

Songs of Wayfaring Strangers (Revised): Track Notes

1. **Six Days on the Road** (Earl Green and Carl Montgomery, by permission from Southern Arts Music and Tune Publishers, Inc.) (3:49): Gary Farias (GF)-guitars, harmony vocals; Clem Brown (CB)-lead vocals, bass, guitar; John Toste (JT)-harmony vocals; Mike McKenney (MM)-harmony vocals.

I learned this trucking song from a Livingston Taylor record 50 years ago, but was first inspired by the version Gram Parsons sang with the Flying Burrito Brothers. It's my kind of song—with about a 3 note range—but it does provide a good background for some mind-boggling Gary Farias electric guitar work. John Toste and Mike McKenney help Gary out on the harmonies.

2. **Just Because** (Sydney Robin, Bob Shelton, and Joe Shelton, by permission from Universal-MCA Music Publishing Div. of Universal Music Corp.) (2:58): GF-lead vocals, guitars; CB-bass, percussion

Here's an old Elvis hit performed by Gary on vocal and guitar. His hot solo was lots of fun to shadow on bass.

3. **Blues Stay Away From Me** (Alton Delmore, Rabon Delmore, Wayne Raney, and Henry Glover, by permission from Fort Knox Music, Inc., Trio Music Company, Inc., and Universal - Songs of Polygram International Inc.) (3:10): GF-lead and harmony vocals, guitars; Matt Brown (MB)-guitars; Helen Brown (HB)-claps; CB-bass, guitar, percussion, claps

An old Delmore Brothers tune with lyrics we can all get behind. It's a Gary staple, with a little electric guitar support from brother Matt Brown.

4. **Me and My Uncle** (John Phillips, by permission from Spirit Two Music o/b/o Spirit Services Holdings and Sarl) (4:25): Bruce Gavin-lead vocals; MB-guitars, mandolin; JT-harmony vocals; CB-guitars, bass, vocals

This is a rather grizzly cowboy tune from way back, written by John Phillips of Mamas and Papas fame. It was covered by the young Joni Mitchell, among others. Bruce Gavin has been doing this song justice for many decades, here with Matt on guitars and mandolin and John Toste on harmonies. Over the years, Bruce has added a few lyrics of his own. Matt does a little of his Jerry thing and does it well.

5. **Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms** (Traditional) (2:49): Gary Faris-vocals; Helen Brown (HB)-vocals; MB-vocals, mandolin, uke, guitar; CB-vocals, guitars, bass, drum loops.

In the early-fifties, Flatt & Scruggs had a hit with this ages-old song of bawdy British origin, also performed with elan by their former boss Bill Monroe and his brother. It was a favorite of the mythic ragtime/bluegrass group Hot Rufus and is recreated here with a hearty lead vocal and harmonies from Gary, with Helen on vocals and Matt doing yeoman's work on mandolin, ukulele, guitar, and bass vocals.

6. **My Old Kentucky Home** (Stephen Foster)(2:30): GF-lead and harmony vocals, guitars; MB-mandolin, ukelele; CB-bass

Stephen Foster wrote this classic in 1852 after reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The song became controversial because it was often later performed in black-faced minstrel shows, but that was not Foster's original intent. Frederick Douglass praised it for generating anti-slavery sympathy and that's authority enough for me. And who can beat Stephen Foster for a perfect time-worn, yet timeless, melody? Gary's lead and harmony vocals, along with Matt's mandolin and ukelele, give it the perfect sentimental polish.

