

PERNICE BROTHERS

OVERCOME BY HAPPINESS



OVERCOME BY HAPPINESS

25TH ANNIVERSARY DELUXE EDITION

Joe Pernice

Even if you're not in prison, 25 years is a long time. That said, I vividly remember much about every stage of making *Overcome by Happiness*. Most of the songs were written in the same house in Northampton, Massachusetts. All of the "pre-production" took place in the 1979 Pontiac Bonneville I'd inherited from my late Uncle Joseph "Ducky" Vitale. It was early fall, and Thom Monahan and I would drive along the wooded roads in the Knightville Dam area and listen to my crude demos. (A few of these earliest demos are included on the bonus LP included in this lovely package. And a number of the photos also included were taken on and near the Knightville Dam.) Those were pretty exciting drives, chain-smoking coffees and mapping out where certain instruments might go when we tracked in earnest.

But I recall the recording sessions at Studio .45 in Hartford, Connecticut, most clearly. We moved into the apartment a floor beneath the studio, and

Peyton (who has always been a wonderful chef) cooked for us when he wasn't tracking his guitars. We ate like kings. We got up early (for musicians, that is) and worked late. There was a seven-day stretch when it dawned on me I had not left the building a single time. We must have misplaced that case of ginger brandy. Yes, that's exactly what happened... I think we spent 35 days there from load-in to post-mixing load-out. Seems extravagant to me today. It seemed extravagant to me then, but we used every last second of time. Maybe we could have done it in 25 days. Who knows? But I recall Thom turning me on to the expression: "The goldfish grows to the size of the bowl." If we'd budgeted 25 years, I'd be writing this from the B room at Studio .45 with two mixes to go.

Most of what's worth me saying about *Overcome* I already said for the fine prose piece that's also part of this book. To be honest, I did not reread it before writing this, so forgive me if I'm repeating

myself. Making *Overcome by Happiness* was an eye-opening experience in so many ways. Though I'd already made three albums with my band the Scud Mountain Boys, *Overcome* has always felt like a start for me. The Scuds were a band in the truest sense. But when Thom, Peyton, Aaron, Bob, Mike, and I showed up on day one of the sessions, it was the first time all of us had ever been in the same room. There were no rehearsals. Things could have gone much differently than they did.

Miraculously, Sub Pop Records (who paid the bills) made zero objections when I pitched my idea for the record in late summer 1997. In fact, they were into it. And to their credit, they stayed completely out of sight until the last day of tracking. They (aka my now-partner of 25 years, Joyce Linehan) only showed up at all because the orchestra was tracking that day, and she loves strings as much as I do. That day remains a high point in my record-making life. Strings. Big. Yes.

The last things I'd like say about *Overcome* are as follows: Though I was in hog heaven writing and making the album, I've probably listened to it less than 20 times since it was mastered in late 1997. When it comes to all of my own music, the only joy is in the making of it. I'll listen to someone else's record when I want to be delighted as a civilian. Try tickling yourself. You can't do it. All that said, love it or hate it, *Overcome by Happiness* has three undeniable qualities that I need as a listener of music: The songwriting is pretty good. The performances top-to-bottom are evocative. And the recording captured a vibe. Being able to say that makes me feel pretty good. I like to think *Overcome by Happiness* is an album some other Joe Pernice out there might enjoy hearing.

As always, thanks for listening.

—JP, Toronto, 2022







STAYING ON TWO FEET

THE PERNICE BROTHERS AND *OVERCOME BY HAPPINESS*

Stephen Deusner

In 2007, an AOL Music publication counted down the “Most Exquisitely Sad Songs in the Whole World,” and a leftfield choice topped the list. Outsadding the Beatles’ “Eleanor Rigby” and Billie Holiday’s “Gloomy Sunday” was a more recent song, not even ten years old, called “Chicken Wire,” by the Massachusetts band the Pernice Brothers. It tells the story of a woman who drives her car into the garage, leaves it running, and drifts off into oblivion, all with a drink in hand. Even at the end of her life, she comes across as a vivid, lively, perhaps even reckless character, her suicide an act of defiance. You don’t even know her name, but you grieve the loss just the same.

What truly makes “Chicken Wire” so unfathomably sad, however, is the mundanity of her death. Joe Pernice, who wrote and sang the song for the Pernice Brothers’ 1998 debut album, *Overcome by Happiness*, tells us that the last thing she ever saw in this world was a spool of chicken wire in the corner. That’s the image she takes into eternity.

Death becomes the most unceremonious aspect of life, ornamented only by the mundane contents of a suburban garage. “She’d come so far to end her life by the rusty mower and the chicken wire, by the chicken wire and the studded tire,” Joe sings, as the song takes a breath and braces itself for a short and supremely mournful flugelhorn solo.

That solo—which sounds like “Taps” if it had been composed by Burt Bacharach, with just a bit of swing in its step—is the sighing climax of “Chicken Wire,” and in the 1990s it might have been tempting to hear it as ironic: a bit of pop kitsch intruding on a grave moment. And it is, in a way. That solo complicates the song as well as its central character, becoming both a eulogy for someone who couldn’t be saved, maybe didn’t even want to be saved, and a devastating acknowledgement of the limitations of pop music. Even the loveliest melody and the most scintillating horn solo can’t convey the incredibly fine gradients of human emotion. A good pop song is never enough, and

that realization only compounds the sadness of “Chicken Wire.”

“It was all about just getting a feeling,” says Joe Pernice 25 years later. “I think we captured that feeling, but I don’t know. For me, a song is gone once it’s been recorded, and it’s for other people to pick it apart. For me it’s the engagement of making a song. That’s really the only time I can comment in a way that’s not bullshitting you. Oh yes, ‘Chicken Wire’ is about the dark juxtaposition of this happy sound with this sad lyric. Sure. Whatever. But for me it’s all about the feeling when we made the music. That’s what I connect to most. After that it starts drifting away and I connect to it less and less.”

That’s what Joe Pernice does so well: He captures a particular feeling in the amber of music, using the melody and the lyric and the arrangement to evoke an emotional reaction, such that what isn’t said—what can’t be said using the tools of

pop music—becomes as much a part of the song and the experience as what is said. “Chicken Wire” and other songs on *Overcome by Happiness* may have diminishing returns for him, but for his fans they still sound as devastating in 2023 as they did the first time they heard them. “I don’t even think I was trying to reach people,” he says now. “I was more trying to get something out of myself, which is why I was stunned by the positive reaction to these songs. I wasn’t writing them for other people. I was writing them for myself, and then you have people who come up to you and say that one of those songs changed their life. That blows my mind, because at the time I was just trying to sustain my own life. I was just trying to stay on two feet.”

The story of *Overcome by Happiness* is one of great risk and greater payoff. It’s the story of a disgruntled country singer struggling to define himself against prevailing musical trends. It’s the story of a songwriter just finding his voice, an artist so desperate to express himself that he scrapped one band to form another, jeopardizing his record contract and arguably his career to put what he heard in his head onto tape. It’s the story of a musician embracing the sounds of his childhood: AM easy listening, sophisticated chamber pop, baroque lounge music, Bread, the Carpenters, Bacharach, Manilow. It’s the story of a poet driving through Massachusetts in a rusted-out Bonneville with a wooden bumper. The Pernice Brothers was never a conceptual project, nor a reclamation mission, but rather a sincere exploration by a songwriter only a year or two removed from his MFA studies, who wrote “literary” songs without the baggage that adjective often implies, who discovered a particular and very personal style of songwriting that he’s still refining today.

“You don’t want your stuff to vanish,” says Joe about the 25th anniversary reissue of *Overcome by Happiness*. “Not that I’m looking to get famous, but you need to connect with the world. There’s something that reaffirms your own life in that echo that comes back to you—even if it’s your own voice coming back.”







Joe Pernice lyrics and session notebook



Early '70s Gibson Blue Ridge used to write and record *Overcome by Happiness*

The story begins in an average kid's bedroom somewhere outside Boston and somewhere in the 1970s. Young Joe Pernice was trying to write his first songs, if only to impress his brother, Bob, six years his senior. His earliest efforts were mere retreads of popular songs he heard on the radio, for which he rewrote the lyrics and tried to pass it off as a wholly original composition. Bob was impressed by his talent for mimicry, but alarmed by the kid's knack for plagiarism. The experience might have been embarrassing, but it gave Joe a strong grounding in the principles of songwriting: melody and meter, structure and style, rhyme and reason. "I didn't pick up a guitar or a bass until I was 15 or 16 years old and Bob was 21," he says. "He'd been playing guitar for as long as I'd been alive, so of course he was always my biggest influence. My first guitar, which I still have, was his."

