

TAKING THE PLUNGE

AN EP BY HOWLIN' HOBBIT

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liner notes written by Howlin' Hobbit

Welcome to my second solo CD! It's my third solo recording, but the first one was so long ago it was released on cassette. This was not to be all hip and trendy, this was because cassette was *it* back then.

Most of these tunes are from an old cache of recordings, re-mastered (and generally tidied up) just recently. Some I haven't heard in quite a while and wondered why I hadn't put them into general release!

They were recorded on a number of different machines and edited/mixed on even more. The final mastering was done on an Ubuntu Linux box using Audacity.

(There was actually one refugee from my "let's be all lo-fi like the hip kids" phase that I actually recorded direct-to-stereo on an *extremely* cheap cassette boom box. That one just won't see the light of day. I gave it a decent burial though, I promise!)

Since I released most of these tunes into the wild some years ago as poorly mastered, low-res versions, there's bound to be some of you who have them already. I hope you'll like the new versions at least as well, if not better!

I'm calling this "Taking The Plunge" because after waffling about it for some time I've decided to walk the talk. I'll let you name the price for the downloads. I don't have a swelling horde of fans but you cats and kittens who have supported me have always been awesome and I expect you still are. :-)

(If, for some reason, you are coming across this document without benefit of first finding the recordings online, the downloads I refer to can be found at www.howlinhobbit.com/music.)

Please accept a huge thank you for all your kindness!

The Credits Bit

Recorded at:

Bard's Cathedral (www.bardscathedral.com)

Studio Eh? (hey, that's me!)

Mastered at:

Brig Street Studios (shoot... me again. just a different address.)

The Songs

He Might Be A Vampire

A little dating advice I wrote back in 2006 (or thereabouts). Back when vampires killed you instead of sparkling at you.

lyrics

If his skin is as pale and white as a wedding dress
He Might Be A Vampire
If he's always dressed natty in a tailcoat and starched white vest
He Might Be A Vampire
If his teeth seem a trifle wrong
If he gripes the smell of garlic's too strong
I think it's time to say so long
'Cuz He Might Be A Vampire

If he never looks into a mirror just to check his hair
He Might Be A Vampire
If the sun comes up and you turn and he just ain't there
He Might Be A Vampire
If he don't pick up the phone all day
If his bed sheets are covered in clay
I think it's prob'ly safe to say
That He Might Be A Vampire

(bridge)

He could be a werewolf with a hairy chest
He could be a pod man from an alien nest
He might be just the mummy to unwrap your desire
But I think he's a vampire

Don't let him step across your threshold unless you're sure
He Might Be A Vampire
He's gonna give you something for which there ain't no cure
He Might Be A Vampire
I don't mean to give you a fright
But if he wants to step in for a bite
Tell him no thanks not tonight
'Cuz He Might Be A Vampire

12th Street Rag

A ragtime piece written in 1914 by Euday L. Bowman. It's sort of become the equivalent of banjo players "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" except for ukulele players.

I believe I'm playing my National Resonator ukulele in this one, along with an Acme Siren whistle and a souvenir quacker from the Ride The Ducks tour in Seattle. Still have the latter two but sold the reso some months back.

Twentieth Century Fads

A song I wrote back in 2004. This was my first recording of it, done at Studio, Eh? (read that, a closet

in a Seattle studio apartment) back in 2006. I'm playing ukulele, banjo ukulele, harmonica, vocals.

That's T. Spae on *Sri Oompah*, the mighty sousaphone. He can be found at tspae.com.

lyrics

For many years society has offered up to you and me
So many things to buy or say or do
While stupid is the kindest thing to say for most of them
I've often fallen for them, haven't you?

spoken: Things like...

Ouija boards and go-go boots
Smiley faces, Betty Boop
Bobby socks and big zoot suits
Twentieth Century Fads

Superballs and saddle shoes
Granny glasses, Rubik's cubes
Putt-putt golf and beehive dos
Twentieth Century Fads

I've grown too fat for my Nehru shirt
And platform shoes just cause my calves to hurt
Still got my pet rock and an old mood ring
I wonder what fads the 21st will bring?

Bean bag chairs and fanny packs
Flagpole sitting, coonskin caps
Hula hoops and hacky sacks
Twentieth Century Fads

(instrumental break)

It's just plain nuts what some people do
The silly stuff they want to sell to you
But if it's funky, keen or really rad
Ain't risky to bet that it'll start a fad

Lava lamps and all them Smurfs
Phone booth stuffing, poodle skirts
Body paint and Astroturf
Twentieth Century Fads

Some that's foolish and some that hurts
Twentieth Century Fads

Home On The Range

A song written as a poem way back in 1873 by Dr. Brewster M. Higley with the music provided slightly later by Daniel E. Kelley. Reputed to be FDR's favorite tune. I'm playing ukulele, harmonica, and providing the lead vocals. Awesome backup vocals by the Chickadee Glen Men's Chorale.