7. **Heh, Good Lookin'** (Hank Williams, by permission from Sony/ATV Acuff Rose Music) (4:04): GF-lead and harmony vocals; MB-guitars, vocals; Anon-organ; CB-guitars, bass, organ, percussion, vocals

Talk about well-worn, this song from 1951 must be the most played Hank Williams song of all. Of course, as a Hank Williams song, it wears it well. Matt and I had fun creating the rhythm tracks and then gang singing behind Gary's multi-tracked choruses. I hazard a guess that Gary's steel-guitar-playing father was doing this one with local country bands when Gary was just a wee lad. I originally did some rhythm tracks for my brother Matt to sing over, but he demurred because he always did the song over a fairly fast walking bass. I told him I wanted to do it Tex-Mex style, like the Mavericks would. (It turns out that the Mavericks *did* cover the song, but they performed it over a fairly fast walking bass.) The production also owes a little to the Beach Boys.

8. **My Gal** (Traditional) (4:08): CB-lead vocals, guitars, bass, percussion; GF-guitars, harmony vocals; MB-guitars, claps, vocals; HB-harmony vocals; JT-harmony vocals; MM-vocals, percussion, and shenanigans.

Here's a really old jug band tune from the 1920s or earlier. It was revived in the 1960s by the Jim Kweskin Jug Band and the Lovin' Spoonful. We do it as a rag-tag sing-along, with me in the lead and Gary, Helen, John, Mike, and Matt providing much-needed vocal assistance. The wonderful solos by Matt and Gary add a touch of professionalism. Mike adds percussion and laughter.

9. **St. James Infirmary Blues** (Traditional) (4:03): GF-lead vocals, guitars; CB-bass

Seeing Gary perform "St. James Infirmary" live was the inspiration for this album. After the set, I went up to him and said "We ought to do an album of old tunes." Gary said, "Sounds good," and off we went. In this performance, Gary certainly captures the gravity of the situation in his vocal and guitar solo. The song gained fame after being recorded by Louis Armstrong in 1928, but it is based on a much, much older folk song.

10. **Wayfaring Stranger** (Traditional) (4:51): GF-lead and harmony vocals, guitar; HB-harmony vocals; MB-guitars; mandolin; CB-guitars, bass, percussion

Here's another venerable oldie from the mists of time (early-19th Century or older), our version inspired in part by the noble versions Emmylou Harris performed with her Hot Band and with the Nash Ramblers. Matt and I created the rhythm track and then Gary sang lead with Helen on harmony. (There is another, particularly fine, version of this recorded with Helen in the lead.)

11. **Jamaica Farewell** (Traditional) (3:42): GF-lead vocals; CB-guitars, bass, percussion, vocals; MB-guitars, mandolin, vocals; HB-harmony vocals; JT-harmony vocals; MM-harmony vocals

This is a quite ancient Jamaican folk song of obscure origin, made famous by Harry Belafonte. Gary's been doing it in his live set recently. Of course, I had to slow it down and "produce" it, which might have thrown Gary a curve, but like the pro he is, he adjusted with a great lead vocal and much of the wonderful a capella harmony section. Helen, John, Matt, Mike, and I all joined in on the choruses,

inspired by an arrangement taught by my junior high choral director, Joan Roth. Matt takes the solo, short and to the point. Mike hums a little tune (a “mike” test) at the beginning and end. This production owes something to Gary Usher and Roger McGuinn.

12. Red River Valley (Traditional) (1:51): GF-lead vocals, guitar; HB-harmony vocals, MB-mandolin, ukelele; CB-guitars, bass, percussion, vocals

Another cowboy song and a fitting farewell. When we were kids, my father sang this late-19th Century ballad (along with “On Top of Old Smokey”) to get my brother and me to go to sleep. Gary sang it beautifully at my father’s funeral, as he does here. Helen brightens the sorrow with her harmony vocal. Matt joins in on several small acoustic instruments.

Thanks for listening! This was a labor of love.

Produced by Gary Farias and Clem Brown

Co-produced by Matt Brown (Tracks 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, and 12) and John Toste (Tracks 10 and 11)

Mixed by Clem Brown

Mastered by Clem Brown

Technical Assistance: James M. Brown

Cover: Quilts by Helen Brown

Photographs and Design by Gary Farias