A few years later, Joe was playing bass in a pickup band with Bob and their second cousin, Joe

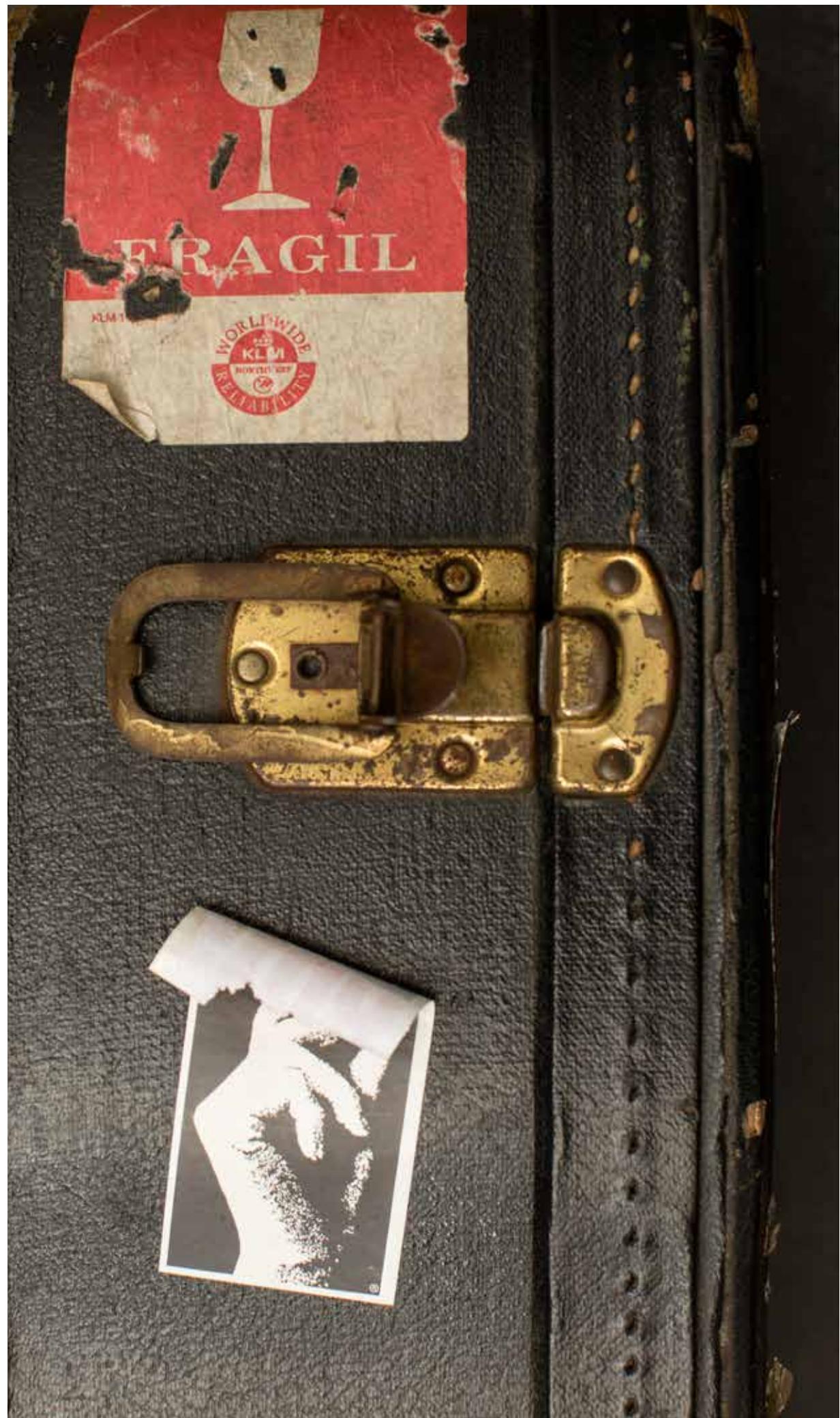
Harvard, who owned and founded Fort Apache Studios in Boston. The Lemonheads recorded there, as did the Pixies, Throwing Muses, Dinosaur Jr., and scores of other indie bands. "Joe Harvard was our second cousin," says Bob Pernice, "but we thought of him as our first cousin. He was a monster in the Boston music scene, but we had a little band with him called the Country Cousins. At that time everybody who played in any kind of rock band in the '80s suddenly discovered Patsy Cline and George Jones and all those people. So everybody, including us, was playing country music." When Joe and Bob did some recording with their more professional relative, Joe Harvard credited those tapes to the Pernice Brothers. "There wasn't anything special about the name," says Bob. "It was more like: *Here are my cousins, they're brothers, so what else are you going to call them?*" Nothing from those sessions was ever released, but it marks the very first very tentative lineup of the Pernice Brothers as a music entity.

Music was merely a hobby for both of the Pernice brothers. Bob was working toward a career in engineering, while Joe wanted to write books, maybe get a job in academia. Around the time he enrolled in the graduate program at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, he formed a rock band called the Scuds with two new friends, guitarist Bruce Tull and bassist Stephen Desaulniers. Further proving Bob's contention that all bands gravitate countryward, the Scuds gradually morphed into the Scud Mountain Boys, who specialized in a very austere brand of twang. As a songwriting project, it was in some ways an extension of Joe's poetry studies: "The Scud Mountain Boys really opened my eyes to songwriting," he says. "By making things simple, I could make things more complex. I was getting down to the basics, and it was exciting. I felt like I was learning to build the foundation of a house instead of trying to start with the roof."

The Scud Mountain Boys did a lot in a little time. They released their debut, *Pine Box*, in January 1995 (featuring liner notes from Silver Jews' David Berman). Their sophomore album, *Dance the Night Away*, arrived in February 1995. By the time they signed with Sub Pop Records just a few months later, they'd already written most of their third album, *Massachusetts*, which was recorded in October 1995 and released in April 1996. They ended up on the indie label due to the enthusiasm of Joyce Linehan, who had managed the Providence, Rhode Island, band Six Finger Satellite and opened an East Coast office for Sub Pop.

After discovering the Scud Mountain Boys via their split single with Steve Westfield & the Slow Band (whose side featured a guest appearance from Lou Barlow of Sebadoh and Dinosaur Jr.), "I did a little sleuthing, which was a lot harder back then," she says. "It turned out that Joe and I had a lot of things in common. We're both from the eastern part of Massachusetts, and I knew his cousin, Joe Harvard. It was a small indie-rock world, and a small Boston world, so it was surprising that we didn't know each other already."

The Scud Mountain Boys' compressed career coincided with the heyday of the alt-country movement, and their songs dripped with pedal steel and bristled with twangy guitar licks. Given the austerity of their sound and the unhurried clip of their tempos, however, they arguably had more in common with slowcore acts like Low and Codeine than they had with y'allternative groups like Son Volt and the Jayhawks. More crucially, Joe never felt like a country artist; as a singer, he had no southern drawl, and as a songwriter, he didn't pretend he had any experience with honkytonks or rodeos. He had nothing against the genre itself, but there were other sounds rattling around in his head. In fact, many of the pop elements that defined the Pernice Brothers were already present on the Scud Mountain Boys' first three albums: an emphasis on mood and melody, a careful deployment of words





and sentiments, song structures that rejected the strict verse-chorus-verse format, and a keen interest in the kinds of '60s and '70s pop sounds that were considered outré or kitschy at the time. When they covered Cher's 1971 hit "Gypsies, Tramps & Thieves," there was no irony or condescension in the way they slowed it way down and reveled in the historical milieu. Instead, they appreciated the storyline and especially the alienation that defined the narrator's world.

That friction between pop and country was already subtly ripping the band apart. "I was writing songs that were more like pop songs," says Joe. "I'd always been into Burt Bacharach as a kid. I loved the Beatles and Nilsson. I loved Barry Manilow and the Bee Gee's—not the disco stuff, although I grew to love that. I was starting to get an ear for more orchestral stuff, and I was trying not to get pigeonholed as a country singer. I loved what the Scud

Mountain Boys did, but I was already branching out musically. Bruce is a fantastic guitar player with a unique style, but he was getting more into playing pedal steel, as he should have. He had a real knack for it. But I was hearing a grand piano and a harp and an oboe. I didn't want to turn my new songs into country songs."

Joe found himself at a crossroads. Did he want to spend another two years or more writing, recording, promoting, and touring a new Scud Mountain Boys album, or did he want to figure out how to get his pop songs on tape? Could he make that work? Would Sub Pop even release a record with a grand piano and a harp and an oboe? Despite his doubts, he made the difficult decision to put the Scud Mountain Boys out to pasture. "There was a lot of trepidation," he recalls, "because I knew what I was walking away from. We had an immediate vibe in that band. Not unimportantly, those guys were my

best friends at the time. We had great chemistry. We had a lot of fun together. It was as much of a hang-out than a band at that time."

When he broke the news to Linehan, she didn't question his decision. Instead, she only asked what he needed. "I was excited about it," she recalls. "I knew he had different kinds of music he wanted to explore. Band breakups are always tough, but he had a really well-thought-out vision for what he wanted to do. And it didn't sound like just nostalgia. It had a modern feel to it."

