

From Classical To Country: Expanding Trumpet's Role Through Genre Fusion

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the intentional fusion of trumpet performance within country, western, and folk music idioms, addressing the instrument's underutilization as a featured voice in popular genres. While trumpet appears prominently in funk, reggae, ska, and R&B, it typically serves textural rather than soloistic functions in these contexts. This project demonstrates how the trumpet can transcend its traditional role through strategic genre fusion and performance approaches informed by conservatory training.

The research methodology combines practical songwriting techniques with studio recording processes to create four original compositions that integrate trumpet as a central soloistic voice. Four distinct compositional approaches are examined: low end-driven songwriting ("36"), chord change-driven composition ("Hymn for Jim"), rhythmic-driven composition ("SPCY JNY"), and melody-driven songwriting ("10 Paces"). Each piece represents a different stylistic synthesis—Appalachian folk with Baroque influences, country bar ballad with jazz harmonies, honky-tonk with Louisiana zydeco, and spaghetti western with mariachi elements.

The project documents comprehensive recording processes in a Nashville studio and technical analysis of how different trumpet family members (piccolo trumpet, flugelhorn, cornet) serve specific timbral requirements within each genre. The trumpet's vocal-like phrasing capabilities and extensive range (E3~Bb6) make it naturally suited for featured roles in country and folk music, with fusion strategies that respect both source genres while creating new aesthetic possibilities. Historical precedents from the Beatles' "Penny Lane" to Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire" provide contextual framework for

contemporary applications, while technically informed approaches detail methods for achieving stylistic authenticity and maintaining classical performance standards.

This work provides practical frameworks for trumpet players and other instrumentalists seeking to expand their creative reach into popular genres through songwriting and arranging. The documented processes offer replicable methodologies for genre fusion while maintaining high performance standards. The project ultimately argues for trumpet's untapped potential in popular music contexts and provides concrete examples for future genre collaboration initiatives.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to the loves of my life that I have lost. Charlotte, whose artistic lens shed light on the greatest joys of creating and expression. Josh, who with his bear hug would take any care or anxiety and obliterate it from existence, if only for the time one spent with him. Matt, the ultimate warrior, and mischievous challenger of comfort levels. Chris, who invited me to his parents' garage every weekend to make unspeakable noise as we explored and learned the hard rock hits of the '90s. Lauralyn, who selflessly made everyone feel wonderful about themselves as she struggled internally and silently. Jack and Marcella, for the foundation of family and artistic creation. Aeryn, my dearest, sweetest, silliest, whimsical friend—whose lasting light continues to sprinkle magic on this life for everyone she knew. And to Jimmy, who accepted the six-year-old me as his own. I dedicate my creative endeavors and lasting joy to their memories that continue to shape my future.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Genre fusion in music can be described as blending two or more cultural styles into a new format. In the Americas, we often examine relationships between rhythms from West Africa brought over during the slave trade and western harmony which have evolved into modern popular genres like reggae, salsa, or calypso (Rice, 2001). The scope of this project is to forge new pathways for genre collaboration in writing and performance for trumpet with intentional fusion of already popular genres within the country, western, and folk idioms. Not only do I hope to increase awareness of the instrument's versatility in this sphere, but also to provide example frameworks that help trumpet players and other instrumentalists to expand their creative reach into other popular genres by means of songwriting and arranging.

There are a few notable instances of memorable trumpet across the Western popular music landscape, with two prime examples being the Beatles' "Penny Lane" and Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire". There are also some noteworthy soloists that have crossed genre lines into fusion territories, mainly from jazz music, to become household names fronting billboard charting groups, such as Chase, Herb Alpert, Chuck Mangione, and most famously Louis Armstrong, among others. While the trumpet is common in funk, reggae, ska, R&B, blues, roots rock, and beyond, by and large, the trumpet is utilized as the top line in textural orchestrations in these pop genres, rarely taking center stage in soloistic playing the way guitar or keyboards do. The tessitura of the trumpet ranging from E3 to, in some extreme cases and dependent upon the player, up to a Bb6, easily

covers the functional range of a featured guitar or keyboard solo. Additionally, the trumpet's ability to mimic phrasing of the human voice allows for relatable tonality and presence within popular genres.

### **Previous Experience**

I've been toying with the idea of incorporating trumpet where it isn't typically featured since 2011, when I began writing my first solo record, which went on to be produced by Coldplay's bassist, Guy Berryman. Initially I began writing and recording the record to showcase all my musical skill sets— a kind of musical business card for all occasions. I wrote the music and lyrics, sang, arranged strings, brass, and woodwinds, played bass, a bit of guitar and keys, and of course all the trumpet, piccolo and flugelhorn parts. I also co-produced alongside Berryman, working with a community of musicians I had known from the rock, classical, and commercial scenes in New York City.

As the project moved forward and with the name recognition of Coldplay behind some of the social media postings, it evolved from a business card into a full-fledged digital and analog release, *Daybreak*, in 2013, complete with press campaigns and live performances. While well received critically, the album's reach was only marginally successful without continued financial backing, and the project fell dormant within a couple of years. However, based on streaming data from the Tunecore digital distribution service as well as feedback from friends and fans, two of the most played and favorited tracks both featured the trumpet as the main soloist and melodic voice.

Although these tunes feature trumpet, it is only used in interstitial and bookend capacities. The first tune, "Breakfast of Fools," is a synth-driven, mid-tempo pop ballad

in C minor that features a modulating pentatonic improvisation, which eventually leads up to the dominant 7, and is then utilized as a drone, while the solo instrument becomes the melody (see Figure 1). Multi-tracked flugelhorns then play the chords below for 8 bars of the form (see Figure 2)



Figure 1. Flugelhorn opening to “Breakfast of Fools”



Figure 2. Flugelhorn lead line and pads to “Breakfast of Fools”

The subsynth bass then swells in for three measures before the trumpet melody comes back in for one pickup measure leading into the rhythm section entrance. The trumpet melody returns in the middle section and outro, and there are some additional melodic counter-rhythms in the B sections.

The second tune from the album, similarly featuring trumpet, entitled “Jean-Marie,” in which the instrument provides a textural counter-melody in a development section that assists the transition of the rhythmic schema: interchanging meters (11/4 to 9/4 or 4+3+4+4+5) in the A section, common time in the B section (Figure 3), and straight 4/4 through the development into the bridge (Figure 4).



Figure 3, A-section melody to “Jean-Marie”

The image displays a musical score for the bridge of the song "Jean-Marie". It consists of five systems of staves, each with a Trumpet in B♭ (Tpt.) and a Flugelhorn (Flghn.) part. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as rests, eighth notes, quarter notes, and eighth rests. Some measures contain circled numbers (4, 8, 20, 25) indicating measure numbers. The Flugelhorn part often provides harmonic support with chords and rests, while the Trumpet part carries the melodic line.

