheon (flute & classical guitar) to our little group and began doing gigs at local coffeehouses around the University. Besides doing cover songs by the popular artists of the day such as CSN and Van Morrison, we would often perform some of our own material when we did shows. This alone made us stand out from most of the other groups playing the coffee house circuit.

After college, we all moved to Maryland to pursue our dreams of rock band stardom in a band called Mama's Boys. Things didn't quite pan out there so Ray & I headed back to Long Island where we regrouped as a new version Freelance Vandals in 1976. Three years later, Chuck would join the band. We still get together to play music whenever we can.

The initial recording for Magic Lantern was started in 2017 and then in 2018 Ray & Chuck stopped by my studio and helped me out on the backing vocals. A couple of weeks later Ray added some tasty acoustic guitar to the track. I find it amazing that this recording pretty much reflects exactly how the three of us sounded in our coffeehouse days all those years ago.

Track 4 > ANGEL ON MY SHOULDER - Angel On My Shoulder is a song that I started writing back in my Dayton days circa 1974. The music came to me right away but I could only pull together the first

verse and chorus of the lyrics. After repeated attempts to finish the song, I ended up putting the lyrics away in my big box of unfinished songs. Some songs have legs and this one certainly did because I ended up finishing the lyrics in 1985 after witnessing the romantic turmoil one of my musician friends (you know who you are) was experiencing. I recorded this song on the Biscuit Kings album, *Hambones & Trombones* (out of print), in 2009 but my favorite version of the song is this one because the stripped-down sound of keyboards and bass supports the feel of the tune as a ballad.

Track 5 > BAD MOON RISING - Track 5 is a cover of John Fogerty's *Bad Moon Rising*. The original version by Creedence Clearwater Revival always bothered me a little bit due to the fact that Fogerty's dark lyrics were sung over such jaunty music so I decided to play it like a dirge. I recorded this one right after Hurricane Sandy hit Long island in 2012. *Don't go out tonight, stay here in the light*. Kudos to the folks who helped me out on this recording; my fellow Biscuit King Dave Filloramo (Lead Guitar) and my Belgian friends Don Reintier (Standup Bass) and Rudy Schnee (Drums)

Track 6 > KING OF THE DEAD SEA - *King of the Dead Sea* was written in 2009. The genesis of the song can be found in the seeds of political division that began to appear in the USA after the rise of the Tea Party and the presidential election of Barrack Obama. The rise of the religious right wing in America inspired this lyric: *Trouble always starts when you put words in God's mouth. Amen.*

Track 7 > BURNED BY THE SUN - This is the oldest recording on the album. It was written and recorded in 1998 and was part of an unreleased album titled *Radio Lux*. *Burned By The Sun* describes a chaotic romance that is in the process of melting away into nothingness. I've always liked the 2nd verse : There's a girl in a

dress, looks like summer, what's her name, what's her number, swinging like Jesus on a Lazarus tree, she was always good to me.

Track 8 > GOD'S FAVORITE SON - This is a ballad that was written in 2010. Oddly enough, I've had a number of people over the years ask me if I wrote this song about them. It's actually about a place called America. I don't consider this piece of work to be a political song. It was written as a glimpse at the drumbeat of nationalism that was just beginning in 2010.

On the lighter side of things (speaking as a songwriter), I can't believe I found a way to use the word "conundrum" in a song. Hoo hah!

This recording originally appeared on the aforementioned Biscuit Kings 2009 album, *Hambones & Trombones*. This track, along with *Song For The Wild Boys* and *Prayers Before Sleeping*, were all written and played in Open E tuning on my old acoustic guitar. I've always liked the warm, full sound of that particular tuning and have used it many times over the years.

Track 9 > SONG FOR THE WILD BOYS – I wrote this song in 2012 for *Imagine My Mind is a Taxi* which is an ongoing project of music that is inspired by the writing of Richard Brautigan.

I wrote this one right after reading the opening chapter of *Jubilee Hitchhiker*, William Hjortsberg's excellent biography of Richard Brautigan. The opening chapter of the book was centered around the day that Brautigan died and contained a vivid description of Richard Brautigan's suicide. I found the flow of that opening chapter to be very cinematic and tried to impart some of that imagery in my song. Sometimes it's best to try and capture the true emotion of a song immediately. It's important to do it before you have time to overthink exactly what you're trying to say in a song.

Track 10 > PRAYERS BEFORE SLEEPING - The Mystery Street album closes out with this ballad that was written and recorded in 2000. Some folks have asked me if this is a religious song. It's not religious at all. The song reflects a philosophical view of life as it reveals the vulnerability that we all feel at one time or another. The main inspiration for the song came to me one day when I realized that the most vulnerable moment in a person's day is the moment before they close their eyes and drift off to sleep.



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