In March 1997 the second iteration of the Pernice Brothers convened at Bob's home in Carlisle, Massachusetts, just outside of Boston. It was Bob and Joe, with a rhythm section comprised of Desaulnier on bass and Garret Fontes, from the Northampton band New Radiant Storm King, on drums. With Bob's wife and kids away for the





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who were you ~~to~~
when I woke up
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You you said
I made no sense
Then you showed me
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All the worlds open for u

I believe that ~~I was~~
that I was less
when I never knew your face

MONKEY SUIT - 1

VIOLIN II

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14 8# 4 A2 LEGATO mf

18 8# 4 2 8va LEGATO mp

22 8# 4 8va LEGATO mp

26 8# 4 mf cresc. ff

32 8# 4 - mp cresc. ff 32 LEGATO mf

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41 8# 4 cresc. f

46 8# 4 mf

50 8# 4 f f

weekend, they turned the house into a makeshift studio, with Thom Monahan (who had recorded *Dance the Night Away* for the Scud Mountain Boys) setting up a control room in the basement. They tracked four songs altogether, including one called "Monkey Suit." Joe had written it about Bob's fancy new engineering job, lambasting him for giving up music for a nine-to-five. It's not mean-spirited, more like a bit of brotherly prodding disguising his fear of losing Bob as a friend and influence. "See myself off in my monkey suit each day / Then I walk the slow fish ladder, made of concrete and the bones of people," Joe sings. "Don't let me disappear inside this monkey suit I'm wearin'."

"I'll always have a special place in my heart for that song because Joe wrote it about me," says Bob. "Earlier in my life I was in bands and wrote songs. But then I got a job. I became a career guy. I only played music in a very spare part of my time, and I was happy with that. So I listen to that song now mostly with delight but also with the tiniest bit of chagrin."

The song was raw and jangly, sketched out but not yet filled in. Still, it was fitting that this bit of sibling provocation became the B side of the Pernice Brothers' first official release, a 7-inch single with "Jimmy Coma" as the A side. Just a few months later, the band released a second 7-inch through

the Summershine label in Australia: "Square World" b/w "In Plain Sight," both of which were recorded with the same personnel in an actual studio, Slaughterhouse, in Hadley, Massachusetts.

Together, these four songs represented a step in the right direction, but they were still not quite what Joe had in mind—too much rock in the music, not enough pop refinement and absolutely no oboe.



Pernice BROTHERS

Thanks: Pernice family, Robin, Eva, Erica, Christine, Send Mt. Boys, Jeremy Marnsek (Worm).
Recorded and produced by Thom Monahan and Pernice Brothers when we could find time, where we could find space.



"Jimmy Coma"

©1997 Sub Pop / SP 381 / Design by Hank Tucker

SUB
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"Jimmy Coma" b/w "Monkey Suit" 7-inch single issued by
Sub Pop Records in 1997 (Cat No. SP 381)

Pernice **BROTHERS**

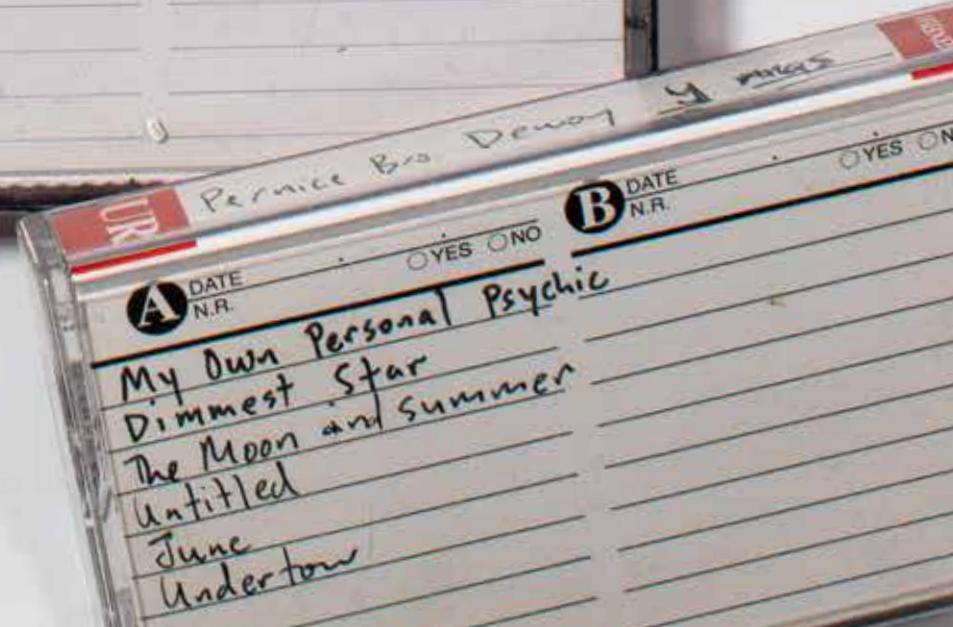
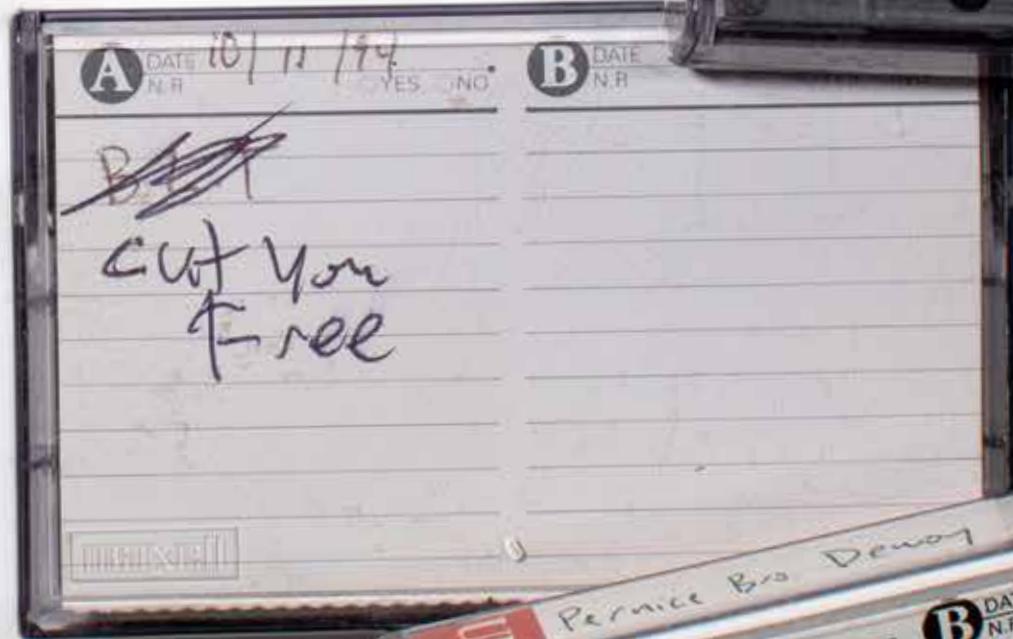
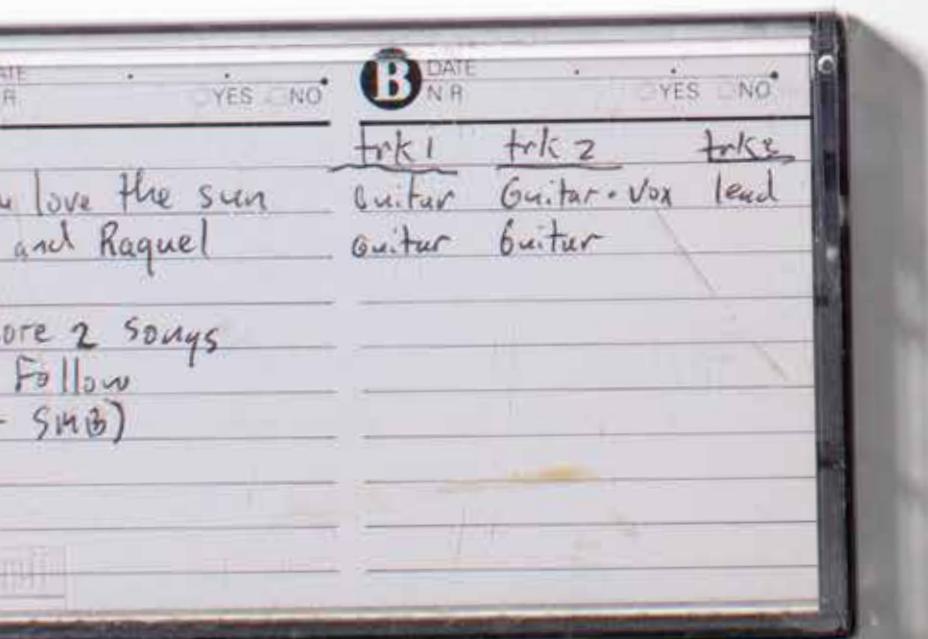
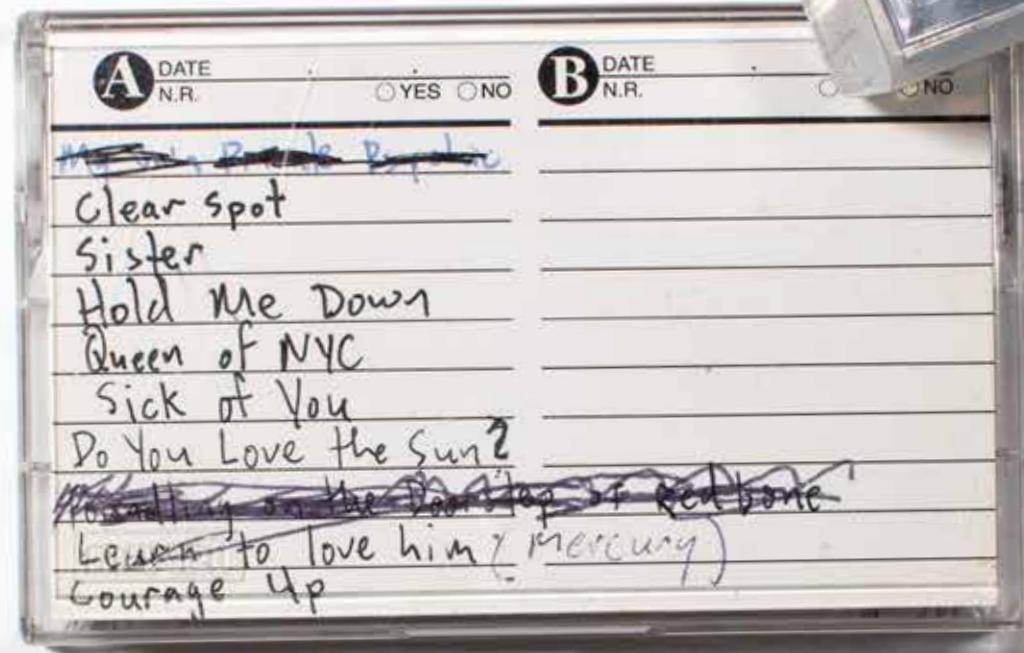
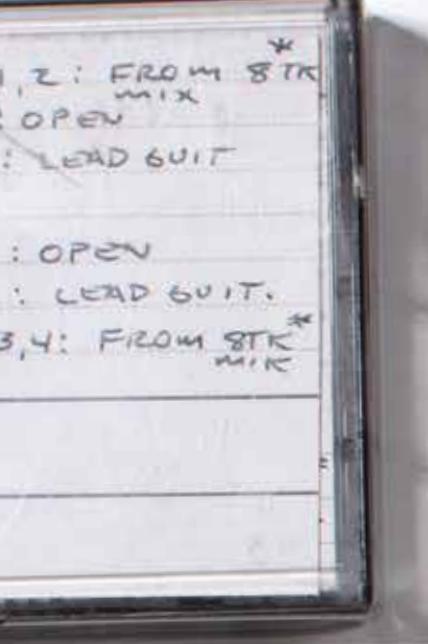
Pernice Brothers are: Joe Pernice — vocals, acoustic & electric guitars; Bob Pernice — lead guitars, vocals.
With: Stephen Desaulniers — bass guitar; Garrett Fontes — drums; Thom Monahan — analog sampling.