Figure 4, Bridge trumpet melody and pads to “Jean-Marie”

While not incredibly central to the song, a poignant moment for me as a songwriter was finding how natural the trumpet could be incorporated into a common genre and that listeners broadly accepted this alternate soloistic voice. “Breakfast of Fools” certainly fit more within a popular genre of the time (Brooklyn indie, mid-aughts); however, “Jean-Marie” crosses into timeless Americana genres, incorporating finger-picking guitar, the thump of an upright bass, and a simple brushed shuffle approach on the snare drum. It evoked responses from concert-goers and listeners on social media regarding the

arrangements, in addition to general genre classifications. Some of the obvious associations were the fluttering flutes to birds, the winding bass clarinet following the vocals to the wind or water, and the trumpet to bees or perhaps solo electric guitar—something very common in our aural databases. It is this familiarity that served as a prime inspiration for this recording project.

## **Influences**

A few outside influences that moved this project in a country and folk direction came while performing with a colleague on a recent Broadway tour who shared many stories of his time playing keyboards with the great Merle Haggard. It was he who relayed to me on several occasions that Merle always toured with a horn section, which is generally rare for country acts. From a recent email interview, my colleague, Henry Palkes, gave some insight into the advent of this addition to the band (H. Palkes, personal correspondence, December 4, 2024).

When asked about Merle Haggard's swing influences and genre fusion, Palkes explained:

His swing influence was Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys, so the featured players were guitar players, fiddle, [and] pedal steel, but Wills, Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, even Willie [Nelson incorporated horns]. I think the advent of Memphis horns with Elvis carried influence.

Regarding the musical background of Haggard's horn section, Palkes noted:

Don [Markham] played on every album since 1974; he comes from the same genre as Boots Randolph. He was self-taught, as were 99.9% of his players. His criteria [were] simple. They had to be great players with chops. He was both a teacher and a listener; all his players had tremendous respect for Hag, and no one was doing it for the gig. You became part of the legend.

On the rarity of horns in country music and Haggard's approach, Palkes observed:

By the time country music became huge business and started including rock and blues, lots of folks were carrying horns. Once Don started recording, he became a mainstay, as did Gary Church on trumpet. His live show included tunes like "Sweet Caroline" [and] "Pancho and Lefty," and later more ballad[s with] harmonically inventive use [and] jazz-influenced soloing.

It was also around the same time that I had discovered Sturgill Simpson after watching a performance on Saturday Night Live that carried a powerful horn section, albeit mostly for background texture, but featuring a trumpet solo in the outro (Simpson, 2017). Other inspiration comes from a group out of Tucson, AZ called Calexico that frequently uses trumpet for countermelody and texture. Of course, as previously mentioned, Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire", with the addition of its mariachi-inspired trumpet melody, is ubiquitous in the modern zeitgeist and likely the subconscious foundation for this musical experiment.

### **Country Music and Purpose of Project**

Country music is a blanket term encompassing an incredible variety of genres and delves much deeper into the American sub-conscious than visions of John Wayne on a horse or a muddied pickup truck. With roots reaching back to folk songs of English and Scottish peasantry, to rhythmic and instrumental innovations from Africa, modern country meets at a unique intersection in American culture incorporating hymnody and building upon its own recorded history (Brady, 2017). Each region has its own unique set of cultural influences that shape a particular sound. It is my goal to explore a few of these musical intersections with trumpet at its core in four country inspired songs and to

provide a documented guideline of the theory and practice behind their creation for future projects.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE WRITING PROCESS

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, we will explore the songwriting processes that were the foundational basis in shaping the four tunes for this project. It must be noted that this process is highly individualized, and each songwriter will have their own nuanced approach and inspirations that form the product. In my experience, the synthesis of song creation has come from a variety of pathways, and it would be unwise to limit creativity to one narrow formula. However, there are a few templates that seem to assist the creative undertaking as a songwriter, and it is of utmost importance to be ready to document the process at all stages. Deciding on a framework can help get any project off the ground. Once it begins to come to life, it is easy to move project boundaries as they evolve, but when one is new at something, getting started can be the most difficult challenge. Setting basic parameters based on big picture goals regarding form and stylistic influences will get a songwriting project off the ground, and I have outlined four basic templates and their implementation below.

#### **Low End–Driven Songwriting: “36”**

As a former bass player in rock bands in the late 1990s–mid 2010’s, I find that much of my initial inspiration in songwriting starts with the bass line. Picking up any instrument and emulating the bass while experimenting with rhythmic and harmonic combinations will lead an experienced musician to a repeatable pattern. If new to the

process, I suggest familiarizing yourself with recognizable basslines from popular music. Low-end inspiration can be found in the active basslines from Motown recordings of the late 1960s and 1970s, or funk/R&B/hip hop tunes from the 70s, 80s, and 90s. While there are countless examples to seek out, a few that have struck inspiration for me are the Commodores' "Brick House", Stevie Wonder's "I Wish", Roberta Flack and Donny Hathaway's "Gone Away", and the Sugar Hill Gang's "Rapper's Delight". Transcribing countless basslines allowed my ears to hear how rhythmic and harmonic foundations were built upon the low end and, it is my recommendation for any aspiring songwriter to start here.

The formulation of an original bassline is often an automatic response to rhythmic occurrences that happen in mundane moments; hearing the steady pulse of a dryer or appliance, an idling motorcycle, or the tempo of my feet while walking or running provides perfect backing tracks with which to experiment with basslines. I then pick up the nearest instrument, usually a trumpet, and do my best to transcribe the idea. Recording this, even on a simple voice memo app, and listening back will allow the songwriter space to fill in the blanks from here. I generally continue with the percussive elements, starting by looping a simple MIDI drumbeat. Even pre-programmed beat loops on simple Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) like GarageBand can provide a metronomic framework for your bassline. Upon completing the time feel, or groove, I then add harmonic elements utilizing guitar, MIDI keyboard, or by fleshing out the chords in Finale or Sibelius and transferring the MIDI data over to my DAW to experiment with patches to find the right accompanying sound for harmony, sometimes using multiple sounds to create added texture. At this point, I will structure the rest of the

section with melody, employing passing tones to connect the chord changes, often following the bassline

### ***Style and Execution***

Dedicating this song to a close friend who passed away, I wanted to write an Appalachian-influenced country song while also emulating some of the famous female/male duets, imagining a last conversation I could never have in a style that she loved. While it was easy to pick up on stylistic nuances between classic duet partners (Dolly Parton/Porter Wagoner, Johnny Cash/June Carter, Tammy Wynette/George Jones, Patsy Cline/Bobby Lord, and others), as a non-guitar-playing songwriter, it was difficult to pick up on the finger-picking style idiomatic to the Appalachian and folk traditions. To jump-start the song, I reverted to the low-end process, which was familiar to me, and decided to write a basic chart in MIDI, hoping that the experienced session guitarist could interpret and execute it.

With the idea of a sparse arrangement and low-end foundation, I utilized arco bass in unison with solo cello. Not having access to a cellist for the recording session, I eventually settled for the low string patch on a Mellotron: a keyboard used often by the Beatles, which oscillates pre-recorded loops of tape. As they are somewhat rare, in this case, we used a digital plug-in through Pro Tools (DAW). Following the bassline, I wanted to keep the rhythm sparse to accommodate the somber tone, so I decided to incorporate both the simple syncopated rhythmic schema and chord changes through a simple, finger-picked acoustic guitar. Additional rhythmic color from bass drum and shaker was added to enhance the end of the bridge and the following solo section. For

extra harmonic and melodic support, we added an improvised pedal steel guitar part in which the player correctly and instinctively alternated between the chord changes and playing distant responses to the vocal melody.

