

# Susie Fitzgerald

talks about

'Restless'

by Johanna B. Bodde





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**(Big Purr Music, 2015)**

**[www.SusieFitzgeraldMusic.com](http://www.SusieFitzgeraldMusic.com)**

**Susie's BIO:**



Growing up in Colorado, Susie's musical influences were abundant and varied - from traditional Folk and Country to Rock, Classical, Jazz and Soul. After a successful professional career in museum administration, Susie began writing her next chapter, first in short stories, then in poetry, and ultimately in music. Her lyric-driven songs integrate the diverse musical styles she has loved throughout her life.

"I grew up with what is now termed 'Americana' music - a genre encompassing a variety of American roots musical styles. When I was about twelve years old, my Dad had a hollow-body Gibson guitar and taught me how to play "T For Texas" and other songs by

traditional C&W people like Hank Williams and Patsy Cline. As a teenager, my Mom would drive me to guitar lessons at the Denver Folklore Center and I learned about folk music from some really talented musicians. My Mom was a big fan of the American Songbook, Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald and those smooth singers of the Swing and Post-WWII era.

I was married for a time to a musician and I learned about early Jazz greats like Django Reinhardt & Stéphane Grappelli. My sister was a classical violinist, so I heard beautiful classical music as a child. Now, she and her husband play Hawaiian music in Hawaii. My brother had an encyclopedic record collection when I was a kid, and approached music in a real Alan Lomax kind of way. He turned me on to a ton of music, especially Bluegrass. I'm also a big fan of Rock and Soul - the classics as well as contemporary bands, and of course, the Singer-Songwriter tradition - poets and storytellers - vast riches of inspiration.

Later on, I got my degree in Intercultural Communication, worked with international art and in museums, traveled to different countries and was exposed to World Music - different rhythms, instruments, and cultural traditions. My spiritual path has broadened my musical menu, as well, with devotional chanting and hymns.

All of this music bounces around in my head, all the time... An interior soundtrack for which I am truly grateful. It wasn't until 2010 that I began songwriting, when all these influences converged with my own sensibilities. We all share this same human experience, and certainly there is nothing new under the sun, but we all have our own unique voice. As Dylan said, 'The world doesn't need any more songs'. Yet, we keep writing them, because we must. For me, writing songs is Bliss."



Over the past few years, Susie has joined other musicians from around the world as a participant in Richard Thompson's Music Masters Camp, 'Frets & Refrains' - exploring songwriting, music, guitar, and performance techniques with Richard Thompson, Shawn Colvin, Teddy Thompson, and Sloan Wainwright.

In 2011, Susie created her own record label and publishing company, Big Purr Music. Her first album, **'Plenty'**, gained critical acclaim in 2012 among Americana and AAA audiences, charting on the Roots Music Report, CMJ Top 200, and was recognized as 'one of the great Americana albums of the year' by WAMU's Americana Breakdown.

Susie lists as her influences: Richard Thompson, Teddy Thompson, Shawn Colvin, Sloan Wainwright, Joni Mitchell, George Harrison, Tim O'Brien, Norah Jones, Ray LaMontagne, Steve Goodman, Hank Williams, Ry Cooder, Sheryl Crow, Chrissy Hynde, Nick Drake, Annie Lennox, Bob Dylan, Lucinda Williams and Elvis Costello.

As an ardent animal welfare advocate, a portion of Big Purr Music's proceeds support The Wild Animal Sanctuary - a permanent safe haven for rescued animals, such as Tigers, Lions, Bears, Wolves and many others.



### Susie's **ALBUM**:

Susie Fitzgerald's second album 'Restless', with twelve new original songs, travels across the American musical landscape from rootsy acoustic Folk and Alt-Country to vintage Rock riffs with a bit of jazzy Swing measured into the vibe. 'Restless' takes the listener on a lyrical road trip, exploring relationships of all kinds along the way. Lovers, friends, enemies, 'frenemies', and The Self are regarded from the artist's seasoned point of view: grown-up, wised-up, a little sassy, razor-sharp yet soft-hearted, and always, eternally hopeful.

