

Sweet Bunch of Daisies

AJ Srubas & Rina Rossi

Central Standard Tone

ajsrubasmusic.com

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AJ Srubas - fiddle and vocals, Rina Rossi - guitar and vocals

Additional personnel, instruments, and sources (in parens) noted below.

About the album:

Both of us love listening to fiddle tunes accompanied only by guitar. Combinations like Cyril Stinnett and Dwight Lamb with Elvin Campbell, or Pete McMahan with Fred Stoneking are some of our favorites. Neither of us would claim to be a singer, but there are so many great songs out there and the process of arranging songs and singing harmony lines is something we've always liked to do. While we both love playing in larger musical projects, we've been wanting to make a more pared-down recording that represents some of these other musical

interests. Old time music is thriving in the upper midwest, and while people including us play all sorts of types of tunes from all over the country, a lot of what is played where we live is somewhat different than what is played in the southeast or the east or west coast. A lot of this album comes out of the regional styles we hear here.

Arrangements vary from traditional to new interpretations, all of them both rooted in what has come before, and in some ways our own. Many thanks to Andrew Bartleson, Brian Miller, Eric Mohring, David Robinson, and Addie Rosenwinkel for helping us achieve additional visions for some of these tunes by lending their talents to this album.

We recorded live with no fixes (except when we had to overdub a second instrument) so there are little imperfections throughout. We chose to do it that way because for us the energy of playing together in one room was more important to us than every track being engineered to sound flawless.

Thanks to Tom Herbers, Adam Kiesling, Brian Miller, and Bob Walser for the instrument loans, and our music community for the continued support. Thank you to the musicians that preceded us and the people who recorded them for being the source of and inspiration for this music. Special thanks in that regard to Chirps Smith, Dwight Lamb and many others who have generously shared so much great fiddle music with us.

Recorded, mixed and mastered by Tom Herbers

Album art and design by Addie Rosenwinkel

All tracks are arrangements by AJ Srubas and Rina Rossi of traditional songs in the public domain except Keweenaw Light written by Craig Johnson and used with permission.

Track info:

Lazy Kate

In 2012, while attending the violin building program at Minnesota State College Southeast in Redwing, MN, AJ met another fiddle playing student from South Dakota named Nate Glazier who invited AJ along to a multi-day tunes throwdown at Iowa based National Heritage Award recipient Dwight Lamb's house. Dwight got AJ tuned onto the repertoire of the Missouri Valley, including that of Missouri fiddler Cyril Stinnett, with whom Dwight had shared many tunes. Cyril quickly became one of AJ's favorite fiddlers for his strong, clean, precise fiddling. The National Endowment for the Arts has this to say about Dwight: "Lamb is not simply a musician and teacher. Without his efforts, the majority of available recordings of Missouri Valley

musicians such as Bob Walters, Casey Jones, Cyril Stinnet, and Lena Hughes, as well as their unique styles, repertoires, and stories, might have been lost. His broad repertoire reflects the confluence of his heritage and his region, as the Missouri Valley fiddle tradition reflects a unique melding of Anglo-Irish traditions with the Scandinavian, Eastern European, German, and Canadian influences of the upper Midwest.” A regular visitor to Minnesota, you can see Dwight’s influence on many tracks on this recording. He’s given AJ numerous recordings over the years which are on constant rotation in our house. AJ learned this tune from Cyril’s *Mahoney Reel*. *AJ: fiddle, Rina: guitar*

Thunderbolt Hornpipe

AJ learned this b-flat Missouri tune from Dwight Lamb. Rina requested they record it because she really likes this one. *AJ: fiddle, Rina: guitar*

Molly Bonder

A very old and tragic cautionary ballad about safety while swan or fawn hunting. Rina first heard it on The New Mules record *Pride of America*. Years later, Gloria Goodwin Raheja requested AJ and Rina prepare a few songs/tunes for a documentary CD she is putting together to accompany a book on Frank Hutchinson, blues, and labor struggles in the Appalachian coalfields. Rina had recently heard Aunt Jenny Wilson’s version of Molly Bonder - which is interesting in the ways it differs from the Illinois collected version - so they decided to work it up for Gloria’s project. They have continued to play it and it has continued to morph. Top shelf Irish musician Brian Miller (of *Bua and The Lost Forty*) joins in on this most recent adaptation.