In the solo section, continuing the conversational nature between the vocals and pedal steel, I employed two different instruments in two styles to emulate the aforementioned last conversation. As we had used the Mellotron string patch for the low end, harking back to a familiarity with the Beatles, I decided to start the solo section with a piccolo trumpet in a Baroque style (e.g., “Penny Lane”), and then answer with flugelhorn in more of a modern jazz harmonic style, influenced by my father, saxophonist Dick Oatts, whom I had mentioned earlier in the lyrics. The progression was intended to loosely follow the tension and release of saying goodbye to an old friend, as described in the lyrical content. The technical approach and implementation will be discussed further in chapter 4.

### **Chord Change Driven Songwriting: “Hymn for Jim”**

Country, Americana, and blues music, in general, keeps pretty simple structure as it pertains to harmony and chord changes. In “Hymn for Jim”, I set out to write a song that incorporated all three of the aforementioned genres to capture the essence of American folk. I tend to find that the heartbeat for both country and Americana music is the strum of an acoustic guitar. Although I am not a guitar player in the slightest, I have strategized how to overcome my limitations through alternate tunings. Simply lowering the low E string a whole step to D, for example, allows even the most novice of musicians an outlet for easy access to major and minor fingering shapes. Going one step

further by tuning the entire guitar to D major can enable even a beginner to emulate blues slide guitar. In my specific case, after much experimenting, I have found that tuning the six strings to D, A, D, G, A, D, which is common in folk and Celtic music, provides a simple finger structure with the added depth of harmonic drones and open intervals.

### ***Style and Execution***

For this tune, finding a simple chord change was the first item on the list. Old country bar ballads seemed to be the right feel for me, and there were a few clear artistic influences. Among the many of Merle Haggard's slow ballads from which I found inspiration, "Are the Good Times Really Over" employs idiosyncratic orchestration additions, with pads of French horns, trombones, and what sounds like bass trombones employing pedal tones in choruses (Haggard, 1982).

To keep things simple and effective, I decided to cut up, reorder, and add simple variations to a blues chord pattern. Instead of I-IV, I started with IV-I. Instead of a V-IV-I turnaround at the end of the pattern, I employed V-vi-IV-I. The bridge/solo section is rooted in the subdominant that is mournfully answered by a passing ii chord, landing on the vii chord, and a turnaround that lands on an unresolved  $\emptyset\#4$  (||: IV-ii-vi-vi :|| IV-ii-V- $\emptyset\#IV$  or  $\emptyset\text{vii}/V$ , back to I-IV-I). The outro is a simple variation of the original chord change (IV, IV, I, I, vi, V, I, etc...—see Appendix A). Using classic chord structures as a template for experimentation and using a guitar in simple tuning to feel the rhythmic strum, I was able to compose the rest of the tune around the changes in an architectural approach, building upon this foundation.

With the chord changes complete, we built the rhythm section around the slow 6/8 shuffle of the guitar strumming pattern. To keep a simple feel, I asked the drummer on the session to keep a tight shuffle with a closed hi-hat (with tambourine attached—his expert addition, not mine) and to play sidestick on the snare. To boost the simple harmony and really give it that country texture, the pedal steel guitarist improvised harmonic and idiomatic responses to the vocals while staying close to the chord changes. The low end had to remain simple as well, always hitting the root on downbeats while adding occasional passing tones between chords on beats 4, 5, and 6. In the solo section, to match the muted tone of the overall composition, I chose to use flugelhorn instead of trumpet as the solo voice and added flugelhorn and cornet pads that followed the harmony with some inner passing lines. The pads were mostly improvised until they “felt” and sounded right (see Figure 7, pp. 29-30). The technique of padding is examined in detail in Chapter 4 (see pp. 26-30).

### **Rhythmic Driven Composition: “SPCY JNY”**

Common stereotypes surrounding the image of modern country display twangy male vocals that focus on topics of nostalgia, country living, drinking, and patriotism, among other tropes. There is an entire subgenre that music critics sarcastically dubbed “Bro-Country” that embodies these subject matters, and much of the repertoire sounds painfully the same (Crouch, 2014) (Dickens, 2015). While these cultural ingredients are not part of this NYC-born and -raised musician's experience, I did want to capture a bit of the tongue-in-cheek approach. I set out to compose a piece about my used 2004 red Ford Ranger pickup, which my wife and I nicknamed Spicy Jenny, that I bought with cash

during the pandemic for a relocation move. I did find many examples of songs about trucks, cold beer, and country romance (Kip Moore's "Somethin' 'Bout a Truck," Brad Paisley's "Mud on the Tires," and Tim McGraw's "Truck Yeah", to mention a few), but mostly in more of a modern Nashville style that didn't interest me musically.

### *Style and Execution*

Moving away from modern country tropes, I was drawn in a different direction by a keen fascination with the zydeco music of Louisiana and South Texas, and I've always felt the blend of honky-tonk and accordion-driven music would make a great foundation for a ripping trumpet solo. Zydeco is described as a blend of Afro-Caribbean rhythms, African-American blues, R&B, and Cajun music (Sandmel, N.D.). It is generally up-tempo in a dance-driven 4/4 shuffle that features a washboard playing lilting eighth notes as its pulse (Snyder, 2012). With this template in mind, I chose a simple beat in four at a brisk 180bpm. Not having a washboard, we replaced that with a shaker and kept it simple and tight on the hi-hats. The chord changes in this music are usually blues-driven, so in keeping with that, I chose a simple variation on the blues with a I, bVII, IV, bVI, I, V, I, walkup turnaround at the end (see Appendix A), with a simple bridge going to the subdominant. Texturally, we had an accordion on hand and doubled the tagline (see Figure 8, p. 31) with the trumpet to give it that “zydeco” sound. I also had our keyboard player lay down pads on the Hammond B3 organ to give it a bit of the blues, and I played a bass line that mixed a bluesy walking style with an eighth-note honky-tonk thump to tie the low end together. Choice licks on the pedal steel with a distortion pedal were intended to rough up the edges of our tidy and tight rhythmic feel. With the trumpet solo (see

Figure 9, p. 33), I wanted to emulate a country guitar solo à la Waylon Jennings to add some of that archetypal nostalgic country style on top.

### **Melody Driven Songwriting: “10 Paces”**

Melody-driven songwriting is likely the most difficult to quantify, as, in my experience, it tends to be the culmination of one's entire musical listening and performing experience. Melodies have a way of popping into one's head, and the challenge is to be in a place to capture them. Many times, a melody will emerge in my ear, and I will simply hum it into the voice memo application on my phone to store it away for later use. In an example from my previous solo record, my song, "Jean-Marie", mentioned in the introduction as an inspiration for this project, I simply woke up one morning having dreamed a melody on clarinet (see Figure 3). I quickly got out of bed and luckily got to my computer to transcribe it into Finale before the idea fluttered away with the day's distractions. I find it remarkable how impactful being able to capture a melody can be in one's writing endeavors. In my case, it set over ten years of songwriting in motion and codified a major part of my process. Once the melody is in place, I find it important to set the rhythmic and tempo parameters first before harmonizing. Any melody can be reharmonized countless ways, so it is my experience that the rhythm and tempo will help characterize the melody and therefor give a better direction when layering it with chords

and orchestration. Many of these decisions can also be made by setting out with stylistic goals in mind.