"Monkey Suit"

©1997 Sub Pop / SF 251 / Design by Hank Tedder

S-U-B
P-O-P



Even if you had the sun
in the color of your eyes.
~~you would~~ never be so blind
And you don't feel the weight
pushing out of your life
can't see the light
dying out in your eyes

Fresh out of grad school with a shiny new MFA, Joe Pernice was living in a glorified broom closet in Northampton, which set him back a mere \$250 a month. He had a little money from the Scud Mountain Boys and an advance from Sub Pop on what would be the Pernice Brothers' full-length debut, "so I had nothing to do but focus on music. I had really sharpened my writing and editing skills in grad school, so I was in the zone. I was writing a lot of songs. I can remember sometimes writing two a day. I think I had 30 or 40 songs to choose from."

Those songs were different than the ones he had written for the Scud Mountain Boys. He'd been thinking more carefully about the shape of the song and how it conveyed—or didn't convey—what he wanted to say. He found himself editing down, paring back, taking his red pen to his lyrics in order to find the kernel of the song. "I tried to get to the basics. I tried to think about the things that were important to me. What were the things that made me feel something?

And what were the things that made me want to listen to a song over and over? I thought a lot about vibe. The guitar tone or the drum sound can be otherworldly, but that only matters insofar as it lends to the vibe of the song, to the feeling that makes you want to keep listening to it."

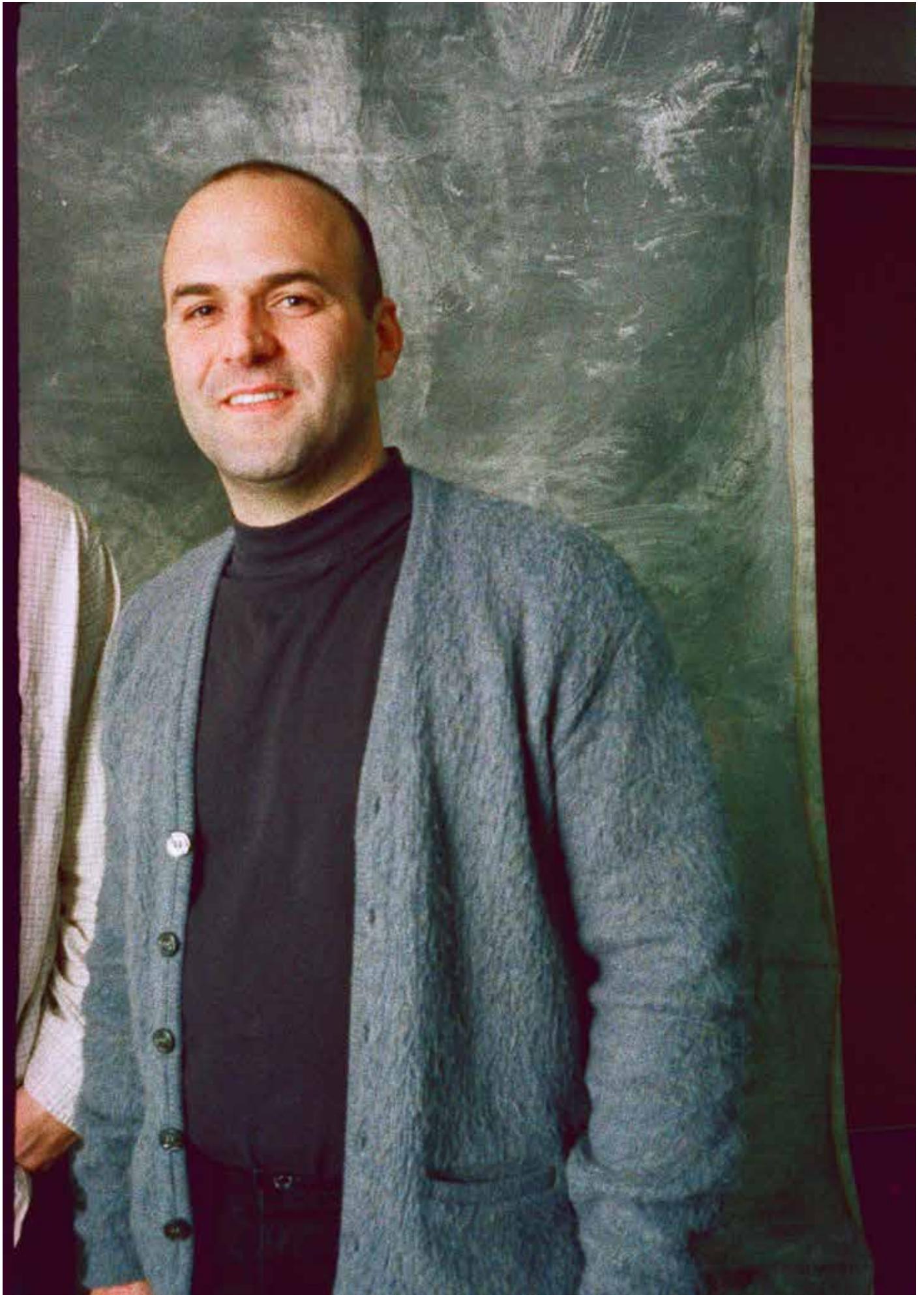
In his apartment Joe recorded rough demos of these new songs onto cassette tapes, often just moments after he'd written them. Some are fully realized compositions, others just the basic ideas to expand later. Most were inspired by close friends and some not-so-close acquaintances, including "Sick of You." His original demo was only about two minutes long, but it seemed too mean-spirited, despite its eloquent melody. So he struck most of the lyrics, and in its finished form it clocks in at just under a minute and a half. (That demo is one of several included on the bonus LP.)

Joe asked Monahan to produce the Pernice Brothers' first record, and together, they mapped

the songs out while driving Joe's rattling jalopy through the hills of western Massachusetts. "I had this old car that my Uncle Ducky gave me—a 1979 Pontiac Bonneville. It was a big fucking boat with velour interior. The back bumper was rusted out, so in order to pass inspection, we built one out of wood and bolted it to the car. It was a big, powder-blue monster with a wooden bumper and an eight-track. I had to buy an adapter to play cassettes, and we would drive around for hours listening to music, looking for ideas and taking notes. That was our pre-production. We never sat around and rehearsed." (The Bonneville was commemorated on the back of the Scud Mountain Boys' *Massachusetts*.)

In November 1997 the third Pernice Brothers line-up convened at Studio .45 in Hartford, Connecticut—so named because the building was formerly a firearms factory. It was the first time they had ever been in the same room together. It was the first time they'd ever played together as a band.





Both of those facts concerned Joe. “There was no guarantee that we would come up with anything. I had sent them demos, which were the shapes of the songs and not even all the lyrics. Lots of *la la la*. It could have all ended up sounding like shit, and I would have had to go to Sub Pop and say, *Sorry we took your money and made a shitty record*. I was not super confident.”

