

Joel Mabus

Lonesome Road

Suite for solo guitar & voice

Songs of The Lost Generation: 1924-1928

Americana, Acoustic Jazz & Country Blues



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| 1 | Softly (as in a morning sunrise) Sigmund Romberg 1928 | 3:49 |
| 2 | Old Man River Jerome Kern & Oscar Hammerstein II 1927 | 4:30 |
| 3 | Lover Come Back Romberg & Hammerstein 1928 | 3:16 |
| 4 | Fascinatin' Rhythm George & Ira Gershwin 1924 | 3:12 |
| 5 | Someone to Watch Over Me George Gershwin 1926 | 3:18 |
| 6 | It Had to Be You Isham Jones & Gus Kahn 1924 | 2:37 |
| 7 | Blues In A Bottle Prince Albert Hunt 1928 | 5:04 |
| 8 | Prisoner's Song Vernon Dalhart 1925 | 2:43 |
| 9 | Stardust Hoagy Carmichael 1927 | 3:29 |
| 10 | Blue Yodel Number Three Jimmie Rodgers 1928 | 8:21 |
| 11 | Die Moritat (von Mackie Messer) Kurt Weill 1928 | 2:04 |
| 12 | The Lonesome Road Nat Shilkret & Gene Austin 1927 | 3:32 |
| 13 | The Red Robin Harry Woods 1926 | 4:02 |
| 14 | Adiós muchachos Julio César Sanders 1927 | 3:37 |

from the liner notes:

The Lost Generation: People born in the last decades of the 19th century. Before airplanes. Before automobiles, radio & penicillin. They came of age in a brave new world. Had a front-row seat to the horrors of the first World War, and on its heels a bird-flu pandemic even more deadly.

Then came the chaos of prohibition: The vice. The greed. The booze. The flappers. The gangsters. No wonder their songs demanded a new tune and a new rhythm. And a lyric born of cold realism & keen-eyed cynicism — and unresolvable conflict.

It was a Lonesome Road for the Lost Generation. And much of their music is now forgotten. But, in fact, many of the songs I do here were million-sellers in their day. As squiggly grooves etched on discs of black lacquer (at 78 rpm). Songs that won the heart of a nation were sung “live” over the pop & crackle of AM radio waves.

To be sure, every song was not heard by everybody. These songs had widely disparate audiences: Broadway swells, Texas ranch hands, Mississippi gandy dancers. But the plain talk & cynical eye of the Lost Generation were the common chords, no matter the genre.

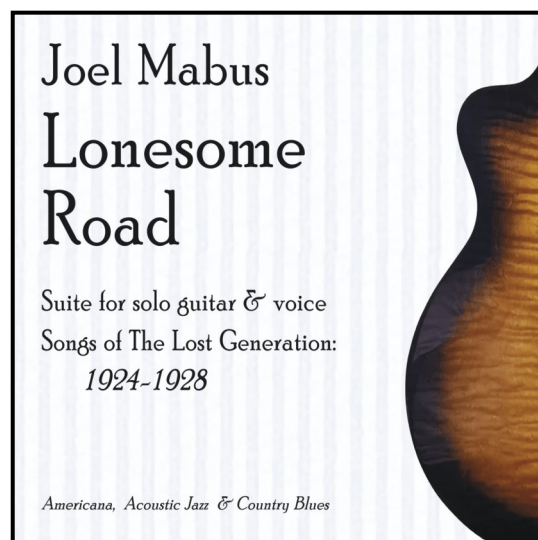
Recently, the copyrights for these songs expired; they now reside in the public domain (PD). Meaning anybody is free to sing & record these songs any which way they like.

What I've tried to do here is to give these old songs new life with a new reading & a new voice -- albeit one that's well-worn.

I've made a long career of singing rough with an acoustic guitar. Tilting at windmills run by the synthetic-music industry. And now this album. What relics these pearls must seem to ears weaned on Auto-Tune & beatboxes.

Creating this suite has been gratifying work. I have found a great degree of solace in these songs. And much wisdom. I hope you do too.