### ***Style and execution***

In the song "10 Paces", I wanted to write something one would find in a spaghetti or cowboy western, trying to emulate gunslingers and outlaws of a bygone era. The sound and orchestrations of Ennio Morricone's western movie scores from the 1960s and the early country stylings of songwriter Lee Hazlewood (a popular singer/songwriter in the 1960s–70s notable for writing Nancy Sinatra's biggest hit, "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'") have always been aesthetically interesting to me, so I set out to find a melody that would fit this mold. The orchestrations are generally sparse with a lot of reverb, somewhat reminiscent of playing in a canyon or empty boxcar, and feature solo instruments like a whistle, harmonica, or Telecaster guitar with slapback reverb and lots of tremolo. Guitar was the closest instrument I had on hand to attempt creating this atmosphere. In my experience, there is no better key for an outlaw tune than open E minor on a guitar. I ended up playing variations of that E minor scale until I created three fragments of melody, which, when put together, formed a curious eight-bar composite form with a three-bar tag at the end with rhythmic emphasis that actually sounds like this: 4+4+2, 4+4+2, 4+4+4, 4+4+4. After a discussion with the session drummer, we decided it would be best to keep a rolling shuffle with brushes on the snare drum as our overall rhythmic driver. When the lyrics were written, the tag was used to accommodate the content and was only used in the first stanza of the first verse. In sticking with the E minor theme, I decided to closely follow the melody with this basic chord progression: |i,

III, bVII, i|, |VI, III, VIII (V/III)|, |iv, VI, I, VI, i| (see Appendix A). In thinking about orchestration, to really capture the spaghetti western essence, I gave it to the Telecaster with a classic Fender Twin amp tremolo and had the low baritone vocals, à la Lee Hazlewood, follow the melody in unison. The acoustic guitar was utilized to drive the chord changes, and to create a barroom feel, we added a solo piano and pedal steel guitar to meander and comp around the chords. To finish out the arrangement, we added some vocal oohs to accompany the melody in the choruses and added a few choice vibraslaps. While the trumpet did not feel like a natural fit for the body of the song, it certainly felt appropriate for a mysterious, tense introduction, and the process of composing and recording it is detailed in Chapter 4 (pp 35-37).

## CHAPTER 3

### THE RECORDING PROCESS

#### **Introduction**

The recording process can be daunting for anyone new to the studio, and I hope to provide a small window into some of the necessary considerations when undertaking this nuanced process. When choosing to take a project to a recording studio, three major factors include budget, preparation, and communication. While there were musical aspects of the recording that I was able to implement myself (vocals, electric bass, trumpet, cornet, and flugelhorn), I relied heavily on expert Nashville studio musicians to fill out the ensemble. When preparing a recording project with hired musicians and a studio engineer, I recommend a thorough demo process, outlined below, as it helps tie budget and communication together. For a complete list of personnel on this recording, please refer to Appendix C.

#### **Budget**

For an independent artist with little prior experience, it is important to first set a spending limit and have the budget in liquidity before starting any project, in addition to having the music completely written. In my experience as an arranger and producer, I have seen many great projects "die on the vine" because an artist will start the recording process without clear musical intention or a finished, written product when entering the studio. I often hear the term "studio magic," referring to advances in technology in recording sessions. It is important to note that these tools only save time and money in

organized projects. In disorganized projects, it is my experience that fancy plug-ins, auto-tuning, and other editing tools will end up taking you down rabbit holes with your engineer, thus inflating timetables and cost.

For reference, a mid-range studio will cost an artist anywhere between \$500–\$1,000 per day; mixing is dependent on the engineer's hourly rate and the size of the project; and excellent mastering services can be found for \$150 to \$200 per song. All told, it is incredibly important for an artist to bring an organized project into the studio. For this four-song project, I booked three studio days in Nashville with an engineer and three local session musicians. The studio cost \$700 per day; the musicians (guitar, drums, keyboards) each had their own fee structures, some charging per song, some per day, totaling \$1,000. Rough mixing came in at a very affordable \$50 per hour, but this was due to the personal relationship that I fostered with the engineer over years of being colleagues. Mixing and mastering are currently ongoing, but I estimate another \$1,200 when the process wraps up. The total for these tunes comes to around \$4,500, not including my travel expenses.

### **Demo Process**

To ensure smooth recording days with limited back and forth (yes, talking takes a lot of time off the clock), it was critical to put together coherent demos for the studio musicians and engineers. With the current state of technology, a cheap, crude home setup was enough to get the basics of each tune communicated to my team of musicians. I utilized a budget \$100 MXL condenser microphone, a used two-channel Behringer audio interface (\$75 from eBay), and Logic Pro, which is a low-cost digital audio workstation

by Apple that is the professional version of GarageBand. Most of the rhythm guitar guide tracks I edited together and looped, due to my limited skill level. When there were parts I could not play—fingerpicking in particular—I composed them in Finale and imported the MIDI information to Logic, where I was able to pick preset sounds that I could assign to the parts. This, at the very least, gave the guitarist an idea of rhythm and style. When using drums, I was able to find preset loops that were close enough to the concept I had in mind. I decided to leave drum fills and other more detailed cymbal and percussion work to the expertise of the player, trusting their experience over mine. Additionally, I handwrote chord charts (see Appendix A) for the engineer, guitarist, and drummer to reference for learning and while in the studio. I intentionally kept the charts simple to leave room for harmonic interpretation and to honor potential differences in music education. Engineers and studio musicians in popular music traditions come from a wide range of musical backgrounds; some of the most accomplished rock/pop artists and engineers I have worked with cannot read music. It is for this reason that I find it best to keep demo processes and chart writing as clear and accessible as possible. In this circumstance, I was lucky to have an engineer who was a trained jazz bassist and session musicians with music school training, much like my own.

### **Establishing language with the engineer**

A major component of a successful recording session is communication between the artist and the engineer. In larger-budget and mass-produced recording projects, there is generally a producer who, among many tasks, will act as a conduit and communicate

between the engineer and the artist. But for the purposes of this project, I will outline my experiences of self-producing and forming relationships with engineers.

It is important to understand the engineer's preferred workflow. The artist will be keenly focused on their project coming to life, but it's important to remember that a human is working with you, and they have their own needs and formulas for success. Things like lunch and beverage breaks and start/end times should be discussed at the outset. I once had an engineer who required a smoke break every 45 minutes, and as unhealthy as that seemed to me at the time, these breaks kept him focused and efficient, which inevitably saved the project time and money. The process of engineering also comes with an inevitable element of looking over their shoulders, so it is paramount to feel out and respect their personal boundaries. A great way to resist the urge to look over shoulders at their monitor is to have a notebook to take notes, being sure to record timestamps or measure numbers, if you are using a click track. Time and information will generally be at the top of the DAW window, so when in the control room, situating yourself within view of the monitor screen will be important. Other ways include making sure that you timestamp various musical landmarks in the piece when recording the initial rhythm section elements. This could include indicating verses, choruses, or bridges with markers in the DAW —solos, and places of distinguishing character changes. Many engineers in the pop and contemporary music world do not read music at the level of a formally trained musician, and in many circumstances, the artist will have to find clear ways to communicate time and location within the piece when handling all facets of the process: from recording, to editing, to mixing.

