

Track Notes by Bernie Gelman - Curling - No Guitar

Shamble

This was one of the first songs that we recorded for the album. Jojo's guitar part is in a different tuning for the second half, so the song was recorded in two parts and later sewn together. From the sonic collage at the beginning to the celebratory horns ornamenting the end (and accompanying lyric simply stating "breathe out/nothing"), everything in this song is full of accidents, and pure chaos that somehow came together in the studio.

Pastoral

This was my best attempt to capture the 12-string shimmer and jangle of old XTC albums. The chord changes are kind of unusual and the strings that come in at the halfway point are meant to be really surprising! The melody is kinda sweet, but this song is sung from a sort of petulant perspective of someone who is leaving a relationship. It's got that venom and an unchained malice.

Pop Song

Jojo wrote it in spring 2018 in Japan after getting a voicemail from his temp-company boss in LA that he was getting laid off. The song sat around as an idea for a while. In reality, Jojo was pretty happy to get laid off, leave LA and move back to Japan. In 2022, he wrote a bridge to finish the song and encapsulate the true ironic sentiment: getting fired was actually the best thing to happen to him in 2018.

URDoM

Jojo wrote this after writing Pop Song and it's in a similar vein. The title comes from something his unhinged coworker in Japan screamed at him as a joke after messing up with a client. "Do M" in Japan means to be a masochist, or someone who enjoys pain. Like Pop Song, Jojo didn't complete this song for four years, but me and Jojo were able to finish the vocal melody and lyrics just a week before recording.

Reflector Mage

The structure is a long chord progression performed twice in two different styles. The first half is a very slow, very somber walk through self-loathing and loneliness; the second half kicks into an almost Jimmy Eat World anthem with triumphant-but-resigned lyrics.

Dysfunction

A studio creation made with lyrics by Jojo's buddy Fernando. Jojo and myself interweave acoustic guitars, plus there's a mixture of drum takes from Kynwyn, a synth loop I made, a feedback loop that Jojo made that sounded like a horse, and a conga loop made sent from Japan from their buddy Akio Jeimus. The lyrics encapsulate Jojo's whiskey-fueled days in Japan during COVID, jumping off of buildings, doing zoom meetings under bridges, while bike camping around Japan and generally leaning into the pleasure of one's own dysfunction.

Majesty

I wrote this song as a sweet lullaby for Jojo's brother's then-unborn first child. The lyrics are sort of advice to a new parent ("stay by her side when the world's gone too dark/listen to her yearning") with a beautiful string quartet arrangement accompanying a Beatlesque melody. We really wanted to write a great, soft-toned ballad with a compelling melody.

Track Notes by Bernie Gelman - Curling - No Guitar

Hi-Elixir

My dad passed away at the end of 2019 and then the pandemic happened just a few months later, so we were in a pretty dark place while writing this one. I wrote this song late one night sitting in the house he grew up in. He had the melody and chords and was struggling with lyrics until he looked over and saw his dog, Lily, peacefully napping. We were aiming for a 2-and-a-half-minute mini-symphony full of unusual chords and key changes. There's a shoegazey lead guitar hook bookending the song and a lot of cool little guitar parts in there too.

Patience

Patience was originally a song Jojo had written with a much slower tempo and just the first verse. The lyrics ended up morphing into a kind of story about the idea of taking pleasure in pain. The beginning verse says that it's "not a love song" and that "you're enamoured with pain." By the end of the song, the lyrics get flipped around a bit and say "you're enamoured with shame." There's actually no "normal" bass guitar in this track until the first chorus; the weird higher-pitched synth-sounding instrument during the first part of the song is actually highly processed electric bass! This track was one of the highest energy performances from Kynwyn at her drums.

Husk

Inspired by a hellish trip to Okinawa (where Jojo's mom grew up) where Jojo got super fucked up and ended up locked inside a love hotel with horrific fairytale wallpaper. This was our first time using a harmonium in the studio and it quickly became one of our favorite sounds, ending up all over the rest of the album!. The first section where the drums come in has a surprisingly deceptive cadence where the downbeat is never quite where you expect it to be, mirroring Jojo's disoriented state that inspired the song.

Hotel

This started off with chords that Jojo had written. I had a different part that ended up being the chorus/guitar solo, so we put the two songs together. Lyrically, this song is about my relationship with his dad, who died at the end of 2019. It's about spending your life trying to make meaningful connections with someone, but always missing the mark. When someone is gone, you don't have that chance any more. The guitar solo was performed through my dad's old 1950s amplifier.

No Guitar

The album was originally supposed to be the first Curling album where we diverged from writing songs with guitars. That definitely didn't happen, but No Guitar the song was an effort to acknowledge the original concept with a song made with a bunch of synths, fuzz pedals and loopers.

Cavalry

The result of us smashing together a pair of different songs. It has a cool little rhythmic "hiccup" during the chorus to keep the listener on their toes.

C2

It's in a guitar tuning that I once saw Fleetwood Mac's Lindsey Buckingham use. It has a long improvised section in the middle. We were tracking this dark song in the studio when I found out that my dad passed away, so this was a particularly hard song to return to. It has a unique vibe.