But he and Monahan had assembled some of New England’s finest indie musicians for these sessions. There was Michael Deming, who owned Studio .45 and wrote string and horn arrangements. He’d worked with Monahan and drummer Aaron Sperske on Lily’s 1996 album *Better Can’t Make Your Life Better*. In addition to playing bass and engineering the sessions, Monahan recommended Peyton Pinkerton, the guitarist for New Radiant Storm King. None of them played with anything that might be mistaken for twang. “I remember Joe specifically wanted people who were not... I think he said ‘spoiled’ by country music,” says Pinkerton. “He didn’t want any country riffs at all. The Pernice Brothers were about going back to what he grew up with—AM radio and weird fades, stuff like that—so he wanted people with more of a pop background, who could capture some of the stuff he couldn’t describe.”

Bob Pernice even showed up for a few days, bringing with him lab coats for Monahan and Deming to wear. In the context of this new band, they were considered old-school technicians, scientists even. “They were both incredibly good engineers,” says Joe. “Mike knew his studio, knew the equipment he had, knew the sounds of his mics and pre-amps. Thom was at that time—and still is—one of the best guerilla engineers I’ve ever seen. I could say, Hey, let’s make a kickdrum out of this coffee can and I’ll hit it with a ruler. And Thom would know just how to mic it.”

United by their shared mission, the crew were all willing to do whatever it took to capture the sounds Joe heard, however taxing that might be. Pinkerton remembers the toll the title track took on him: “We tried out six guitars before we settled on this really heavy Travis Bean, which must have weighed 20 pounds or more. I had to hold this chord up high on the neck throughout the entire chorus, and I had to arpeggiate through the entire chorus until the chord change at the end. It was killing me. My hand was cramping and twitching, but we couldn’t have any fret noise or finger squeaks. I was biting my lip just to get the adrenaline going. It must have taken four hours, and my arms were jelly afterwards.”

These moments were important to Joe, perhaps even the most important part of the entire process: more rewarding than writing the lyrics or playing them night after night or hearing from fans who loved those songs. “Around this time I realized that what I love most is the creation of a thing,” he says. “Even if you think you’ve written the greatest song, it will never hit you the same way as your favorite song by someone else will. So I quit writing with the idea of the payoff. Instead, I thought about how I connected with the song and how I felt when I was making it. That process is what gets you the payoff. That became my way of engaging with the song. It became all about the moment. When I think about the best parts of making *Overcome by Happiness*, it’s Peyton and I singing a backing vocal to ‘Wherein Obscurely.’ We were singing into the same mic together, but we would get into laughing fits. Finally we nailed the part, and we could feel it in that moment.”

And then there was “Chicken Wire.” The “Most Exquisitely Sad Song in the World” was recorded late in the evening, after a long day of tracking. “It was one of those things where being exhausted paid off,” says Pinkerton. “I wasn’t quite on, at

least not the way I would have been earlier in the day, so I ended up doing this draggy, drugged-out strumming thing. It ended up being beautiful without being exploitative of the contents of the song itself. In the wrong hands, it could have been a cartoon, but we made it work.”

Still, Joe had to fight for the song’s finest flourish—that flugelhorn solo, played by Mike Jones. “At the time there were a couple of people who didn’t want the horn solo. But I insisted. It’s a nod to Bacharach. It’s a nod to Herb Alpert—even though it’s not a trumpet. I love that sound and it really spoke to me. It’s not an easy part to play, either. There’s a little trill at the end of it, which is not in an easy range.” It took several tries to get it right, but Joe remained steadfast that it was crucial to the song. “Often I can’t enjoy my songs, because I know what’s coming next. But I enjoy that song. It goes right through me. Peyton starts playing that guitar part and the flugelhorn comes in and it’s like, *Fuck me, man.*”

But the ultimate moment of connection—the instance that sticks with Joe the most, even after all these years—came late in the process, when he first heard an actual orchestra, complete with harp and oboe, playing on one of his songs. “Of course I’d never recorded with an orchestra before. The Scud Mountain Boys never had the money. I remember Joyce came in when we tracked the strings and the horns and the harp. We sat in the control room as Mike Deming moved the faders up and brought the strings in. Joyce grabbed my arm so hard when they did that. She couldn’t believe it, and neither could I. Hearing that was one of the greatest musical moments of my life.”





"Square World" b/w "In Plain Sight" 7-inch single issued by
Summershine Records in 1997 (Cat No. Shine-us21)

SQUARE WORLD IN PLAIN SIGHT

Joe Pernice . rhythm, lead and acoustic guitars; vocals

Bob Pernice . rhythm guitar

with **Thom Monahan**.bass, keyboards, backing vocals, aircraft sampling

Garrett Fontes.drums, dog choker

Songs by Joe Pernice, Bony Gap Music (BMI)

Recorded and mixed by Thom Monahan and Pernice Brothers at Studio To Go Go and Slaughterhouse.

Mastered by Chris Ryan at Big Bang Productions

Some amps provided by Wormco. Furs by the Christie Brothers.

PATRICK DAVID BARBER DESIGN / GIRLIE PRESS PRINTING

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WAIT TO STOP - 1

VIOLIN II

J = 92

1 

OVERCOME BY HAPPINESS

Violin I

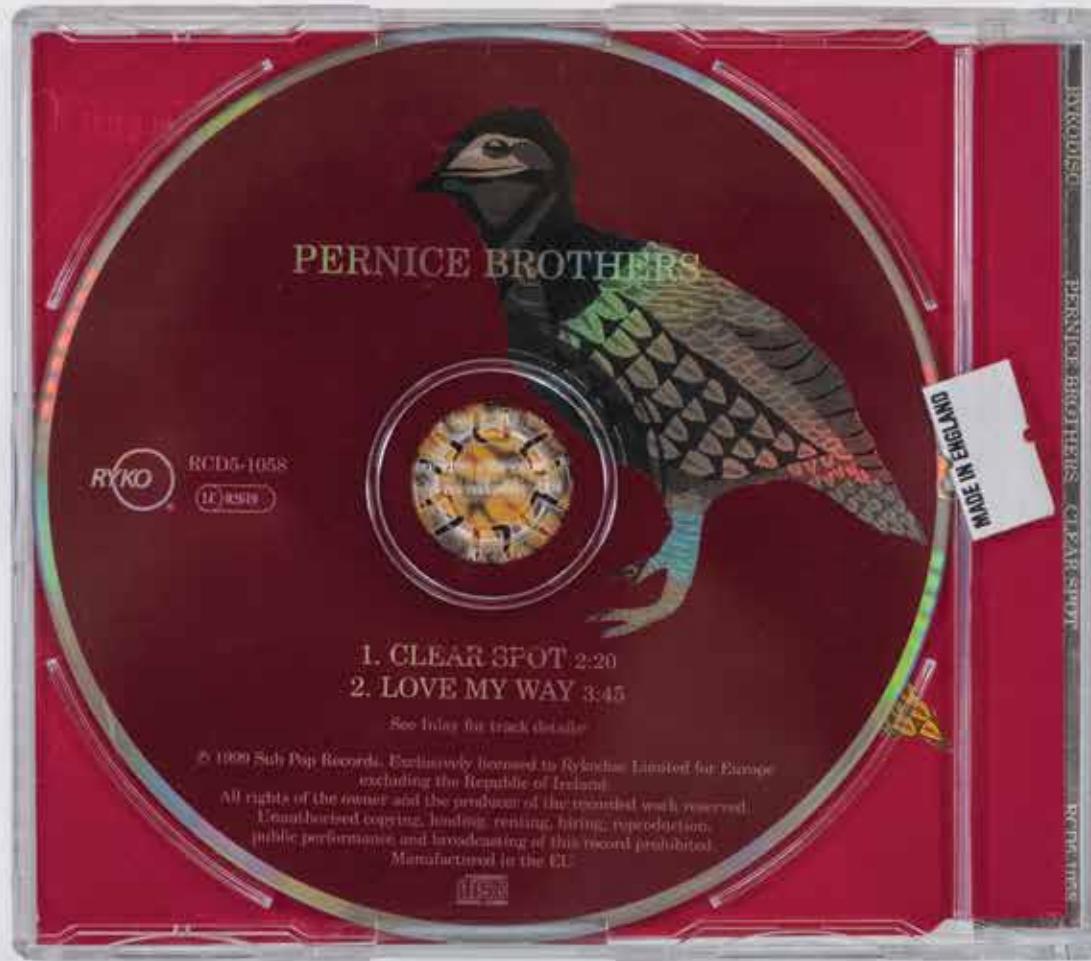
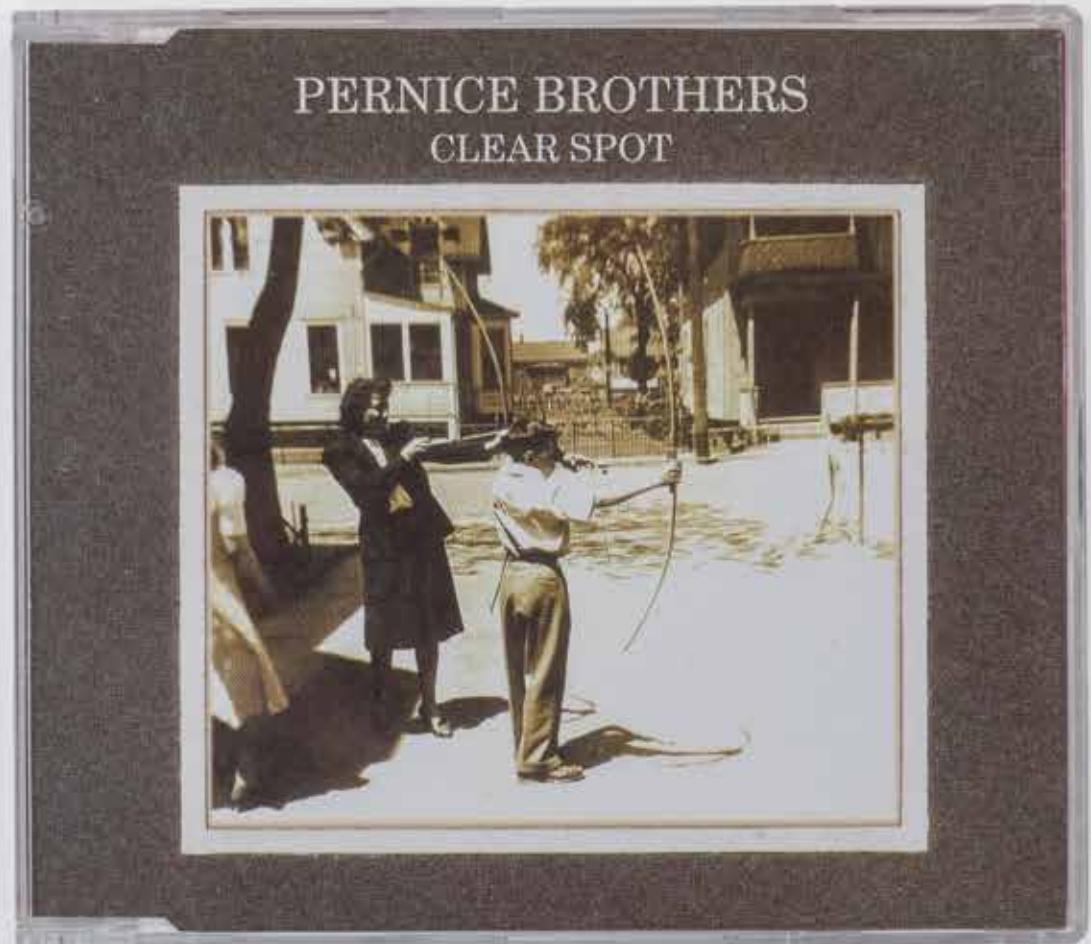
WAIT TO STOP - 2

