

The St. John Family Hour



THE ALBUM

The St. John Family Hour began as an attempt to finish some tracks I had started recording over the years, but never mixed. Once I realized that adding my two daughter's harmonies to the songs greatly improved them, I began thinking about doing an album's worth of songs that featured our voices together. We then proceeded to record thirty songs twelve of which are represented here.

Abi and I began appearing as a duo at various gigs in 2016, and in 2021 Ella started joining us onstage for some numbers. A dad/daughter trio seemed like a good idea at the time, and it was fairly easy working up the tunes because both girls knew these songs having heard them over and over pretty much their whole lives.

I had been recording sporadically at Gravity Studios for over twenty years with Doug McBride, my brother from another aunt who had the good sense to marry my wife's cousin, but I always found reasons to not release the material. I felt the world had plenty of singer-songwriter records and didn't really need any more. A dad/daughter trio though? That was another thing entirely. That could be fun. And fun we had pulling these tunes together. We look forward to sharing more in the future.



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BIG WIDE WORLD FULL OF EVERYTHING

©2014 Marlon St. John/Work Song

There's a big billed bird where the trawler's beached
There's a smiling moon out where the rockets reached
There's a blue road runs where the phones don't ring
There's a big wide world full of everything (2x).

There's a Chevron sign where the clams are sold
The bar is closed and the dance floor's cold
The sun sets nightly wearing next to nothing
In our big wide world full of everything (2x)

There's a flea market made of wagon wheels
There's three for five dollars and deals, deals, deals
There's one place to go for the melamine buffet
There's a big wide world full of everything (2x)

Time can't hold us, there's a place of
stillness past the turning sky
The waitress brings more coffee to us
We're halfway there, we're halfway there...

There's an old wooden walk out to the midden strand
There's deep fried music from a one man band
Baby, let's go dancing, would you wear my ring?
I found it in this place that has everything
A big wide world full of everything...

ABOUT

Come join us on a 2014 road trip to Florida, a place that has just about everything. I took a picture of the sun setting in Cedar Key and not long after a song fell out of the guitar. It mentions the Wagon Wheel Flea Market where you can get three pairs of socks for five dollars, the Golden Corral, which had surprisingly great service and excellent food, and a verse about a fella doing a one-man-band gig at a church fish fry who was doing a great job on Steven Stills' "Four & Twenty" as we went through the serving line. It is as true a story as I could make it.

CREDITS

Marlon St. John: vocals, guitars, drums

Abigail St. John: vocals

Ella St. John: vocals

Doug McBride: bass

Produced and mixed by Doug McBride

Recorded August 9, 2022 at Gravity Studios

Photo by Marlon St. John at Cedar Key, FL

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PICTURE DAY

©2007 Marlon St. John/Work Song

You get dressed up, you strike a pose
don't dirty that shirt, those are brand new
cloths
comb your hair, smile this way
chin up now, it's picture day

Now, don't you look too surprised
camera will catch ya, with half shut eyes
the camera man don't have much to say
'cept for "smile, it's picture day"

It seems you get just one shot
to look your finest, or not so hot
whether in color or charcoal gray
here it is now, it's picture day

Stand in line, sit up straight
don't fuss around, you're looking great
still as a statue made of clay
frozen in time, it's picture day

There I was no more than ten
the camera caught me with a crooked grin
some things never quite fade away
it's for all time, it's picture day
it's for all time, it's picture day

ABOUT

Written in 2007 on the eve of a school picture day, this song covers ground we are all fairly familiar with, and is, as they say, a true story.

