



How We Made *See You On The Moon* by Tift Merritt

I put a note on the wall beside the desk where I was writing this record. *Direct*, is what it read. *See You On The Moon* is a parcel of letters stowed in my pocket all along. Ghosts came to visit this record like compasses we were unaware of pointing us in the right direction. We wanted to make something elemental: open space, grit, real strength. Direct. Two people talking honestly. We kept to ourselves in the studio like this was what we had been practicing for all along, loosely, inevitably, a wide net of openness, a pencil shaved with focus. We drank some beers. We made soup. We wore roller skates. We told the truth. We didn't want to talk about this record. We just wanted to play it.

Mixtape

Zeke stole my ukulele and kept coming up with little tunes he wanted me to write words for. He had big plans. I had been staring down this immense suitcase of old cassette tapes I'd collected. Mostly 4 track demos of who knows what, but also some really wonderful handmade tapes that people had made for me. Even an audio letter called *Greetings from Vietnam*. Really wonderful, handwritten things. About that time, we went to Maine with some of our best friends and we were properly relaxed and having such a great time driving around. On a scrap of paper I wrote, "I'm still making you cassette tapes with homemade covers" and shoved it down in my wallet. I didn't tell anybody at the time, but I thought I might have something pretty good for Zeke's ukulele song.

Engine To Turn

I was listening to the news on the radio and it just seemed like the world was a big mess. Everything was a big mess. Including me. Nothing made sense, and there wasn't anything anybody could do to fix it. By some strange stroke of compassion for myself and the world, I just decided that feeling not enough or failed or a mess is just a waste of time. Totally boring. The only thing to do is give what I have and forget about being scared. Nothing else is that important.

Things That Everybody Does

I wrote this song in one sitting, maybe faster than I've ever written anything. I don't know how it happened but I know it is true. Every bit of it.

Six More Days of Rain

Why is it always raining and gray when you have to get up really early in the morning to catch a train in a damp gray train station heading to a lonely strange place that makes you homesick and tired just to think about? Once, I watched it rained for a month straight. Everything was restless. I worked on this song all that month. It started in an open tuning, but I threw that away. It finally got somewhere on the piano. I can't remember, maybe the sun finally came out about that time.

Feel of The World

My grandparents grew up in California in the 40s. My grandfather died about the time I was born. He loved to sail and fly airplanes. My grandmother died last spring. That night, as I was very far away from her and waiting for the news from home, I thought about the world, the tactile feel of it. Wood, skin, sleep, water. I wrote this song quickly, in one sitting. I did not realize until it was finished that it was my grandfather's song to her and not mine. I dreamed that night that the third verse was a bridge and I fixed it in the morning.

Never Talk About It

This was one of the first songs I wrote for the record. Really, really simple two chords to sort of unlock things in the beginning. An accident. I do love the endlessness of trying to say what you mean, of exposing yourself to someone else. It never really resolves. Tucker, our producer, kept it a lot like the demo, which made me feel good.

All the Reasons We Don't Have to Fight

I hate to tell you but I started this song after a terrible argument with Zeke. In the exhausted clarity that followed, I had sense enough to write a few things down to save for later. I could not tell you what we fought about. It's easy and inaccurate to think about time before being simpler than now, but I will say that we always did sleep late and play our records loud and drive down to the beach in our van. We'd load up our bikes and take our dog and find an old motel with wood paneled walls.

Live Till You Die

During the *Bramble Rose* tour, we had Emitt Rhodes on all the time. Our guitar player Dave had a copy of his first record on cassette and we were always just in love with it. We loved the music and we loved that he disappeared and did his own thing. I had a feeling there might be something greasy and good about cutting this song with a girl singer, and I had always wanted to sing those words.

Papercut

This song started as a sad little art project. I wish that I could make huge canvases and be covered in paint but I'm pretty lousy at it. I was trying to draw despite that, one night when my head had turned to mush from writing. Fooling around with whatever art supplies were in our apartment, I found a flip book of lighting gels and decided to cut a red one up for my sad little art project. It looked astonishingly like a paper cut. I thought, isn't that funny how such silly, tiny things hurt so much. I suddenly realized how often life was like that.

See You On the Moon

This song is for my friend Doug who was my next door neighbor since I about five. He had a three-legged dog named Calvin who was deaf and had been hit by a train. Doug brought him home and took care of him because that was the kind of man Doug was. Doug looked out for me, too, for many years, and I think he still does. He died a while ago. It was very sudden and we all felt incomplete. I wrote the verses to this song not long after, but I couldn't write anything near enough to capture everything Doug was or what he meant to us. One day, years later, I was brushing my teeth, and the refrain to this song popped into my head all in one piece. I got to the piano and it came out whole and I knew Doug had just stopped by to see how I was and tell me the news.

Danny's Song

This all came about because of a pair of his and her roller skates I found at the flea market while we were in the studio. I was wearing them around the studio – they were orange, I was bored – and a conversation about girl singers in the 70s ensued and someone said something not so his and her roller skates about Anne Murray. There was much protesting and immediate search for vintage 1970 footage. Tucker and his gal Laura Veirs were expecting; we all got a little teary over “Danny's Song”. I was playing around with a high-strung guitar, and Jay and I just started singing it in the lounge. Tucker told us we had two takes, but gave us three. Nobody really thought we'd put it on the record. But we couldn't shake it.

After Today

I ran into an old friend who is a public defender in the airport. We caught up for five or six hours on the flight, and he told me about his work defending kids in the inner city whose circumstances are so terrible that most end up in prison, often with life sentences before they are twenty. He described the life they faced as so dire that they never had the luxury of learning to think ahead and plan. His clients were just trying to get their next meal or survive until morning. The first time these kids came to court in chains, they were always shaking and crying, but by the second day or a little time in prison, my friend could see them harden, become acclimated. I was very moved by his work and I felt like the voices and stories of these juvenile inmates were not heard very often or loudly enough. I wrote this song a few days later. For the record, when I sent it to my friend, he wished the last line were “No Matter Who you are, DON'T get used to your chains.”