

Glass Bottom Boat

The earliest written song on the album, “Glass Bottom Boat” serves as a proper opener, setting the tone for what follows. The writing process began in the final months of a decade-long stretch of living in New York City. I have a vivid visual memory of walking up Tenth Avenue trying to work out the second verse in my head. It took moving back to California to finally complete the song. It has been in live sets for many years but had somehow eluded a proper release. I am pleased it is finally seeing the light of day.

Paper Screen

“Closely observed, then loosely rendered,” might serve as a mission statement. While the song “Paper Screen” can be seen as an unavailing attempt to translate silent light into song form.

Awhile

Sometimes the stairwell is a mountainside. The proceedings here are profoundly elevated by the pure toned vocal contributions of Jen Benoit.

Fog On Mirror Glass

On this recording of “Fog On Mirror Glass,” the core trio is joined by longtime collaborator Ken Lovgren, employing his ever-ghostly guitar work. Lyrically, the song is a meditation on obfuscated self reflection. Structurally, it’s a bit labyrinthine. A staple in live sets, when playing “Fog” it is positioned, almost invariably, as either an opener or closer and — when it lands — serves to recalibrate the mood in the room.

Old Universe

A little lift right around the halfway point of the album, “Old Universe” is propelled by the brushwork of drummer Michael Nalin and the jaunty bass playing of Kirt Lind. A metaphysical ode to (among other things) eye contact, with repeated references to the collapse of space and time.

Makeshift Room

A portrait of someone who’s painted themselves into a corner and is attempting to tiptoe out.

Your Dreaming Eyes

“Your dreaming eyes are always closing...” A stark arrangement (vocals accompanied by fingerpicked classical guitar) until the bridge, at which point things open up a bit: intertwining acoustic and electric guitar leads hover over unfolding layers of accordion and muted piano to create a deft dynamic shift. Then things hollow out again for the final verse. When I hear this one it sounds like it still lives in the room in which it was recorded.

Valley Floor

The descent was long. Inertia is potent. It can be quite a journey from one side of the room to the other. Written in early pandemic isolation, "Valley Floor" is another song in which time and space become rather fluid.

Usual Phantom

One of several phantoms moving through these songs. Another spare arrangement of strummed nylon string guitar and vocals. Only the choruses are slightly adorned, with female backing vocals, making things all the more apparitional.

Bamboo

A sort of shadow play.