AJ: fiddle, Rina: vocals and B3, Brian Miller: bouzouki

Bell Cow

Originally into Irish fiddle, AJ started learning old-time to accompany his brother and was quickly hooked. One day he ran across a tune on one of Wisconsin fiddler Chirps Smith’s albums that seemed like an old-time adaptation of an Irish tune. AJ reached out to Chirps via the Fiddle Hangout for information on the tune because that’s what you did in 2001 or whatever and Chirps saw that AJ lived close by and invited him over for a big party he was having the next day. Friends ever since, AJ has learned a lot of tunes from Chirps including this one. The source for this is great Illinois fiddler Harvey “Pappy” Taylor, and like all of Pappy’s tunes, it rips. *AJ: fiddle, Rina: guitar*

Fort Smith

This derives from Missouri fiddler Cyril Stinnett's version. We are grateful to our friend David for adding some three finger on this one.

AJ: fiddle, Rina: guitar, David Robinson: banjo

Keweenaw Light

This song was written by Craig Johnson, from Wayne, MI, a few miles down the road from Rina's hometown of Ann Arbor. We've liked this song for a long time. The Upper Peninsula of Michigan has a lot of geologic and ecological similarities to Minnesota, especially northern Minnesota, with Lake Superior being a significant presence for both. After recording the song, we took a trip to the UP to try and find all the places mentioned in it. We made it to most of them.

AJ: fiddle, vocals, Rina: guitar, vocals

Pretty Polly Anne

A few years ago we met the great Ozarks fiddler David Scrivner who gave us some recordings of Bill Bilyeu. We heard this tune on one of those recordings and thought it was great.

AJ: fiddle, Rina: guitar

Sarah's Reel

We learned this from the fiddling of Missouri fiddler Pete McMahan, who we think either wrote or dedicated it to his wife. We've liked this one for a long time. We also liked the fiddle, guitar, bass trio sound on some of Pete's recordings, so we did that here.

AJ: fiddle, Rina: guitar and bass

Constitution Hornpipe

Dwight Lamb spent a lot of time with Bob Walters, from whom we learned this strenuous F tune. AJ isn't sure he remembers all the details correctly, but he thinks the story goes that Dwight and Bob lived pretty close to each other as the crow flies, but Dwight was in Iowa and Bob was in Nebraska and the Missouri River ran in between their houses. The bridge that now exists wasn't there at the time, so to get from Dwight's house to Bob's house Dwight had to go miles up the road to the nearest bridge, cross over, then backtrack down to Bob's. Our friend Andrew Bartelson added some snare to this track. He's one of our favorite drummers, both because he's awesome and because he doesn't get bored playing fiddle tunes. This one was our favorite to record.

AJ: fiddle and electric guitar, Rina: pump organ and bass, Andrew Bartelson: snare drum

Rabbit in the Briar Patch

Another good one from Bill Bilyeu.

AJ: fiddle, Rina: guitar

Lillie Dale

It's hard to beat Doc Roberts and Asa Martin when it comes to fiddle/guitar duets. Although this one is a guitar/guitar duet.

AJ: vocals and guitar, Rina: vocals and guitar

Morris Hornpipe

This C tune from Missouri fiddler Pete McMahan sure is a good one. Thanks to our friend David for joining us on banjo.

AJ: fiddle, Rina: guitar, David Robinson: banjo

Sweet Bunch of Daisies

This b-flat waltz from Missouri fiddler Pete McMahan is one of AJ's favorites and is also very challenging to play. *AJ: fiddle, Rina: guitar*

Casey's Hornpipe

Casey's was played by Cyril Stinnett, Bob Walters, and Dwight Lamb. Another of Rina's favorites and another b-flatter.

AJ: fiddle, Rina: guitar

Red Apple Rag

AJ woke up one day wanting to add this tune to the album with a treble forward sound inspired by Chirps Smith's *Prairie Dog*. Our friends Eric and Addie made the dream a reality.

AJ: fiddle, Rina; guitar, Eric Mohring: mandolin, Addie Rosenwinkel: banjo

The Dying Soldier

Rina's grandparents lived just outside of Washington DC. On a visit to see her grandpa some years ago, AJ and Rina went to check out the Library of Congress archives. After they asked to listen to JW Day's *Deerwalk*, the librarian at the American Folklife Center told them they might like this compilation of Kentucky music that was half LOC recordings and half commercial recordings. Buell Kazee sings this song on that collection. Kim and Jim Lansford also did a great version of this. This song also appears in *Dear Old Illinois* with a bunch of extra verses

Buell doesn't sing, which is where the last verse comes from. This was recorded live in one take with AJ singing and playing the harmonium which was harder than it seemed like it would be.

AJ: vocals and harmonium, Rina: vocals

Monona County

We heard this on a party tape of Cyril Stinnett's Blue Mule Sessions recorded on New Year's Eve. After the tune ends, everyone at the party agrees that this is a great tune.

AJ: fiddle, Rina: guitar, David Robinson: banjo