VIOLA

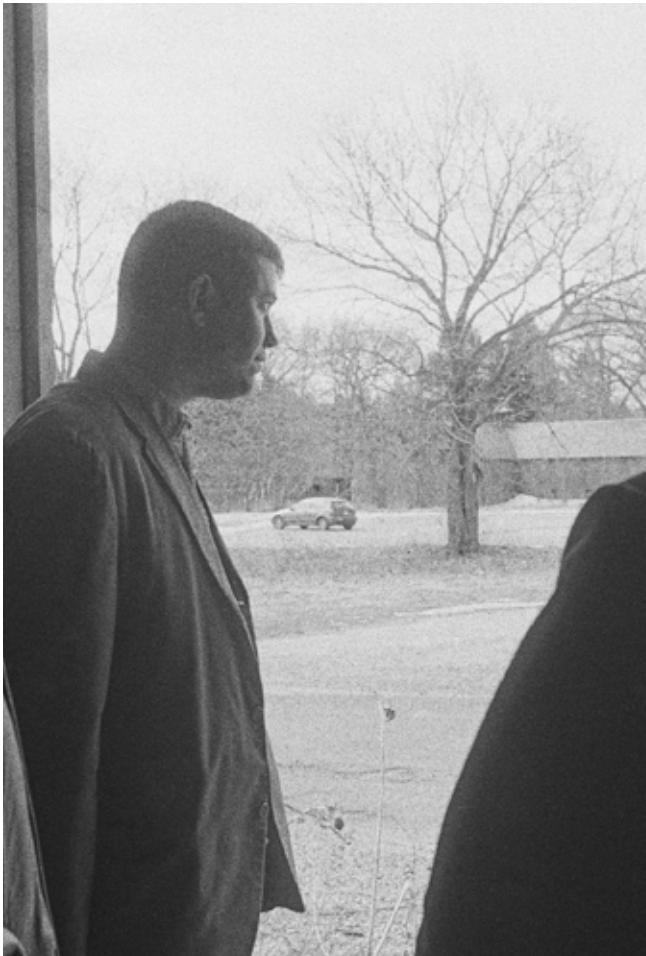
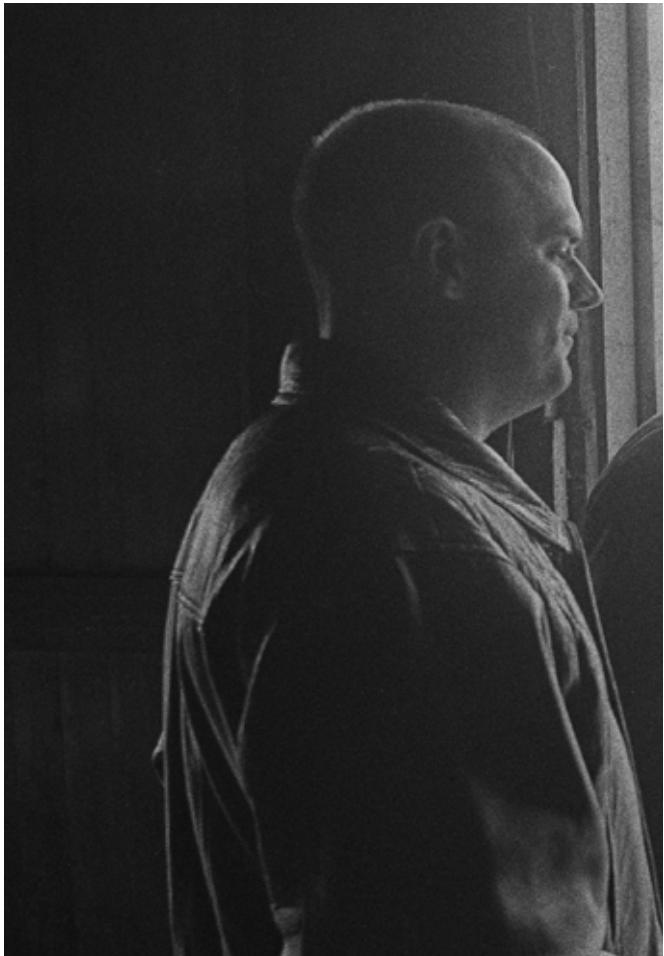
OVERCOME BY HAPPINESS

VIOLIN I

Coda NO. 13



"Clear Spot" UK & Europe CD Single issued by Rykodisc in 1999 (Cat No. RCD5-1058)



Much to Joe's relief, Sub Pop was pleased with the results. Well, they liked everything except the cover image. Joe had chosen a collage of a partridge made by his friend Zoe Blyth, because the bird had special meaning for him. "My last name in Italian means 'partridge,' so I wanted to use Zoe's artwork. But [Sub Pop Co-Founder and President] Jonathan Poneman said it wasn't a good image for a debut album cover. He didn't think people would connect with it." Instead, they decided on a photograph taken by Dennis Kleiman at an abandoned mental hospital not far from Northampton. "We had a shot with the peak of a barn or a storage building in the background, and Poneman gave it to the art guy to do a mockup. As soon as he showed it to me, I thought, That's the cover. He was absolutely right." Blyth's partridge was placed inside the jewel case, right behind the CD itself.

Sub Pop, however, was not in great shape in the late 1990s. The label had pioneered the alt-rock

movement earlier in the decade, releasing Nirvana's debut as well as albums by the Afghan Whigs, Mudhoney, and Sunny Day Real Estate. In the 2000s it would define the indie-rock boom with records by the Shins, the Postal Service, and Fleet Foxes. In between those two trends, the label stumbled. "In our kind of tongue-in-cheek corporate mythology, we refer to those years as the dark years," Poneman told *Magnet* magazine in 2015. "All kidding aside, they were years filled with struggle and trying to figure out what we did as a company... We thought *Overcome by Happiness* was something that would take off more than it did... It's not to suggest that we were disappointed. We were so used to being disappointed, because we thought we were releasing some truly extraordinary records."

Like many other labels both independent and major, Sub Pop was also weathering the rocky straits of digital technology. Tracks from *Overcome*

by Happiness were among the first batch of mp3s offered for sale on the label's web site, along with songs by St. Etienne, the Murder City Devils, and Combustible Edison. "There was a lot of stuff that was clearly before its time," says Linehan. "There were some really great records that just didn't find an audience for whatever reason. But now I hear some of the new Sub Pop bands and I'm like, oh my god, that sounds just like Zumpano!"

