



“Every once in a while a new band emerges that catches my attention. Not only their great name, Steam Machine, likely taken to honor the memory of my dear friend the late Garry Harrison, but most of all their music which has the power and the glory of the old stuff, the stuff I love to listen to, the stuff that makes me wanna play more, learn new tunes and play the old ones every single day. Steam Machine plays with respect to the sources, accuracy and drive that seems to be often missing nowadays. They roll on like a steam machine indeed!”

Rafe Stefanini

Steam Machine would like to thank the Srubas, Rossi/Gregerman, Tacke/Kornelius, and Fields families, Doug Lohman, Sarah Cagley, Marie Stier, Addie Rosenwinkel, Rafe Stefanini and the greater old-time community. Steam Machine would also like to acknowledge the many musicians of color both enslaved and free whose importance in the evolution of music is immeasurable, yet poorly documented and often obscured.

AJ Srubas (fiddle) Aaron Tacke (banjo/vocals) Rina Rossi (guitar/vocals) and Nokosee Fields (bass)

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We aren't totally sure what to call this project. You could probably say that it's old-time music, but many of our favorite fiddlers played both old-time and bluegrass, and both genres shaped their styles. Many bluegrass songs had old-time roots, and many master musicians in both genres picked up material wherever they heard it rather than worrying about labels. They played the tunes and songs they liked, and so do we.

So while we aren't purists, we do listen closely to the old stuff, and we strive to capture the essence of what makes these tunes and songs special, as we hear it. It is inevitable to stray, but we hope to do so consciously. Sometimes we adapt a song to fit our style, but other times a version of a tune is so good, we aspire only to get it as close as we can. Listening to Gene Goforth rip into Dink's Dusty Miller doesn't get old. Lyman Enloe's tone and technique is always inspiring. Buddy Thomas' tune selection paired with Leona Stam's unique accompaniment is continuously interesting. Addie Graham's timing in a song is always rich and Ed Haley's variations on Forked Deer reveal something new each time we listen. This album represents one moment in our evolving work to play music we love and honor the brilliance these musicians left behind.

Back in '89

We got this tune from one of our favorite fiddlers, Lyman Enloe. Enloe was born in Cole County, Missouri, in 1906 to a musical family. Lyman learned this tune from his dad, Elijah Enloe. According to Bill Shul, Lyman didn't know the name of the tune, so DJ "Captain Jack" Hiney of radio station KWOS gave it this name.

Paddy on the Turnpike

Gene Goforth was born into a musical family in 1921 in Shannon County, Missouri. Gene had many influences extending from family members and regional musicians all the way to Grand Ole Opry fiddlers. We don't know where he learned this tune, but other fiddlers in the area like Roy Wolliver and Cleo Persinger also played versions of it.

Hard to Love

Tacke learned this song from Buster Carter and Preston Young from Franklin County, Virginia. They recorded in the early '30s and were accompanied by Posey Rorer.

Molly's Tune

We think this tune was written by Owen "Snake" Chapman, born in 1919 in the small town of Canada in Pike County, Kentucky. Paul Roberts describes Snake's compositions as "the sort of music old-time fiddlers play to sound progressive and bluegrass fiddlers play to sound old-time." Just our kind of tune.

Birdie

Birdie also comes from Lyman Enloe. According to Al Murphy and Dwight Lamb, Lyman and Kenny Baker were pals. AJ has recordings from Al Murphy's collection where you can hear Lyman playing certain tunes that echo Kenny's versions, and he even plays some of Kenny's original compositions. While we don't know exactly where Lyman learned this tune, the way he plays it is very similar to the version Kenny plays on High Country with Joe Greene (County 714). Who wouldn't want to play a tune like Kenny Baker if you could?

Down the Road

This is our old-time version of a bluegrass version of an old-time song, from Flatt and Scruggs.

Forked Deer

Forked Deer is an old standard played by many fiddlers. Our version is an homage to Ed Haley. We “tried” to emulate Ella Haley’s mandolin accompaniment, though we definitely strayed a little. James Edward Haley was born in 1885 in Logan County, WV.

Soap Suds

This is another from Lyman. Lyman moved to Kansas City, MO, in 1948 and, according to Bill Shul, he learned this tune there from John Journagan.

Wild Bill Jones

This version of Wild Bill Jones comes from Addie Graham, as interpreted by her grandson Rich Kirby, whose uses a banjo to reproduce Addie’s “clawhammer” piano playing. Addie Graham was born before 1900 in Wolfe County, Kentucky, and sang all her life. According to Rich, his grandmother learned songs everywhere and from anyone she could, ranging from her family and church community to African American railroad workers who passed through laying tracks by her house. Rina had the good fortune to hang out in Alice Gerrard’s *Women and Community in Old-Time Music* class this past summer at Augusta Heritage Center, where Rich visited and taught everyone this song.

Kitty Puss

Buddy Thomas of Emerson, Kentucky, played this lovely tune. Buddy was born in 1934 and is said to have suffered poor health his whole life. He died at age 39. Luckily, at least some of his playing was recorded, and it is a real gift to hear. Buddy’s cousin, Leona Stam, backs up his fiddling with wonderfully interesting accompaniment throughout the album that bears the same name as this tune. As far as we’re concerned, Buddy’s tunes really aren’t the same without Leona’s chords, so we’ve tried to play Leona’s chords accurately here. AJ and Rina would like to dedicate this tune to a beloved kitty puss; Sylvie, who sat in banjo cases during many band practices, left this world a week before this cd was recorded.

Dink’s Dusty Miller

We got this tune from Gene, who says he played it pretty well the way his dad Dink Goforth played it.

This World Can’t Stand Long

Rina first heard this song from a recording of Benton Flippen, though it was popularized by Roy Acuff and written by Jim Anglin. Benton’s version is pretty great, and we try to reflect it here.

Knockin’ at Your Door

AJ heard this tune on a home recording labeled “Dwight [Lamb] & Lena [Hughs], 1974.” None of the tracks were labeled and the recording contains playing by a couple different fiddlers. AJ had to call Dwight and play it to him over the phone to figure out what it was. Dwight says it’s a version of Knocking at Your Door played by Cyril Stinnett. Dwight says he knew it was Cyril because of the extra beat, which was something unique to Cyril’s way of playing this tune. Cyril was an incredibly accomplished fiddler born near Savannah, Missouri, in 1912. He lived in Filmore most of his life and played left-handed.

Farewell Waltz

A waltz from “Fiddlin’” Doc Roberts from Madison, Kentucky. Doc was born in 1897 and died in 1978. His main influences were his older brother, Levert, and Owen Walker, a well known African American fiddler who lived nearby.

Do Not Wait Till I’m Laid Beneath The Clay

The Kentucky Ramblers of Williamsburg, Kentucky, can be heard singing this one on Kentucky Mountain Music (Yazoo 2200), which is a compilation of commercial and Library of Congress recordings. Elmer Bird recorded 35 sides from 1929-1931 using various band names and personnel. In September, 1930, he along with Louis Bird (maybe Elmer’s father), Connie Bird, Jack Hicks, and Charley Dykes recorded under the name The Kentucky Ramblers. We took this from their recording and gave it a grassier flavor.

Chinese Breakdown

This is a rendition of an old chestnut played by Ed Haley. Learning all the variations in Ed Haley’s sophisticated playing would be a life’s project, so this tune will always be a work in progress.