CREDITS

Marlon St. John: vocals, guitars, drums

Abigail St. John: vocals

Ella St. John: vocals

Doug McBride: bass

Produced and mixed by Doug McBride

Recorded November 14, 2022 at Gravity Studios



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KEEP YOU ON MY MIND

©1995 Marlon St. John/Work Song

I keep you on my mind
I keep you on my mind
I keep you on my mind
more and more these days

You and your skinny red boots
You and your skinny red boots
Now, I'm not prone to absolutes
but I never fail to surrender

That phone booth in St. Paul
the phone booth in St. Paul
where I placed a call
that told me where you'd been

told by a mutual friend
told by a mutual friend
now how does one comprehend
such a sudden idea

I came across a wall clock
in a side street antique shop
I came across a wall clock
it had your name written all over it

Now the time it doesn't change
the hands never worked they stayed where arranged
I couldn't bring myself to toss it away
It's how I keep you on my mind
I keep you on my mind

I keep you on my mind
I keep you on my mind
I keep you on my mind
more and more these days

ABOUT

Some memories won't leave you
alone, some you never want to leave.

CREDITS

Marlon St. John: vocals, guitar, drums, bass, perc.

Abigail St. John: vocals

Ella St. John: vocals

Bruce Breckenfeld: Organ

Produced and mixed by Doug McBride

Recorded September 5, 2022 at Gravity Studios

Photo of Laura taken in 1995 at a McDonalds somewhere

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DRAGONFLY

©1993 Marlon St. John/Work Song

Dragonfly, dragonfly
how come you so doggone shy
are you afraid to fly so high?
you stay close to the water

Dragonfly, dragonfly
I've wandered here from paradise
my true love's here somewhere she lies
underneath the water

I came on through the rushes where
a crawdad had his home down there
I sunk down in the river's lair
now I'm waiting for the river's daughter

I heard she sleeps upon the riverbed
'til the sunsets fiery red
hummingbird above my head
will I ever find her?

Dragonfly hanging in the air so still
while a magpie's singing to a whippoorwill
down in the thorns where the river flows
watch the waters ripple and roll

Dragonfly, dragonfly
won't you bring me her reply
wake her up from where she lies
underneath the water

Dragonfly, dragonfly
how come you so doggone shy
are you afraid to fly so high?
you stay close to the water

ABOUT

I used to spend time as a kid sitting
by a creek. This is a song about that.

CREDITS

Marlon St. John: vocals, guitar, drums, upright bass

Abigail St. John: vocals

Ella St. John: vocals

Produced and mixed by Doug McBride

Recorded September 5, 2022 at Gravity Studios

Photo by Marlon of a cherrie pie Abi baked for a party

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HOMEMADE PIE

©2004 Marlon St. John/Work Song

Everyone likes a sweetheart saying sweet talk
Whispering in their ear when they're out for a walk
The one's who say they certainly do not
Are lying straight at you

And everybody likes to laugh and sing
brand new babies and a kitten with string
'tho there's some folks can't see eye to eye
everybody likes a circus and homemade pie

Everybody likes rainbows, new clothes and fun
All the world over, nearly everyone
Likes to feel like a winner on a winning streak
likes to be singled out as something quite unique

You may favor Chevy's, pray to Christ the lord
While some folk pray to Allah and tool around in a
Ford

Take anybody, give them a paid holiday
You'll find they smile all just the same way

Everybody likes to laugh and sing
brand new babies and a kitten with string
'tho there's some folks can't see eye to eye
everybody likes a circus and homemade pie

The French all like weekends, the British like tea
Some folks shake your hand, some give a kiss on your cheek
Some go looking for trouble, some like to lay low
Some find friends waiting wherever they go

We've got our differences, I know it's true
The world's all tied in a knot that's hard to undo
But laughter in latin and giggling in greek
Sounds the same in any language you happen to speak

[Chorus]

ABOUT

Back before people became so opinionated about their preference of pies with the pro-rhubarb factions facing off with the pro-apple and pro-peach factions, we use to all kinda agree that pie was delicious.