An experienced engineer will always have an idea of how long processes take. When on a budget, it is paramount to examine daily objectives, timelines, and having specific lists of line items to accomplish. Being on the same page requires consistent, organized communication and a mutual agreement on the roadmap to your goals.

## CHAPTER 4

### TECHNICAL AND SOLOISTIC TRUMPET PLAYING APPROACH

#### **Introduction**

When bringing my instrumental expertise to a genre, I find it useful to have a stylistic goal in mind prior to creating. Once the style choices have been decided, it is best to stick with playing approaches that one feels comfortable and well-trained in. It is unduly stressful to try to learn a new genre under the red recording light when time and money are factors. Thus, when creating new stylistic combinations, it is wise to create soloistic parts from a place of technical proficiency. In these four tunes, I created familiar soloistic styles superimposed in new settings. The following chapter reviews the approach, basic technique, and gear used in each solo selection.

**“36”**

#### *Approach*

For this selection, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the goal of the trumpet solo sections is to symbolize a conversation. To do this, I chose two distinctly different members of the trumpet family and two opposing styles. The first solo is played on the piccolo trumpet and features a simple, elegant four-bar repeated line that employs baroque/pop stylized ornamentation that is directly reminiscent of the Beatles' "Penny Lane", although not as meandering (Figure 5).



Figure 5, piccolo trumpet solo on “36”

It is meant only to represent a picture that provides the foundation for the musical response, played on flugelhorn, which picks up the dotted rhythm as it takes the solo line into the B section of the verse. Once the dotted rhythm is stated as a connecting musical hand-off, the flugelhorn then continues to improvise in a modern jazz style, starting with a more angular and chordal approach while gradually adding passing tones until the one-bar transition to the outro in the 9th bar (Figure 6).



Figure 6, Flugelhorn solo on “36”

### **Technique**

Playing the piccolo trumpet in this baroque/pop style requires both lightness and immediacy of response in a forte dynamic. To achieve this, I employ small, short breaths

with an open nasal passage and articulation placement that puts my tongue nearly on the roof of my mouth at the top teeth. While the piccolo trumpet can be very loud, the vibrational plane is also extremely small and requires a delicate balance between tongue and air. I find deep breathing to be the enemy of small piccolo apertures, as only small volumes of air can vibrate the lips at high speeds with accuracy. Players new to piccolo often fatigue quickly due to an overabundance of air backing up against the lips, making it difficult to maintain embouchure and vibration. This particular solo section (Figure 5) can be used as an exercise to find the proper piccolo balance, first starting with a tiny approach at soft dynamics and then slowly adding volume while maintaining the small aperture-to-air ratio.

In the responding 9 bars, the flugelhorn takes the solo conversation to a jazz-influenced harmonic and rhythmic feel (Figure 6). As the underlying rhythmic feel is in a straight eighth-note feel, the corresponding solo follows but with longer, fatter articulations. In stark physical contrast to piccolo technique, flugelhorn back pressure can manage a much larger pocket of air. This doesn't mean that my aperture is much bigger; it only means that I can lean more air pressure against it to create the necessary larger vibrations. I employ deeper and lower breaths that live below the rib cage and articulations that connect lower on the teeth and with more tongue tissue forward. To achieve the flexibility to meet the angular nature of the beginning of the phrase, I maintain a large, forward tongue arch and raise, lower, elevate, and depress the tongue to shape and guide the air based on pitch, much akin to whistling. This all occurs while applying a steady column of air that leans against the back pressure existing in the larger horn. I find that most players' natural inclination is to manufacture range on the

flugelhorn with large adjustments to embouchure and aperture. This can lead to a fair amount of inaccuracy, especially in the much smaller partials that live above the staff. When practicing this transcribed passage slowly and softly, the player can really inspect how to maintain control of the instrument while maintaining an economical physical foundation.

### ***Gear***

- Schilke P 5-4 piccolo trumpet (serial numbers dating to the mid 1990's) on the Bb side
- Bach 10.5D cornet shank mouthpiece.
- Antoine Courtois Professional 156 4-valve flugelhorn
- Bach 1.5fl mouthpiece.

## **“Hymn for Jim”**

### ***Approach***

The overall challenge in this selection was to create an ensemble sound with the trumpet family that complemented the slow lilt of a classic country bar ballad. To match this feel, I felt conical-bored instruments would best suit the mellower tone needed, so I decided on a blend of Bb cornet and flugelhorn. After some experimentation, I decided on flugelhorn for the solo part as it better matched the timbre and range of my vocals, and I multitracked two cornet and flugelhorn tracks for the backing ensemble.

The flugelhorn/cornet ensemble, or as we refer to it in the studio, "pads", serves the purpose of filling out the mid-range of the ensemble, giving the overall group a fuller sound, while not being prominently featured. Over the years, I have gotten a lot of

recording work from rock/pop groups generally requesting "horn tracks" for their projects. Many times, they will have a simple, rhythmic melody in mind for certain tag lines or bridge sections, but for only one player, which doesn't usually fill the overall texture desired. It has always been my task to interpret and fill out the textures needed while respecting the melody requested and making sure it does not compete with other featured instruments, such as guitar or vocals. This technique of "padding" seemed a clear choice for this tune, in which the rhythm section was a bit sparse and in need of extra harmonic layering.

### *Technique*

Building the horn pads can happen one of two ways: either the arranger can write them all prior to the session, or you can improvise the separate lines piece by piece while building the texture. I prefer the latter and did it this way for "Hymn for Jim." I generally like building pads this way because it allows room for experimentation to find what really works with all the other moving pieces in the rhythm section. I find it hard to know what fits best until I'm sitting there interacting with the piece. I will normally start with the bottom voice and follow the bassline as simply as possible. Sometimes there is room for a passing tone here and there, but I usually find it best to leave that to the bassline and keep things simple as a foundation for the rest of the pad. I will then record the top voice, finding harmonic choices that follow the lead voice (this could be guitar, vocals, lead horn lines, etc.), while keeping it simple and making sure not to clash. Lastly, recording the inner voices will give some room for motion, filling out thirds, other color intervals, and suspensions that tuck nicely into the pad, giving it a moving feel while not distracting

from the core of the rhythm section or solo parts. For this selection, I chose a 4-part harmony model with the two higher parts on cornet and the two lower parts on flugelhorn (Figure 7).

Score in Bb

Solo

Pads

4

7

11

Figure 7, Flugelhorn solo and cornet pads on “Hymn for Jim”

Figure 7. continued

The solo line on flugelhorn was derived from a scrapped vocal idea that was too busy for the lyrical content. I chose thematically to end the phrases with unresolved non-chord tones that gave the solo instrument a mournful tonality. Rhythmically and harmonically, I attempted to emulate a bluesy guitar solo and mostly stuck with pentatonic language. Breathing deeply and into my stomach allowed me to stay just a little behind the beat while maintaining a large and consistent air column that gave the flugelhorn its solo presence.