Journalists who heard the album loved it. In a *New York Times* list of albums she called "beach reading for the ears," Ann Powers wrote: "Overcome taps an all-American yearning that recalls neon-lighted fairgrounds and lovers' cars parked at the edge of a Great Lake...Beneath the beauty, each song is haunted by bitterness, but its fatalism is characteristic, too, of a land—and a season—in which dreams can be won or dashed at a sideshow roulette wheel. Joe Pernice exhibits a tendency to say one thing and sound like its opposite, which also

suits summer, when life's hard edges seem to melt like the sad verses of his songs."

In Europe and Australia (where Rykodisc handled the release), the album got even more traction. In the London *Sunday Times*, Stewart Lee wrote, "In less capable hands 'Monkey Suit' and 'Wait to Stop' might wash over in a gentle jangle of acoustic guitars and strings, but Joe Pernice has a knack of wringing a bittersweet melody out of every line. Let the Pernice Brothers overcome you." And the *Sydney Morning Herald* praised the subtlety of the arrangements and Joe's "gorgeous, yearning vocal that wraps around the music like a security blanket," adding that "when the strings rise up from the chorus of the album's opening track, 'Crestfallen,' you get a sense of majesty in his misery."

The Pernice Brothers played their first gig—an acoustic show in Brookline, Massachusetts, on a bill with Tanya Donelly of Throwing Muses, the Breeders, and Belly fame. As Joe recalls, "it was me, Bob, Thom, and Peyton. We just sat down and played a couple of songs unplugged. It was fun, but it wasn't the real deal." In order to tour behind *Overcome by Happiness*, however, he had to devise yet another lineup: there was no way to bring an orchestra or a harpist on the road, and Sperske still had obligations with Lilys. So Joe recruited members of their Sub Pop labelmates Jale, including drummer Mike Belitsky and bassist/keyboardist

Laura Stein. Peyton and Thom came along as well, and Bob Pernice even showed up for a few shows.

This new iteration of the Pernice Brothers had to reinvent these songs, which meant that many of them—in particular "Monkey Suit" and "Wait to Stop"—turned out much heavier onstage. They added extra harmonies where they could and relied on Stein's piano. When they headlined the Mercury Lounge in New York, Stein was so nervous that she played through the first song without her amp on. "It turned out that she'd never played piano live," says Joe. "She'd lied to me and said she was a piano player, but she didn't tell me she had stopped playing piano in eighth grade!" (He didn't hold the deception against her. In fact, they married just a few years later.)

Joe had toured extensively with the Scud Mountain Boys, and while their spare sound naturally emphasized his vocals, he had to adjust to singing with a full band making a bigger noise. "If there was a weak link on that tour, it was probably me. Sometimes I'd have anxiety, and I'd be pretty vocal about it instead of just rolling with it. I'm not one to bitch about the monitors these days, but if I couldn't hear, I'd start to panic, like I couldn't sing. I've never been afraid to get up in front of people, but the act of actually playing the song start to finish without fucking up, that took some work. It's not a natural thing for me."







Photo: Dennis Kleiman

Thom Monahan

Joe Pernice

Peyton Pinkerton

Bob Pernice



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PERNICE BROTHERS

- for Taxes with Frank)
1. Arrange for Taxes with Frank)
 2. Oil change
 3. Pay Rent / Visa Bill
 4. Call Riley
 5. Deposit checks (\$207.50 total)

Tonight:

6. Jump car
7. Budget write up (Quickly)

In between the recording and the release of *Overcome by Happiness*, Joyce Linehan left Sub Pop. The Pernice Brothers weren't far behind. Joe recorded one final album for the label, using many of the same players but credited to Chappaquiddick Skyline. There was no acrimony in the split, although relations were briefly tense. "Geniuses that we were," she laughs, "we decided that I would manage the Pernice Brothers. It's good to have a manager who knows where the bodies are buried, but it's not so good to have a manager who has a strained relationship with the record label." Over dinner at a Chinese restaurant in Quincy, Massachusetts, they hatched a scheme to start a new label together. "A lot of people were doing that kind of thing at the time," Linehan says. "It was easier to get access to recording equipment, and it wasn't difficult to put out your own records. But the reason we were able to do that and have any kind of impact was because *Overcome* did

have a bit of a following. It got some notice, so people were anticipating his next album."

That record, *The World Won't End*, was released in 2001 on their newly christened Ashmont Records. And every Pernice Brothers record since then—including their most recent, 2019's *Spread the Feeling*—has been an Ashmont release. Over time Linehan stepped away from the enterprise, focusing instead on organizing campaigns for Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick and Senator Elizabeth Warren. For more than a decade she worked as chief of policy for Boston Mayor Marty Walsh. For the most part it was easy to keep these two aspects of her life separate, but occasionally politics did bleed over into the music: "My boss would take a stance on something that would cause a kerfuffle, and I'd get some Twitter trolls saying, *Don't buy this music because she supports X, Y, and Z.* Then I'd have to go to Joe and say, *I'm so sorry, you have three Twitter trolls now because of me.*"

Joe has kept the Pernice Brothers going for 25 years now, weathering almost constant lineup changes and releasing seven studio albums that have sharpened, expanded, commented on, and elaborated upon the elegant orchestral pop sounds of *Overcome by Happiness*. But his catalog extends well beyond that band. In addition to recording a handful of solo albums (including a Barry Manilow tribute), he reconvened the Scud Mountain Boys in the early 2010s for a new album and tour, and in 2014 he released *Into the Lime* with the New Mendicants, a supergroup featuring Teenage Fanclub's Norman Blake. He also writes frequently for television, most notably as a staff writer for the Canadian crime drama *The Detail*. Joe has published a book of poetry and several works of fiction, including a novella about the Smiths for the 33 1/3 book series. And in 2009, to show there were no hard feelings with his old label, he returned to Sub Pop for a 7-inch single under the alias the Young

Accuser—a tie-in with his novel *It Feels So Good When I Stop*. Poneman called the book “easily one of the most lethal and unrelentingly hilarious books I have ever read.”

Fittingly for an artist who stays so busy with so many projects, *Overcome by Happiness* conveys a fear of stasis, a horror of losing momentum in life, made by an artist who was just leaving school and entering the real world, who was skipping from one band to another, who had only been making music for a few years but had already amassed a

sizable catalog. His characters desperately need to keep moving, whether it’s away from a relationship or a career or toward one. Movement is key: “Ring in the new one, break off the seal / I’m dizzy and lit up like a ferris wheel,” Joe sings on “Ferris Wheel,” the closing track.

Yet, as “Chicken Wire” suggests, to lose that forward momentum—to stop creating, writing, doing whatever you have to do to stay on two feet—would mean a sad and lonely death “by the chicken wire and the studded tire.” “I’m a Gen X’er,” says Joe, “so

hanging on and sticking around and overstaying your welcome and not really doing anything with your life—that all seemed like a real thing that could happen very easily. I don’t think I was conscious about that as a theme on this record; I was just writing from the pool of my own experience. But if your goal is to keep engaging with the world and entertaining yourself and feeling like you’ve done something worthwhile, then you have to keep switching things up. *Overcome by Happiness* gave me the confidence to try new things, to keep making records, to keep exploring.”



SINGLES & DEMOS

TRACK BY TRACK

Joe Pernice

“Jimmy Coma” & “Monkey Suit”

(Sub Pop 7-inch single, issued 1996)

“Jimmy Coma” and “Monkey Suit” were the first Pernice Brothers recordings to be released. The tracks were recorded in March of 1997 at my brother’s house in Carlisle, Massachusetts. (In 2003, that house would burn to the ground in a fluke electrical fire. Another reason I never fiddle with electricity. No one was hurt, but of my brother’s lovely guitars and amps, only his fire-scarred Tokai Strat survives. Plays great still. It’s appeared on a number of recordings since.)

I wrote “Monkey Suit” for my brother. I always thought he was a better musician than me and could have easily made records people might want to hear. But he had other plans. Very Mr. Know It All of me to think his life path was not the one he wanted. The lyrics are not a flattering look at putting on a suit and going to work. But cut me some slack. It was the 1990s. Be that as it may, I wrote the song for him in 1996 while I was still in the Scud Mountain Boys. I knew the song wasn’t for the

Scuds, and I hounded Sub Pop to let me put out a side project 7-inch. They were cool with it.

Stephen from the Scud Mountain Boys plays bass on the tracks. Garret Fontes (who played drums in Tom Shea’s other band Hoola-Popper and Peyton’s band New Radiant Storm King) played drums.

We did the basic recording for four songs, but finished only two. The two abandoned songs were a first crack at “Square World” and a since dried-up song called “My Friends.” I have zero recollection of that last song. I think we tracked the songs in a day. We did overdubs later in Northampton. Again, on Thom’s 1/2-inch Tascam eight-track recorder. There’s a clarinet sample Thom pulled from a hopefully obscure recording. He dropped that into the song. Fit pretty good as I recall. My first experience with sampling.

As for writing “Jimmy Coma,” I don’t remember too much except I had been listening to Lili’s *Better Can’t Make Your Life Better* LP at the time. And I know I had in mind

a news story of a young man in New Hampshire who fixed a bunch of helium weather balloons to a lawn chair.

Whether or not the dude ended up in a coma, I cannot say.