CREDITS

Marlon St. John: vocals, guitar, drums, upright bass

Abigail St. John: vocals

Ella St. John: vocals

Produced and mixed by Doug McBride

Recorded September 22, 2022 at Gravity Studios



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NEW AND OLD

©1997 Marlon St. John/Work Song

How well we do the same old thing
reshaped, remade again and again
the future is nothing but expectation
laughing behind our backs
laughing behind our backs

How well we do the same old thing
reshaped, remade again and again
if not for the knowing it's all so new
'could well be yesterday
'cloud well be yesterday

In the beginning there never was a heaven
but it was always for us to do as we must to
invent one
you and I slowly over time we'll fashion
and furnish
we'll build with our hands
until upon completion our very own heaven
will hold all the love that can be
all the love that can be

How well we do the same old thing
reshaped, remade again and again
piece by piece, made whole of dreams
new and old
new and old

How well we do the same old thing
reshaped, remade, reviewed, reglued again and again
the future is nothing but expectation
laughing behind our backs
laughing behind our backs

ABOUT

I wrote this song June 6, 1997 on the 53rd anniversary of D-Day. It was a Friday.

CREDITS

Marlon St. John: vocals, guitars, drums

Abigail St. John: vocals, bass

Produced and mixed by Doug McBride

Recorded November 14, 2022 at Gravity Studios



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WHO CAN SAY FOR SURE

©2001 Marlon St. John/Work Song

Who can say for sure...

are we temporary or made to endure?

Are we creatures of habit or driven by will?

Are we moving so rapid or just standing still?

Are we part of the sickness or part of the cure?

Who can say for sure...

Don't you think too ill of me

I'm half man and half beast by nature, you see

I'm harmless as one who is toothless and old

until the balance is upset and then I explode

Don't call me 'Dude', son and don't call me 'sir'

'cause who can say for sure...

Is she with someone else instead of me?

Does she spend her time thinking that I am he?

Is that, in fact, who I'm supposed to be?

Is it the name that I answer to regularly?

Am I drawn by her mystery, or her fetching allure?

Who can say for sure

Who can say for sure

Who can say for sure...

ABOUT

This song was written on a day off from work in 2001. I think I was trying to figure out a path through adulthood at the time, and I'm still somewhat trying to figure that out.

CREDITS

Marlon St. John: vocals, guitars, drums

Abigail St. John: vocals, bass

Produced and mixed by Doug McBride

Recorded November 14, 2022 at Gravity Studios

Photo taken at the Abbey Pub 1997 by Laura St. John



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IF IT DIDN'T WORK OUT

©1992 Marlon St. John/Work Song

I'd be burnt down, tornadoed
I'd be flooded with rain
I'd be a blackened out room
where no light ever came
I'd be turned over sideways
down in the mouth
if you ever decided
things didn't work out

I'd be a hollowed out statue
mistaken for dead
living without you
there'd be birds in my head
I'd fall down in my shadow
curse the hard ground
if your love I was missing
if it didn't work out

I'd be chased by the voices
of all my regrets
sad as a gambler
that's lost his last bet
I'd be shattered like porcelain
pieces scattered about
if for any reason
things didn't work out

You know, Eve in the Garden
Helen of Troy
they've got nothing on you
but let me get to the point
If I'm lying the lightning
will strike me all down
I'd be all around done-in
if things didn't work out
if it didn't work out...

ABOUT

I wrote this song October 15, 1992 around the time the photo was taken. The photo is of the band I was with, Cries & Whispers, and was taken at The Heorot, in Muncie, Indiana.

CREDITS

Marlon St. John: vocals, guitar, resonator guitar, perc.

Produced and mixed by Doug McBride

Recorded September 22, 2022 at Gravity Studios,



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WE ARE STANDING

©2016 Marlon St. John/Work Song

Water coming from the underground
dark earth giving all that will abound
The Plains were given by the Grandfathers
They're not driven by no conquerors

We are standing
We are standing
We are standing
We are standing

They are standing
We are standing
We you standing
We are standing

Brother, sister, Mother Firmament
Believe in what you know is permanent
Water washes everything to sediment
Fire, air, and Earth become revenant

The easement zoned for utility
The deeds are purchased, we're the mortgagee
No where to run to where they'll let you be
To get the fruit sometimes you kill the tree

We are standing
Are are standing
We are standing
We are standing

Arctic air from where the Fathers sit
Breathing out their last of discontent
But everything is Creator sent
Nothing will last of any government

ABOUT

Written December 9, 2016 during the siege at Standing Rock, this song was inspired by the courage of the Sioux who stood in defiance against the water hoses deployed against them during a harsh winter. The next morning I went to work on the song.