As the accordion's role is harmonically quite simple, the choice was made to have the trumpet emulate a blues guitar solo. As this was an unfamiliar style to me, it was clear that I would not be able to successfully improvise this in the studio, so I set out to compose a solo that blended elements of both trumpet and guitar characteristics. This gave me some freedom to experiment and demo the solo at home, seeing what worked and what didn't, before entering the studio at a steep hourly rate. What resulted was a nice stylistic blend that stretched the range of the trumpet up to a high G and emulated note bends, barre trills, and blues scale patterns common in guitar solos of the genre (Figure 9).

Trumpet in Bb

5

9

13

17 shake

21

26 shake

Figure 9, trumpet solo on “SPCY JNY”

### Technique

To achieve a tone and brightness that would blend with an accordion and supplant a guitar solo, a small, compact approach was necessary. Through my experiences playing Broadway for over a decade, it was a general expectation to be able to pivot between multiple genres, in most cases throughout the course of a show. To do that most

efficiently, I have found that having the right mouthpiece for the job is paramount. While I can hit most of my functioning range on any mouthpiece, timbre and color become dependent on the pliability of one's aperture, which can be difficult to predict. My lips will feel different based on so many variables; how much sleep I had the night before, being flushed for hours after a workout, how much water I've consumed over the course of two days, the sodium content in the food that I eat, and so on. To simplify, the lips feel different every day, so it is important to limit variables when it comes to mouthpiece selection based on the color, timbre, and range required of the piece. I try to keep the outer diameter of the mouthpiece the same while utilizing different inner diameters, cup sizes, shapes, and throat sizes to meet the sound concept necessary. Generally, the bigger and deeper the mouthpiece, the more color flexibility you have in the middle and lower registers; the smaller and shallower, the more flexibility and bite you can achieve in the higher registers. For this piece, I chose the latter direction to achieve a compact and brighter tone, which provided my aperture with a predictable outer template to achieve the proper vibration.

### ***Gear***

- Bach Stradivarius 37 w/gold brass bell (though much of the lacquer is missing), circa 1996
- Bob Reeves 43 SV mouthpiece

## Intro to “10 Paces”

### *Approach*

For this intro, I wanted to paint a scene out of a spaghetti western à la Ennio Morricone. Mystery, wide open spaces, and the tense moment before a gun duel were some visual inspirations that led to a cinematic desert sound concept, which was a mix between the mariachi brightness of the Southwest and the mystery of an Arabian-influenced tonality as heard in major Hollywood productions like *Lawrence of Arabia* or *Khartoum*. As would be obvious to most trumpet players, my main musical inspiration for this piece was Rafael Méndez, a pioneering Mexican-American trumpeter, who was principal trumpet of the MGM Orchestra from 1939 to 1949 and a famous soloist employing unprecedented virtuoso technique in a mariachi style (Rafael Méndez Brass Institute, n.d.).

The writing process began by identifying the chord the intro needed to land on to properly transition into the main section. In this case, it was the tonic. I then decided to build it like a cadenza in the dominant key that led to a distinct resolution. I began with a more mysterious approach utilizing the aforementioned Arabian-influenced, Hollywood-style phrasing. Experimenting section by section, I continuously added licks more reminiscent of the mariachi style, increasing in technical difficulty until the end of the cadence. Rather than using notation to write this section, I demoed each phrase and mixed and matched them at home to find an order that made sense. Then I composed a very simple continuo-style accompaniment with arco bass and tremolo-picked classical guitar that acted as a drone underneath the solo (Figure 10).

Trumpet in C

Figure 10, trumpet cadenza on “10 Paces”

### **Technique**

The range and sound quality desired required equipment and an embouchure set that allowed for maximum flexibility in range, tone, and technique. Although there was a fair amount of high, bright playing above the staff, a commercial lead mouthpiece was simply too shallow to allow for the fuzz I wanted on the mid-to-low-range material at the beginning, and for the room I needed to maintain optimum vibration while quickly multiple-tonguing in the upper register. Conversely, a more orchestral mouthpiece could achieve the color in the low end but made it difficult to sustain pitch and tone in the upper register. I eventually settled on something in between that I use for all-purpose Broadway and commercial playing that spreads the challenges in range and technique more evenly.

To achieve the technical range required, it was important to utilize my tongue to control and maintain a small oral cavity. In cadenza-like passages, keeping the tongue forward, lifted, and arched gives the player ease of range and the ability to hard articulate or legato tongue within the phrase interchangeably, as necessary. In fast articulated passages, I find it of utmost importance to make sure my first note is properly centered. Isolating and practicing these initial notes in context lays the foundation for the rest of the passage to speak. When adding the fast multiple tonguing, the speed of the passage gives the illusion of separation, and it should be treated with light, quick strokes, rather than trying to make it forcefully short. When done properly, it should feel almost like slurring.

***Gear:***

- Shires 4F C trumpet
- GR 67C\* mouthpiece

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

As the music world continues to evolve, it is my goal to provide continuing framework and examples for advancing the trumpet's relevancy into ever-growing pop and country markets. While it is also a hope that these songs might someday stand alone for personal purposes, the overall aim was to give a firsthand account of the thought, experimentation, and practical application of basic music school skillsets in creating a product that can help others broaden their professional horizons beyond classical and jazz training. Having been a professional for over 20 years and not on a linear path into orchestras or solo-type careers, expanding into other popular genres has been critical in creating growth opportunities where there hadn't been previously. When there isn't direct inspiration to draw from, it is important to look at different forms of musical syncretism to see how others have fused disparate cultural genres. In my case, I drew upon examples of the Beatles and Baroque, past cinematic cultural interpretations, blues and Creole music of the Deep South, mariachi, and country, among others, to form the foundation for the writing process. Regardless of the synthesis of the song, I gave myself a formulated, somewhat architectural, guideline to help navigate through uncharted stylistic combinations, all of this while utilizing academically inspired technique to maintain a high standard of performance. The resulting product may not be ready for mainstream country radio, but it is of consistent construction and gives any listener a chance to incorporate new sounds into an evolving genre, potentially providing its creator professional samples to forge new pathways in emerging markets. It is my hope that this

research project provides an ample framework to assist other trumpeters and instrumentalists with a basic path to expand performance and recording opportunities.

