

Todd Hallawell & Robin Kessinger



Ear

~~Eye~~ Candy

Some days start well. After a crashed computer, downloads that didn't (download), and deadlines that did (go dead) today started nicely with the music of *Ear Candy* finally arriving and sweetening up the summer morning with some beautiful stuff. Mind you, I had my doubts; I always have doubts about yet another steel-string guitar instrumental project, especially my own, as to whether it will have enough freshness, originality, virtuosity, dynamics, taste, and a little familiarity, to add up to something people will enjoy, return to, recommend, and also purchase. But happily with this project, the answer is yes, yes, yes, and yes again.

Todd and Robin are pals and collaborators who obviously have made it to the same page musically... they weave in and out of each others musical space with expertise and grace. The beautiful music they make has all the qualities I listed above. But in addition, the project itself hangs together: it starts nice and pretty and goes to great and powerful, and you want to go along with it. I especially liked Dizzy Fingers, Davey Jones, and Third Eyebrow, all hot with virtuosity and warped with beautiful irony. And then it takes you to sweet and melodic, but then moves to a surprise: an arrangement of Turkey Knob that you actually love, and you don't want to end.

Todd and Robin are, of course, well-known as award-winners and giants in the acoustic guitar world, but Todd the fingerpicking giant here has taken up the flatpick for this project, and he enters that extremely small world of artists who are great at both. And Robin here plays at the top of his monumental game, better than ever, full of power and authority and originality.

But the biggest feat of all, the one you chase for a lifetime, the most elusive goal, is to make a collection of recorded tunes that will last, because people will return to them with joy. When that happens, it's beautiful, as you are about to find out.

- Dan Crary



Thanks

Working with Robin Kessinger has been a rich and unforgettable experience. It's been like having my very own Doc Watson around willing to do any musical thing that popped into my head! Robin's style of playing is so powerful and recognizable that I've often felt guilty when I've tried to copy it. (Emphasis on "tried"). But because I have tried, I've learned more about flat-picking during the course of recording this album than I have in the previous 40 years. As happens with most recording projects, I believe we've both grown as musicians and I hope Robin and I will be picking together for many years to come.

The biggest thank you has to go to Kay Hallawell and Mary Kessinger, our very understanding and patient wives!

And to Duane Webster for adding his talented fingers on the acoustic bass for every track on this CD.

Huge hugs and heartfelt gratitude go out to our good friends Eddie Mattingly and Carol Reesor who graciously opened their home to us during the final stages of this project. Without you two, this album would still be on our hard drive!

Since this album was recorded little by little over a period of three years, many of our friends have heard bits and pieces of it and a few of them have heard the tunes multiple times in various stages of development. For their indulgence we are extremely grateful. These people have seen us through the project and deserve to be recognized for their support and encouragement even if it was only to ask **"So, are you two ever going to finish this?"** I've placed these in reverse alphabetical order because the "Z"s of the world always have to wait.

Matt Zarb (thanks for the airplay); Jacob Williamson; Roxane Webster; Walter Stump; Brent Stuart; Polly Smith; Matt Roth, Dean & Alyce Riedesel; Robin Ralston; Mark & Carol Pritcher; Dawn McCollum, for years of friendship and support; Bobby & Gail Lloyd; Harvey Leach; Frank & Leanne Koonce; the entire Kessinger Family; Jeremy Jenkins; Chris & Robin Jenkins; Pete Huttlinger; Fran Harding; Marquita Hallawell (hi mom!); Steve & Sally Green, for your love and friendship; Bruce Graybill, for introducing me to Russian Rag!; Ron & Karen Gentry, whose enthusiasm for music and musicians goes above and beyond the call; to Michael Ferrucci, who manages to put a happy spin on everything; Elixir Strings, for their years of support; Tim & Brenda Ellison; Dan Crary; Paul Craft; Jim & Debbie Cowan; Mark Casstevens; special thanks to Dave Firestone and Carp Camp for all the tunes, inspiration and support they've given us through the years; and last, who under different formatting would have been first - Ron Bell (aka Antsy McClain).

A note from Robin: I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank some of the people who have contributed to my musical happiness. First, to my family who have always supported me. To my mother who endured the long hours of me practicing while growing up and Dad who was my mentor and best friend. To my sisters who have tagged along with me to so many musical events and act as my guardian angels. And to my little brother, friend, and musical partner who has always been supportive including having a lot of good things to say about this particular project.

I would also like to acknowledge the craftsmen who built the guitars I used on this album: Sam Watts, Bob Thompson, Wayne Henderson, C.F. Martin, and Voyage-Air. Thanks also to Marke Dronge and all the nice folks at D.R. Strings. And to Matthew Goins who gave me my coveted Blue Chip pick. The same one that Todd "borrowed" from me at the end of this project and is still using!

And many, many thanks to Todd & Kay Hallawell for making me feel like part of their family. And an extra special thank you to my friend and musical partner in crime, Todd, whose arranging skills and guitar playing have made for such an exciting project. By persistently nudging me out of my comfort zone, he's opened the door to all sorts of musical possibilities!

Production Credits:

Todd Hallawell, acoustic guitar (left channel) • Robin Kessinger, acoustic guitar (right channel)
Duane Webster, acoustic bass

Recording & Editing: Todd Hallawell

Production assistance: Eddie Mattingly, Pat Kirtley, Kay Hallawell, Robin Kessinger

Mixing: Todd Hallawell, Eddie Mattingly, Ashley Shepherd

Liner notes: Dan Crary

Mastering: Ashley Shepherd at Audio Grotto, Newport, KY www.audiogrotto.com

Cover photo: Mark Rhodes • Back Cover photo: Pat Jarrett • Cover design: Tim Aikens

Layout & Design: Cindy Johnston • Design assistance: Ron Bell

Manufactured by: QCA Inc. www.go-QCA.com

Technical Support

Lee Furr • Keith Andrews • Eddie Mattingly • Ashley Shepherd

Martin Gente and Thorsten Marx at Steinberg

Guitars Played on this Recording:

Robin played guitars by Sam Watts, Bob Thompson, Wayne Henderson, C.F. Martin and a Voyage-Air VAD-1

Todd played a Grand Auditorium and Baritone by Lance McCollum and a Voyage-Air VAD-2

Todd uses Elixir Strings, Elixir Picks and Elixir Hats!

Robin uses DR Strings, Bluechip picks and has no preference regarding hats



McCollum



Elixir
strings

Vinton's Hornpipe (2:35)

Traditional

Russian Rag (3:36)

George L. Cobb

Hoodoo Hoedown (2:59)

Jay Unger

Eleanor (3:12)

Traditional

Campground Medley (5:27)

(Big Liza Jane, Whisky Before Breakfast,
St. Anne's Reel, Butterfly Hornpipe) Traditional

Dizzy Fingers (2:35)

Edward Elzear "Zez" Confrey

Davy Jones Hornpipe (3:29)

Traditional

The Third Eyebrow (3:20)

Robin Kessinger

Sidh Beag Sidh Mor (2:27)

Turlough O'Carolan

Harvest Home (2:34)

Traditional

Maple Leaf Rag (3:08)

Scott Joplin

Turkey Knob (3:23)

Clark Kessinger

Elzic's Farewell (3:18)

Traditional

soundset.com

toddhallawell.com

robinkessinger.com



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