Susie's musical influences were abundant and varied. "I've played the guitar since I was fourteen, but as an adult, I stopped playing for about a decade. Instead, I got my degree in Intercultural Communication and pursued a career as an arts administrator in the museum field. I traveled the world and worked in museums in Colorado and Arizona. A few years ago, I experienced sort of a 'perfect storm' of loss. I had my heart badly broken, suffered some severe health issues, and totally burned out on my professional career. I thought I was 'done in', for sure. I was hanging on by the thinnest thread. At that time, I felt like I had nothing left inside."

Drawing heavily upon her spiritual philosophy and determined to keep going, Susie began to write, first in short stories, then in poetry, and eventually in lyrics and music. "I had been a writer in my museum career, but when I started writing songs, something profound happened: I started to feel good when I thought I would never feel good again. From a deeper source than I ever realized existed, the creativity began to flow, and I re-discovered the musical side of myself. I found that I still had plenty to give."

The album features Susie Fitzgerald on lead vocals and acoustic guitar; with stellar grooves provided by Kyle Zender on lead guitar and bass, and Hill Baker on percussion. With special guests: John Macy (Pedal Steel); Phil Norman (Cello); Chris Speasmaker (Keyboards). Background vocals by Thom Flora and Chris Woods. Recorded, Mixed & Mastered by: Kyle Zender (Zendelicious Productions in Denver, CO). Executive Producer: Steve Cinocco (Big Purr Music).



### Susie's **TRACKS**:

1. **"The Hardest March"**: A lot of my songs have double meanings and I love writing about the weather as a metaphor. The month of March can be really awful - it's cold and blustery and grey, and you're just so ready for Spring to come. "The Hardest March" is also about that transition time between the ending of a relationship and the beginning of a new chapter. That sort of bleak space in between can be kind of tough. Hill Baker on percussion and Kyle Zender on electric guitar and Bass were really brilliant in creating a mood, and the cool harmonies by Chris Woods and Thom Flora. I love the texture and the stormy atmosphere of the song.
2. **"Mended Fences"**: This is a song about 'frenemies', someone who you may love, but just can't dance with, and the realization that it's probably better for both of you to just keep separate lives. I love the pedal steel by John Macy on this tune, the bright snappy drums by Hill Baker, and the 'guitar cascade' by Kyle Zender in the instrumental break - our very own Wrecking Crew.
3. **"I Am a Muse (Tell No One)"**: A mystical song about love - from both the divine and mundane point of view. Falling in love can feel magical and other-worldly but we are also faulty, flawed human beings. That's me on the acoustic guitar, with some brilliant lead guitar and some very tasty slide guitar riffs from Kyle Zender. Hill Baker on the cajon, shakers, tambourine. We wanted a real back porch acoustic jam kind of vibe. Thom Flora's background vocals are so intuitive on this song - he really has an amazing musical sensibility.
4. **"Keep On Driving"**: I wrote this song over the course of a couple of different road trips - both in the pouring rain - I'm sure everyone has had that experience of a truck passing you in a rainstorm, creating a giant splash on the windshield, and you duck involuntarily. Road trips are so cathartic, especially if you're breaking up with someone - isn't it liberating to just drive away and leave your troubles behind? The refuge of the road. I love the rhythm on this track - Hill Baker did such a great job creating a stompy, swampy groove. Kyle Zender's guitar is perfectly gritty. And I really love Chris Speasmaker on the Keyboards. Chris hauled his vintage Leslie Speaker to the recording studio, God bless him - an enormous wooden console with rotating speakers inside, heavy on the tremolo, love it. Super groovy.
5. **"Avidya"**: According to the Bhagavad Gita there are two types of delusion that keep us from realizing our true soul nature - one is Maya -- the cosmic illusion of the material world. The other is Avidya, which is each person's own personal delusion. Avidya refers to one's inner demons -- that negative, chattering voice in your head (like an annoying roommate) that undermines your sense of peace and happiness. This song is a conversation with Avidya, acknowledging her presence, showing her compassion, but making a conscious soul-guided decision to prevent her from completely taking over the show. I love how the vocal and the cello have a musical dialog in this song. Extraordinary playing and interpretation by the cellist Phil Norman.