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APPENDIX A

Original Session Charts

4 V' 36 2x (Repeat Both times)

4 | C Dm Em Eb G |

F Am F Am G |

Eb G |

C' | C C C Em Em 4x |

Bridge:

G F G F

G F G F F F F

V<sup>2</sup> (rpsolo) (FLUG) (Picc?) 2x

C Dm Em Eb G |

F Am F Am G |

Eb G Eb G F |

OUTRO:

Em Dm | C C/F | 3x |

V. Hymn for Jim

$\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|} \hline \frac{6}{8} & C & G & C & G & D & Em \\ \hline | & | & | & | & | & | & | \\ \hline | & | & | & | & | & | & | \\ \hline \end{array}$

$\begin{array}{|c|c|} \hline C & G \\ \hline | & | \\ \hline \end{array} \quad 4-6x$

Bridge (Trp sob)

$\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|} \hline \frac{6}{8} & C & CA & Em & Em \text{ walk up} & C & CA & Em & Em \text{ walk up} \\ \hline | & | & | & | & | & | & | & | & | \\ \hline \end{array}$

$\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|} \hline C & CA & D & D^{b7} & G & C & G \\ \hline | & | & | & | & | & | & | \\ \hline \end{array} \quad 2x$

$\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|} \hline \frac{6}{8} & C & G & C & G & D & Em & C & G \\ \hline | & | & | & | & | & | & | & | & | \\ \hline \end{array}$

$\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|} \hline C & G & C & G & C & Em & D & C & G \\ \hline | & | & | & | & | & | & | & | & | \\ \hline \end{array}$

OUTRO Verse:

$\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|} \hline C & G & Em & D & G & Em & D & G \\ \hline | & | & | & | & | & | & | & | \\ \hline \end{array}$

$\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|} \hline Em & D & C & Em & D & G & Em & D & G \\ \hline | & | & | & | & | & | & | & | & | \\ \hline \end{array}$

$\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|} \hline Em & D & C & C & G^{(C)} & G^A \\ \hline | & | & | & | & | & | \\ \hline \end{array}$

RIT.

P.1

# SPICY LeNY

\* Intro: Drums + Bass hits in G (Potential lead guit 2 bar lead-in)

- 8 -  
(opt. C7 Bb F)

V <sup>1</sup>	G7	G7	C7	G7
	G7	G7	D7	D7 Bb F
	G7	F7	Em(C7)	Eb7
	G7	D7	G7	G A Bb B7
C	C7	G7	C7	G7
	Bb7	Bb7	D7	Rhythm (stop)

\* - 4 bar Abridged intro - (in G)  
(opt. C7 Bb F)

V <sup>2</sup>	G7	G7	C7	G7
	G7	G7	D7	D7 Bb F
	G7	F7	Em(C7)	Eb7
	G7	D7	G7	(stop)

\* - 8 bar Tag (in G) (intro w/ vox tag)

P.2 (SPICY JNY)

C<sup>2</sup> - Same as C<sup>1</sup> -

\* - 8 bar Vox Tag - (G<sup>7</sup>)


V<sup>3</sup> TRPSOLO (Same as V<sup>1</sup>)

(TRUMPET CONT.)

C <sup>3</sup>	C <sup>7</sup>	C <sup>7</sup>	G <sup>7</sup>	G <sup>7</sup>
	B <sup>b</sup>	B <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>7</sup>	D <sup>7</sup>

\* TAG - 8 -

C<sup>4</sup> - ||: C<sup>1</sup> :||<sup>2x</sup>

\* Tag Outro? 

- FIN -

# 10 paces @ Dawn

V<sup>1</sup> | 4 Em G | 2 D | Em |  
4 " "	4 "	" "					
C	G D D Am	Am Em	2 D	Em :			
" "	" "	" "	" "	" "	" "	2 "	4 " :

Tag: | 4 Em G | D Em | Em |  
 | 4 " " | " " | " " |

V<sup>2</sup> Same as V<sup>1</sup> - 1x

Chorus/Bridge<sup>1</sup>:  
4 C	Em	C	Em D				
4 " "	" "	" "	" "				
C	G D D Am	Am Em	2 D	Em			
" "	" "	" "	" "	" "	" "	2 "	4 "

Tag: Same as above

V<sup>3</sup> Same as V<sup>1</sup> - 1x

Tag: (Abridged) | 4 Em G | 2 D | Em |  
 | 4 " " | " " | 4 " | 4 " |

Chorus/Bridge<sup>2</sup>: | C | Em | C | Em D |  
4 " "	" "	" "	" "					
C	G D D Am	Am Em	2 D	Em	Em			
" "	" "	" "	" "	" "	" "	2 "	"	"

10 Paces Pg 2

V4 same 1<sup>x</sup>

Tag: | Em 4 | 2 D | 4 Em |  
(Abridged) | 11 11 | 2 11 | 4 11 |

Chorus Bridge: Same as chorus bridge<sup>1</sup>

Abridged tag out - 3-4<sup>x</sup>

APPENDIX B

Email Correspondence with Henry Palkes

**Date:** December 4, 2024

**Method:** Email correspondence (following initial phone conversation)

**Interviewer:** Samuel Oatts

**Interviewee:** Henry Palkes, keyboardist

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**Can you tell me a bit about your history and how you came to play keys with Merle Haggard and in his house band in Shasta, California?**

I was introduced to Merle's music from a classmate and pal at Juilliard. He introduced me to Merle, George Jones, Willie, and the entire genre. My buddy was a clarinet major at Juilliard. The day of graduation, he was pawning his clarinets to get enough cash to buy his first pedal steel. We went to see Haggard in NYC in the Village and were transfixed.

Years later, while on the road with another label artist, we were booked at Haggard's night club at Lake Shasta. Merle had a house band, and frequently the Strangers would sit in when off the road. He often sat in and tried out new songs on small, loyal audiences. He heard me play one evening while on tour, and after our show, he invited me to his houseboat. Merle was not a fan of Nashville and preferred to hang out on the lake or at his ranch in Palo Cedro, where he had a private digital mastering studio. He told me to move out there anytime, and he'd put me to work. I believe it took only two weeks before I was heading west.

**Elaborate a little on what function his club played for him when he wasn't on the road?**

Aside from previewing new songs he's written, arranging with his band, and also getting to know the constant influx of great young players who moved up to Redding hoping to attract Merle's ear, the club served multiple purposes. He had me join his house band—it was bliss. Eventually, I wound up ghosting on piano in his studio.

**Over the phone you mentioned his roots in swing, particularly Texas swing. There's an obvious connection to the role of a horn section here, but can you elaborate on how he fused swing, and other potentially popular genres, into his music?**

His swing influence was Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys, so the featured players were guitar players, fiddle, and pedal steel, but also influences from Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, even Willie. I think the advent of Memphis horns with Elvis carried influence.

**You mentioned you had met Don Markham, who was Merle's horn arranger and long-time member of his band, the Strangers. Can you speak about the horn section's musical pedigree/educational background and what seemed to be his criteria for hiring?**

Don played on every album since 1974. He comes from the same genre as Boots Randolph. He was self-taught, as were 99.9% of Merle's players. His criteria were simple: They had to be great players with chops. He was both a teacher and a listener, and all his players had tremendous respect for Hag, and no one was doing it just for the gig. You became part of the legend. I still keep in contact with Merle's fiddle player.

**Finally, horns seem rare in country music at this time, and well... historically in general. What did you find Merle's reasons for carrying a horn section to be in this musical landscape, and how did it set the band apart in live shows?**

By the time country music became a huge business and started including rock and blues, lots of folks were carrying horns. Once Don started recording, he became a mainstay, as did Gary Church on trumpet. His live show included tunes like "Sweet Caroline," "Pancho and Lefty," and later more ballads with harmonically inventive approaches and jazz-influenced soloing.

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**Interviewer's Note:** This interview was conducted via email following an initial phone conversation and provides insight into Merle Haggard's integration of horn sections into country music. I had many chats with Henry about his time with Merle Haggard while we were on the road together with the First National Tour of *An American in Paris*, and these conversations became an early source of inspiration for this project.