Joel Mabus, 2024



Produced & performed by Joel Mabus for Fossil Records (Joel plays a Bryan Galloup guitar)

Recorded July 14-17, 2024, at La Luna Studio in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Engineered, mixed & mastered by Ian Gorman

For more on this record and info on the artist and his other albums,

Track comments by Joel Mabus from CD liner notes

1 Softly (as in a morning sunrise) *guitar solo*
Sigmund Romberg 1928 PD **3:49**

A tango from Romberg's operetta, *New Moon*, known today mostly as a "cool jazz" standard. The Ventures surfer anthem, "Walk Don't Run," was derived from it.

2 Old Man River Jerome Kern & Oscar Hammerstein II 1927 PD **4:30**

The famous song from *Showboat*. I re-dream the melody into a fluid guitar piece & boil down the lyric somewhat.

3 Lover Come Back Romberg & Hammerstein 1928 PD **3:16**

Also from *New Moon*, an early example of Hammerstein's penchant for simple language & forthright imagery.

4 Fascinatin' Rhythm George & Ira Gershwin 1924 PD **3:12**

A breakout hit from the Gershwins' *Lady Be Good*. It was sung in the Broadway play by a young Cliff Edwards ("Ukulele Ike") who made it his own.

5 Someone to Watch Over Me *guitar solo*
George Gershwin 1926 PD **3:18**

From the Gershwin play *Oh, Kay!* Originally intended as a fast dance number, Ira insisted George slow it down to a ballad. Smart move.

6 It Had to Be You Isham Jones & Gus Kahn 1924 PD **2:37**

Jones was a tin-pan-alley composer from Saginaw Michigan. Lyricist Kahn was born in Prussia, but as a small child moved to Chicago in 1890.

7 Blues In A Bottle Prince Albert Hunt 1928 PD **5:04**

Popular in the dance halls of Dallas, gravel-voiced Hunt was known as the "Prince of fiddlers." Shot dead in Deep Ellum by a jealous husband in 1931.

8 Prisoner's Song Vernon Dalhart 1925 PD **2:43**

Early country star, Texas singer Dalhart took credit for writing this song but, like AP Carter, he lifted freely from tradition. It was the flip side of his biggest hit, "The Wreck of the Old 97"

9 Stardust *alto ukulele solo* Hoagy Carmichael 1927 PD **3:29**

Hoagy composed this at the piano in 1927. Lyrics were added a decade later. With my first tenor uke

my goal was to learn "Stardust" on it. I use the "high G" re-entrant tuning, but I lower all the strings a minor third to the key of "A": e A C# F# I call that "alto" uke tuning.

10 Blue Yodel Number Three Jimmie Rodgers 1928 PD **8:21**

Deemed the father of country music, Rodgers died of TB in 1933. Among the many songs in his short career, the "blue yodels" stand out. Like his others, "#3" borrows floating verses from other blues songs. But there is a particular sadness to this one.

11 Die Moritat (von Mackie Messer) *guitar solo*
Kurt Weill 1928 PD **2:04**

From *The Threepenny Opera*, a happy oom-pah with a circle of chords and a melody that never seems to find its key. Written while Weill still lived in Germany, with Hitler on the rise. In English, it's "Mack the Knife." In German, literally "death song."

12 The Lonesome Road Nat Shilkret & Gene Austin 1927 PD **3:32**

Many have assumed it's an old folk song. It's not. Composer Shilkret was classically trained, b.1889 in NYC to an emigre family of Ukrainian Jews. Lyrics are by Gene Austin, a popular radio crooner from Texas whose smooth baritone led the way for the likes of Bing & Elvis.

13 The Red Robin Harry Woods 1926 PD **4:02**

Woods wrote tons of jaunty songs, but this was his first big success, a hit for Al Jolson (who strutted it in cheery blackface, with his usual bombastic style). Harry Woods was, by all accounts, a miserable S.O.B. An angry & seriously depressed alcoholic. A WWI vet, and a pianist with a disfigured left hand. I re-imagine this song with all that in mind.

14 Adiós muchachos *guitar solo*
Julio César Sanders 1927 PD **3:37**

Sanders improvised this evocative tango on piano in Buenos Aires in 1927, after a night of heavy indulging. One of his pals had left the party with a hearty "Adios muchachos!" Another friend, poet César Vedani, penned lyrics with him the next day in a small cafe. That same year Agustín Magaldi (Eva Peron's lover) was the first to record it. Given an entirely new set of lyrics in English, in 1951, it became "I Get Ideas" — a hit for both Tony Martin and Louis Armstrong.