CREDITS

Marlon St. John: vocals, guitar, drums, perc.

Abigail St. John: vocals

Doug McBride: bass

Produced and mixed by Doug McBride

Recorded December 29, 2016 at Gravity Studios

Photo by Alyssa Schukar for The New York Times 12/08/2016



UNIVERSAL SONG

©2013 Marlon St. John/Work Song

There's a Universal Song, it travel's through each and every key
It says we're here but not for long, then we're a fading memory
We're a fading memory, so stand and raise your eye
to the Universal Song, to the standard passing by

There's a Universal Song, now come on, don't be shy
lend voices clear and strong: "Be-Bop-Lula-Blue-Tail-Fly"
"Tell me, What'd I say? A-well-a-well-a-well-a-lonely-lonely-lonely-me"
There's a Universal Song, "It's Alright Now", Ooh, Baby"

There's a Chick-a-Chick-a rhythm in the Universal Song
Bo Diddley got it right; we sometimes get it wrong
Chuck Berry said the same thing in so many words
He was hen-pecked for it at the time; fed and left to the Byrds

Now, I'm a no-count rural kid like Elvis in his youth
He once drove a service truck and, well, I did too
Then he found Colonel Parker and the rest was ABOUT
I wish the good ol' Colonel would somehow run into me

There's a mighty river of nickels flows from the Universal Song
I'd charge each and every one of you, but it might take too long
To take down your information, and get right back to you
This song cost me one-buck-fifty; I'll give it free to you

There's a Universal Song
There's a Universal Song
There's a Universal Song
There's a Universal Song
(repeats)

ABOUT

I have no clear recollection
about writing this song.

CREDITS

Marlon St. John: vocals, guitars, drums

Abigail St. John: vocals

Ella St. John: vocals

Doug McBride: bass, shaker

Produced and mixed by Doug McBride

Recorded August 10, 2022 ar Gravity Studios

Image credit: NASA, ESA, CSA, and STScI

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WHO WILL COME THIS WAY AGAIN

©2003 Marlon St. John/Work Song

There's a light, a sound unheard
there's redemption in the Word
'though there is no eye or face
there is power in the grace

There's forgiveness for the sinner
and knowledge of the sin
there's a light we all go into
who will come this way again

So let us stand and sing the pages
of a gospel sent from ages
long ago there was a shepherd
meant to lead us out of here

There's a mother softly holding
a small child her one and only
every man must come from sorrow
every breath we have we borrow

There's solace for the asking
endless life ever lasting
there's a light we all go into
who will come this way
who will come this way
who will come this way again

ABOUT

I have my mother to thank for this tune. For years I had been writing songs, and at one point she reminded me that I had never written a gospel song. So, I gave it a try. It has since become a family favorite, and this track features my father, Phil St. John, on baritone singing along with the girls. The vocal arrangement is by Abi.