6. **"Devil Dog"**: At the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, I was undone by an incredible installation by the sculptor Katharina Fritsch, consisting of 224 life-size Black Poodles surrounding a baby on a palm frond. After further investigation, I discovered it was inspired by Goethe's 19th century tale of Faust. In Goethe's play, Mephistopheles, the Devil, comes to Faust in the innocuous figure of a black dog who follows him home. Mephistopheles persuades Faust that if he invites him in, he will grant all his desires. Naturally, selling your soul to the Devil is never a wise choice, so this is my jazzy swing version of this timeless cautionary tale. With outstanding hep-cat harmonies by Thom Flora, piano by Chris Speasmaker, Hill Baker's brushy drums, and Kyle Zender riffing on a vintage Epiphone, we transformed ourselves into a swingin' jazz band.

7. **"Everywhere & Nowhere"**: Although he doesn't know it, I owe Teddy Thompson a debt of gratitude for this song. Teddy recorded an album of classic C&W-themed songs a few years ago called 'Up Front & Down Low' which was brilliant. I was working on this song when I met Teddy at Richard Thompson's Frets & Refrains Music Masters Camp and we had a chance to talk about it together. That conversation really helped me refine the song and finish it. There is a fine line between classic and cliché, and the advice I got from Teddy helped me bring out a much more authentic, personal take on this timeless genre. I have to give special props to the band, they totally "got their twang on" for this number, and thanks to John Macy for the pedal steel -perfect- it's just the way I wanted it to sound. Hopefully the song sounds familiar and, at the same time, delivers something new.

8. **"Rattlesnake"**: "Rattlesnake" might sound like a character assassination of some bad dude in my own life, (heaven knows it could be), but in reality, it's based on a Native American story, re-told by Joseph Campbell in 'The Power Of Myth', where a maiden walking along the trail takes pity on a very persuasive rattlesnake who begs her to put him under her cloak to keep warm on a cold day. She is shocked and horrified, of course, when he bites her, after she had been so kind to him, and his famous reply is, "hey, you knew I was a snake when you picked me up." So, I thought the allegory was perfect for a rockin' rockabilly song. Gotta stay away from those rattlesnakes - both the slitherin' kind and the smooth-talking, two-footed kind! Love the 60s retro groove by the band.

9. **"Restless"**: Inspired by Etta James, I wanted this song to evoke that classic vintage, torch song, slow dance. Restless is a state of mind where... it isn't as if I have anything to complain about, but I could... Great vibe by Chris Speasmaker on keyboards - very Booker T.

10. **"Meadowlark"**: I Love Birds! I became a Birder a few years ago, and that decision changed my life for the better. It's thrilling to see them in Nature - birds have always been there, but never really noticed them before. Western Meadowlarks are one of my favorite birds because their lovely birdsong heralds in the arrival of Springtime. When Meadowlarks sing, they puff out their chests, open their beaks, and courageously belt out their beautiful song. That's me on the acoustic guitar, with Kyle Zender adding charming, lead guitar, and Hill Baker on the Cajon and Udu -an African clay percussion instrument- and the ingenious shaker sound created with Hill's bare hands - love it! AND THE BIRD GETS A SOLO! Western Meadowlark birdsong courtesy of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

11. **"Activated"**: A love song. A lot of people don't get this song, because they think activated should equate to a fast and rollicking beat. In my mind, it's more like smoldering, luscious pillow-talk - it's make-out music! There are few things better in life than being in love, because it radiates outward and I love everybody. Kyle's guitar solo is brilliant - the perfect amount of distortion, along with Hill's driving drums, and Thom's angelic harmonies.

12. **"Yes Please"**: A song about that delicious feeling of falling in love. Although the flirtation may not ultimately pan out, it sure is fun to think about. Yum Yum! Yes Please!! Amazing rhythm and melodic layers in 6/8 time from Hill Baker & Kyle Zender on this track - makes for a kicky, fun and up-lifting tune. I love how "Yes Please" is the last track on the album and goes out on a positive, hopeful note.

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What a delightful album! I found Susie by coincidence on the Internet and I was interested from the first listen to one of her songs. Her lovely clear voice and sound indeed make me think of Neko Case, with a bit of Eliza Gilkyson and Shawn Colvin. The lyrics are so smart! Also, the varied songs are beautifully arranged and played. A nice extra: Susie loves birds (her "Meadowlark" song is my favorite!) and wild animals, like wolves and tigers. What a very pleasant meeting through music!

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Written by Susie Fitzgerald & Johanna J. Bodde, February 27th, 2015. Thanks to AirPlay Direct.