APPENDIX C

Recording Credits

**All songs and lyrics written and arranged by Samuel Oatts**

### **Original Compositions**

1. “36”
2. “Hymn for Jim”
3. “SPCY JNY”
4. “10 Paces”

### **Personnel**

**Samuel Oatts** — Vocals, Electric Bass, Trumpet, Piccolo Trumpet, Flugelhorn, Cornet

**Thomas Bryan Eaton** — Electric Guitars, Pedal Steel Guitar, Acoustic Guitars

**Dom Billet** — Drums, Percussion

**Pascal Le Boeuf** — Piano, Hammond, Accordion

**Tim Pearson** — Arco Bass on “36” and "Intro to Ten Paces"

**Erin Rae McKaskle** — Background Vocals on "36" and “SPCY JNY”

### **Production**

Recorded at Daylight Sound, Nashville, Tennessee  
August 9–11, 2021

**Produced by** Samuel Oatts

**Engineered, mixed, and mastered by** Paul Defiglia

APPENDIX D

Song Lyrics

## “36”

*Dedicated to Erin Burley*

I got a package in the post.  
You see, my daddy sold our house  
and all those memories.  
Contained within,  
the lovely letters and postcards you sent to me

Well I know...  
you're gone and 36 years is all we have to show  
of your grit... and your laughter

I got a package in the post.  
All the pictures tell our happy tale of yesterday.  
We learned everything together...  
how to love and fight and forgive each other.

Well I know...  
you're gone and 36 years is all we have to show  
of your love... and your wisdom.

Do you sit upon the clouds?...  
raining/reigning glory on all the pretty mountains.  
Are you now the sun?...  
radiating all your silly notions.  
Are you now the moon?...  
reflecting love's reverberations.  
Do you sit upon my shoulders?...  
guiding me through heavy situations.

Death is such a sad word.  
Your presence is still very much alive,  
your kindness is a window,  
Into heavens above.

Love you forever  
Be sure of that my friend  
Love you forever  
those evers never end.

## **“Hymn for Jim”**

*Dedicated to Jim Ognibene*

I pointed that toy gun at your head  
You got on your knees and pleaded for your life  
“Click bang” I said...  
You smiled and laughed and you played dead

Truth be told,  
I was only 6 years old  
I knew you were my friend,  
You treated me as your kin

You see this is a hymn for Jim  
You made me family and my momma your wife  
Heaven brought us a light,  
Now that light's gone dim

This is a hymn for Jim  
Through thick and through thin  
Even in your absence  
We still grow from your wisdom

He lives in the beauty of his music  
His love lives on in every dulcet tone  
You were my stepfather  
I am your boy

Even as you fought for life  
You made everything alright  
We all make mistakes  
But I know heaven welcomed a saint

You gave me the plan-  
I'm gonna be a better man  
I'm gonna do all I can,  
So let go of the world's worry  
cuz mom and kid gonna be ok  
mom and kid gonna be just fine  
everything's gonna be ok

**In your love and memory.**

## “SPCY JNY”

Well, she's a hot red pepper with chrome on her rims,  
She takes me where I gotta go  
Aint the biggest hog out on the road  
She only goes with the flow

6 cylinders and a  
6 foot bed, the other  
6 is cuz she's fiery red  
GO ON SPICY JENNY-GET THE LEAD ON OUT

Don't mess with another man's ride,  
Go on get the hell on by  
Me and Jenny gonna be alright  
We'll get there when we get there- it'll be just fine  
ROLL ON

Got an elbow out the window and a hand on the wheel,  
Sweet country songs on repeat  
Western wind blowin' through my hair  
I never felt so damn free

If you're big and fast and you're on the move  
Well, you can move on past cuz we got nothin' to prove  
GO ON SPICY JENNY- GET THE LEAD ON OUT

ROLL ON SPCY JNY, GET THE LEAD ON OUT

Don't mess with another man's ride,  
Go on get the hell on by  
Me and Jenny gonna be alright  
We'll get there when we get there- it'll be just fine  
ROLL ON SPCY JNY, GET THE LEAD ON OUT

Don't mess with another man's ride,  
Go on get the hell on by  
Me and Jenny gonna be alright  
We'll get there when we get there- it'll be just fine

ROLL ON SPCY JNY, GET THE LEAD ON OUT

## **“10 Paces”**

You can yell that you're right-  
only proves that you're wrong.  
Placate human kindness-  
that's an ill of the heart  
If Thy Will will be done,  
you're a cornered son of a gun.

This time tomorrow, 10 paces at dawn.

One man held a knee  
To another man's life.  
Fire and gas,  
Reminiscent of our past.  
If lawmen concede,  
Maybe justice will finally last.

10 paces at dawn.  
This time tomorrow, 10 paces at dawn.

Springtime Colorado's like a January sight  
Sunshine by day and bitterness by night.  
The wind howls forgiveness for a common man's  
Sadness and plight.

This time tomorrow, 10 paces at dawn.  
10 paces at dawn.

Ghosts of the past have a bounty on your head  
Your fancy boots came off the back of another one  
If you know god's will, then settle the debts you've accrued

Ten paces at dawn.  
This time tomorrow, 10 paces at dawn.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Samuel Oatts is a Doctor of Musical Arts candidate in Music Performance at Arizona State University, where he studies under Josef Burgstaller. He holds a Master of Music from the University of Denver and a Bachelor of Music from Manhattan School of Music. His primary teachers include Robert Sullivan, Mark Gould, Jim Pandolfi, Alan Hood, and Warren Deck. His current research focuses on expanding trumpet performance into popular music genres through compositional and pedagogical frameworks.

As an active performer, Oatts currently serves as Associate Principal/3rd Trumpet with the New Mexico Philharmonic, 2nd Trumpet with the Santa Fe Symphony, and Principal Trumpet with Opera Southwest. His orchestral experience includes performances with The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, The Phoenix Symphony, Memphis Symphony, Hawai'i Symphony, and the Verbier Festival Orchestra under James Levine and Valerie Gergiev.

Oatts has extensive Broadway and touring credits as lead trumpet, including tours with *An American in Paris* and the international company of *West Side Story*. Additional tour credits include *Chicago the Musical*, *Come Fly Away*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *Annie*, collectively taking him to over 35 countries and 49 states. His commercial recording work spans diverse genres and includes the piccolo trumpet solo on the CBS Mornings theme that reaches over 1 million viewers weekly.

His previous academic appointments include serving as Brass Area Chair at Kennesaw State University, faculty positions at Grand Canyon University and University of Denver, and a doctoral assistantship at Arizona State University. He has presented masterclasses at many institutions including University of North Texas, University of Minnesota, University of New Mexico, and Furman University.

As a composer, arranger, and performer, Oatts has collaborated alongside major label artists including members of Coldplay, The Strokes, Coheed and Cambria, Pedro Capo, Darius Rucker, and more. His 2013 solo recording project *Hudson Hank*, produced by Coldplay's Guy Berryman, demonstrates his work in genre fusion and cross-stylistic composition. He is a Conn-Selmer/Bach Performing Artist.