This is not something I generally do live, but it's *such* a pretty chord progression and the CGMC is simply too fabulous to leave in the dark anymore.

lyrics

Oh give me a home where the buffalo roam
Where the deer and the antelope play
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word
And the skies are not cloudy all day

(chorus)

Home, home on the range
Where the deer and the antelope play
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word
And the skies are not cloudy all day

How often at night when the heavens are bright
With the lights from the glittering stars
Have I stood there amazed and asked as I gazed
If their glory exceeds that of ours

Oh give me a land where the bright diamond sand
Flows leisurely down the stream
Where the graceful white swan goes gliding along
Like a maid in a heavenly dream

(chorus)

Where the air is so pure the zephyrs so free
The breezes so balmy and light
That I would not exchange my home on the range
For all of the cities so bright

(chorus)

Goddess Kring

A song I wrote back in 2003 in honor of local Seattle legend Goddess Kring (aka Shannon Kringen). I found the goddess late one night during a pretty difficult time in my life. I was flicking through the channels on my TV and suddenly encountered a largish bare breast. I'd actually flicked a couple channels past that before that sank through my foggy brain. Like, I didn't have the Playboy channel or it's ilk.

But no, it was just Goddess Kring on the public access channel, doing her own strange and wonderful thing. I've since met her (and yes, she digs the tune) and really value our live encounters. She's quite a sweetie.

I'm covering all the ukulele, harmonica and vocal duties.

lyrics

Think I'm in love with the Goddess Kring
'Cause every week on my TV screen
She shows me everything
Sets my heart awhirl
She's all natural
That's why I'm in love
With the Goddess Kring
With the Goddess Kring

There are some times when she paints her breast
There are some times when she paints the rest
She brings my life such zest
She's her own canvas
That's what I like best
That's why I'm in love
With the Goddess Kring
With the Goddess Kring

(bridge)

Sometimes you think the girl
Has got a lot to say
Sometimes you think she just ain't right
It was a real hard time for me
When I found her on my TV
And she helped me make it through
Some lonely nights

So here's a toast to the Goddess Kring
And all the boys who's great joy she brings
Straight from their TV screens
She says it's alright
To touch yourself tonight
That's why I'm in love
With the Goddess Kring
With the Goddess Kring

Shine On Harvest Moon

A tune attributed to Nora Bayes & Jack Norworth from way back in 1908. I've done a very simple version here. See your friendly local neighborhood barbershop quartet for a fancier one. Once again it's

all Hobbit all the time on rhythm & lead ukulele, lead & harmony vocals. One of the better harmonies I've ever managed to sing and some of the lead noodling (on my National reso) still tickles me.

lyrics

The night was mighty dark so you could hardly see
For the moon refused to shine
Couple sittin' underneath the willow tree
For love, they pined
Little maid was kinda 'fraid of darkness
So she said, "I guess I'll go"
Boy began to sigh, looked up in the sky
Told the moon his little tale of woe

(chorus)

Shine on, shine on harvest moon, up in the sky
I ain't had no lovin' since April, January, June or July
Snow time ain't no time to stay outdoors and spoon
So shine on, shine on harvest moon

(for me and my gal)

Naughty Monkey

Another tune I wrote back in 2006. I'm thinking this was a good songwriting year!

This is one of the ones I recorded in a closet in a studio apartment in Seattle. I used a rather spotty Tascam 8 track digital recorder. Still turned out nearly what I aimed for. I'm especially fond of the "phone voice" for the spoken parts.

I'm on ukulele and vocals again, but I also use "tubed kazoo" which, like the name implies, is a kazoo stuck into a tube for that special resonance. I believe the tube in question was an 18" or so section of the heavy cardboard tube that carpeting is wrapped around.

The Snake Suspenderz version of this tune was released first, but it was based on this one.

lyrics

verse 1

If your monkey's acting badly, I'll tell you what I'm thinkin'
What your monkey needs is a damn good spankin'
Just pull his little trousers down and toss him cross your knee
And spank that monkey's bum most satisfactorily

chorus 1

'Cause he's a naughty monkey he's a naughty monkey
The most recalcitrant by far
And all his mugshots are up in the police stations

From Alberta to the shores of Zanzibar

bridge 1

He gives old Uncle Bert a shiner
He starts food fights while in your favorite diner
He will steal a plane and fly to Asia Minor
'Cause he's such a naughty monkey

verse 2

If your monkey comes to dinner, he'll break your favorite pie plate
Monkey keeps library books, well beyond their due date
Each time that monkey goes to town, he's hauled home by the cops
If monk makes you a drink you can expect knockout drops

chorus 2

'Cause he's a naughty monkey, he's a naughty monkey
He's such a saucy simian
And all his antics are known in the best of circles
From the Zulu to the Argentinians

bridge 2

He'll peek down cousin Cora's sweater
His bathroom habits aren't getting better
If he runs away he won't leave you a letter
'Cause he's such a naughty monkey

(repeat verse 1, spoken)

chorus 3

'Cause he's a naughty monkey he's a naughty monkey
He just keeps getting more risqué
And all his crimes have been shown on the top ten wanted
From Alhambra to farthest Zimbabwe

The Thanks Bit

Thaddeus Spae has been an invaluable source, mentor and friend. He's the brains and muscle behind Bards Cathedral and working with him both in his studio and in various other musical projects has been enlightening.

My sweet Fallen Angel has been a constant source of help and inspiration. She even fronted me the money for the first batch of these CDs! I send her lots of those xoxox things!

A fellow who rejoices under the screen name of “yep” who started a *huge* thread on the Reaper—a recording software—forum titled “Why do your recordings sound like ass?” I don't use Reaper but his advice was nicely generic and much of it was used during the re-mastering process on this CD.

The Wrap-up

If you have any questions, comments, kudos or slams, please feel free to send an electronic communication to fanletters@howlinhobbit.com.

These tunes will eventually all have downloadable chord/lyric sheets with my arrangements for ukulele. Stay tuned.

Thanks for listening!

Howlin' Hobbit – Ukulele Ace
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