CREDITS

Marlon St. John: vocals, guitar

Abigail St. John: vocals and vocal arrangement

Ella St. John: vocals

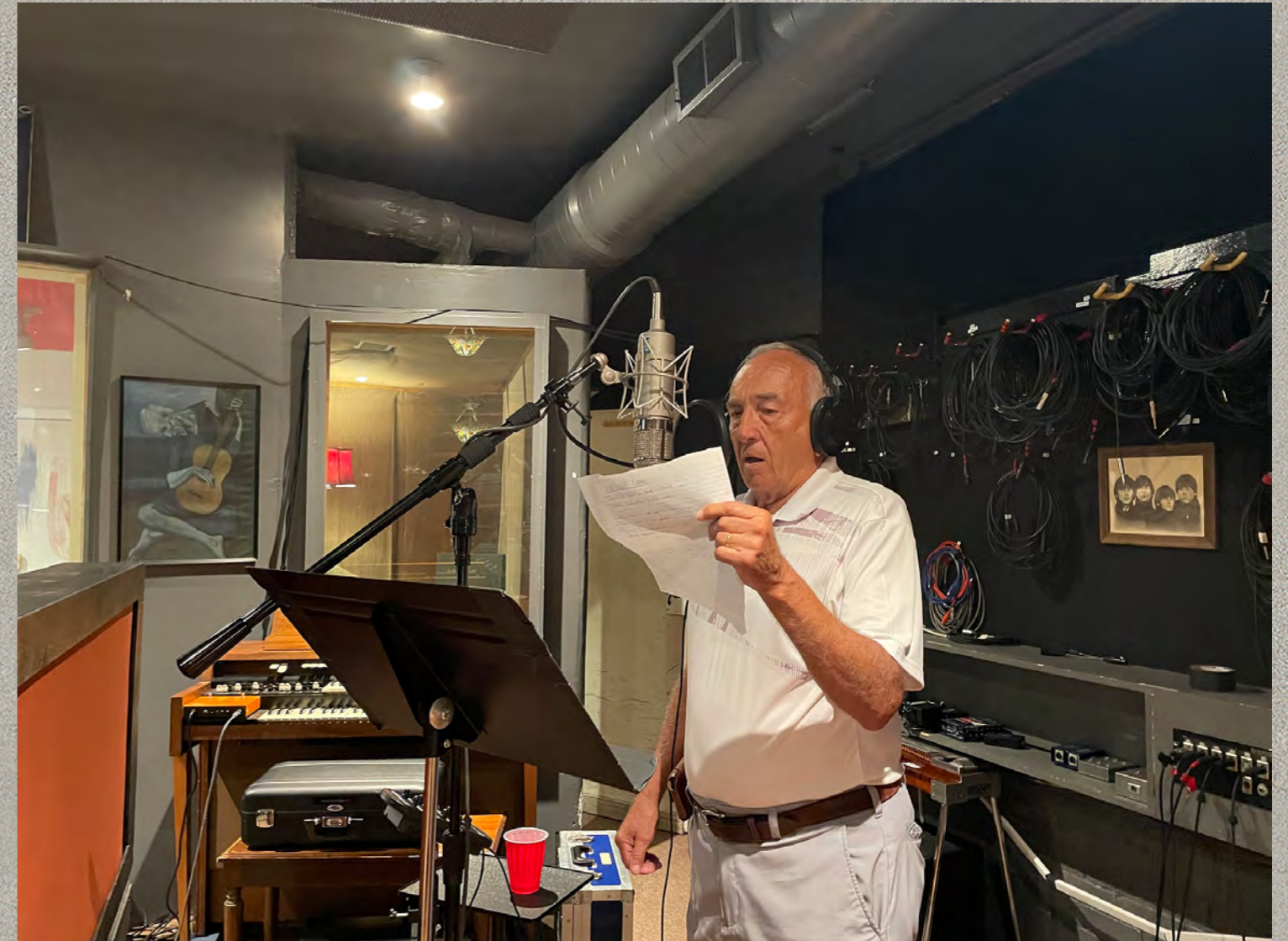
Phil St. John: vocals

Produced and mixed by Doug McBride

Recorded August 12, 2022 at Gravity Studios

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CREDITS

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Produced, mixed and mastered by Doug McBride at Gravity Studios, Chicago, IL

Recorded from August, 2022 to February, 2023

All photos by Kristine Kuczora with Skeleton Clavis Productions except where noted.

Layout and design by Work Song Productions

Guitars, drums and percussion: Marlon St. John

Basses: Abigail St. John and Doug McBride

Vocals: Abigail St. John, Ella St. John, Marlon St. John, Phil St. John

Fiddle: Rick Veras

Organ: Bruce Breckenfeld

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