The “Monkey Suit” 7-inch might be my favorite of my records. It was Bob’s idea to use his and my first communion photos. He appears sweet and angelic. My oldest sister had to wrestle me still on the steps of the church just to get a photo. I think the implications are pretty clear.

“Square World” & “In Plain Sight”

(Summershine 7-inch single, issued 1997)

“Square World” and “In Plain Sight” were both recorded around the same time. Jason Reynolds (who was working at Sub Pop at the time) heard the tunes I’d recorded for the Sub Pop “Monkey Suit” 7-inch, and he asked if we’d do a 7-inch for his Summershine label. We were way into it. I can’t recall exactly when this was, but it was

between July 1997 (when I left the Scud Mountain Boys) and the May 1998 release of *Overcome by Happiness*. I recorded “In Plain Sight” alone, I think. (I still haven’t listened to it as I write this. It was tracked to a 4-track cassette in the basement of my rental in Northampton, Massachusetts. I wrote the tune on tour with the Scud Mountain Boys in 1997.)

As for “Square World,” I wrote that in February 1997, also in the house in Northampton. We recorded it there as well. Thom had his Tascam 1/2-inch eight-track recorder. (Same one he’d used to make countless recordings, including most of the songs on *Dance the Night Away* by the Scud Mountain Boys.) I always liked how the recording turned out. The personnel on the recording comprised the Pernice Brothers touring band for the next five years. I play the rhythm guitar and the lead on the track. For good reason, it was only the second recording of me playing lead guitar. The first was on the Scuds’ song “Television.”

“Love My Way”

(Rykodisc “Clear Spot” UK CD single bonus track, issued in 1999)

The label Rykodisc licensed *Overcome by Happiness* for a UK and Europe release. I was definitely into this because Rykodisc was re-releasing Nick Drake’s records. Had Joe Schmoe Records been releasing Nick Drake’s records, I would have lobbied to be a Joe Schmoe recording artist. (The only copy of *Overcome* on CD I personally own is the Ryko version in the tinted green jewel box.)

Ryko needed a B-side, and we didn’t have a lot of time between tours. We were all big Psychedelic Furs fans, and we jumped at the chance to do a Furs tune. We took a lot of liberties with the arrangement. I’m sure that Thom, Peyton, Anne Pinkerton, and I made the recording at Peyton’s apartment. Anne played the main guitar part on a Danelectro electric. Thom looped the drums on a Roland machine. We did the whole thing in

a couple hours, and the speed at which we worked is audible in the mix. Had a blast, though.

“Sick Of You” (earliest sketch demo)

I wrote “Sick Of You” in late 1996 in a house on South Street in Northampton, Massachusetts. The version here is the earliest recording of it. I did it on a Tascam 4-track cassette recorder. The song (and recording) had some verses, but I chopped off the top of the recording because the lyrics were too mean-spirited. I liked the melody and changes, though.

Another slightly newer 4-track version of this exists somewhere with Stephen from the Scuds playing bass, and me singing, playing guitar and Vox Jaguar organ.

“Cut You Free” (demo)

“Cut You Free” was on my big list of songs for *Overcome*. I wrote it while I was still in the Scud Mountain Boys. Tom Shea from the Scuds plays the lead guitar. He also worked the knobs on the ADAT machine. Yes, this was tracked to ADAT after hours in a music store (Downtown Sounds) that he now co-owns. I truly don’t know what I was thinking with this song. But the falsetto is well-intentioned, if not in tune. The vibraslap was a bold call.

“I won’t forget the moonlight in your eyes. The color of the sky. I’m never gonna sleep. Not even gonna try.” Very 1990s of me.

“Overcome by Happiness” (earliest sketch demo)

I can’t recall for sure, but I know I wrote “Overcome by Happiness” in either late 1996 or early 1997. I was still in the Scud Mountain Boys. I remember playing the skeleton of it and “Shoes And Clothes” on an Art & Lutherie acoustic for Frank Padellaro in a green room before a

Scuds gig on the doomed Vic Chesnutt tour. And while the specifics are blurry, I definitely remember writing the middle eight and trying to keep up with the chords and melody as they were happening. When I hit on the last chorus coming back in a half step down from the end of the middle eight, I knew I had written a real song.

During the orchestral recording sessions for the album version, I simply couldn’t believe what I was hearing... especially on the middle eight. Definitely a lifetime highlight for me. This doesn’t happen too often, but it was exactly how I’d imagined it. Not too many things more fun than that for me.

“Clear Spot” (earliest sketch demo)

“Clear Spot” is one of the rare tunes of mine that I came upon in my head first. No instrument involved. (Almost all of my songs were written with a guitar in hand and a blank slate before me.) I was walking down Main Street in Northampton, Massachusetts. I had just left a store called the Mountain Goat where I’d impulse-bought a crazy pair of hiking sneakers. I didn’t hike. I sometimes do now, but definitely not in 1997. The lyric, “hit a clear spot,” just kind of fell on me. The rest of the melody came together pretty fast. The recording you hear on this LP was probably made the same day or a day or so after. I wanted to get it down.

When we went to record the album, the song had evolved some, but this recording was the one I gave to the other players. To their credit, they were able to “get it” from this stick figure drawing.

“Dimmest Star” (earliest sketch demo)

I wrote “Dimmest Star” a day or two before we went into Studio .45 to make *Overcome by Happiness*. On just about every record I’ve made, there’s a last-minute tune added to the list. “Dimmest Star” is that song. Not only

is this sketchy demo the earliest recording of the song, I'm pretty sure it's the only version to predate the studio recording. There wasn't enough time to flesh it through multiple demo takes.

Recording this tune in the studio was pure joy for me. I had played the whole song down on my trusty Gibson acoustic. Mike Deming suggested we mute the acoustic off the intro four bars, then bring it back in on the top of bar five. It's subtle, but it tickled me then as it probably would now. Deming also played a beautiful piano lead break. Kills me.

But for me the best part is the outro. Deming vamped on Thom's RMI electric piano, while Thom turned delay and effects knobs. They combined to put a lovely tail on that song.

The other little tidbit about that song: I never flew in a plane until I was 25. Was always terrified. So much so that in early 1996 when Sub Pop had the Scud Mountain Boys visit the Seattle offices from Massachusetts, Stephen and I took the train across America. Somewhere in the Midwest I woke at dawn and looked at the blue country sliding by. I saw in an otherwise empty field a solitary car and a person shining a flashlight into it. I wrote "Shine my light into your car" right then in my notebook. Two years later I'd pour some water on that line and try to make a song grow.

"Song #2 (The Queen of NYC)"

(earliest demo)

I wrote "Song #2" in 1995 while I was working on an organic vegetable farm in Whately, Massachusetts. I was living in the aforementioned house on South Street. I had been listening to a lot of Freedy Johnston at the time. Up till then I had not written too many songs that strummed a driving rhythm. I recall writing it in my bedroom in the evening into the night. It all—music and lyrics—came at once. I played it over and over until the neighbor downstairs shouted up at me to knock it off. Fair point.

The Scud Mountain Boys played this tune live a number of times. I'm almost certain the Pernice Brothers studio line-up jammed on this in the studio when we went to make *Overcome*, but it was among the first in the studio to get cut because I wanted to distance my new record from the Scuds' stuff. Again, it was the 1990s, and everything was overly dramatic...at least in my head. It wasn't until we made *Yours, Mine & Ours* did I believe the y'allternative country had been blown off the song.

"Courage Up"

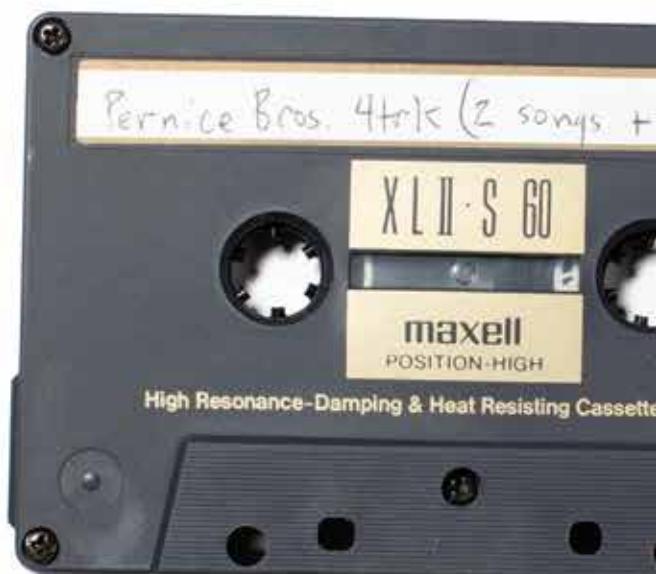
(demo)

"Courage Up" obviously did not make the final cut of songs for *Overcome*. It was pretty newly written when we went into the studio to make the record. I had yet to have a sense of what "kind" of song it was. That, and because we were on a pretty tight schedule and budget, I crossed it off the list. We just didn't have the time to muck with it in the studio. Had I panicked and nixed it too soon? Probably. I panicked about everything back then. Did the record need this tune? Damned if I know. Anyway, we fleshed it out later, and it shows up on the Chappaquiddick Skyline album.

"Let That Show"

(demo)

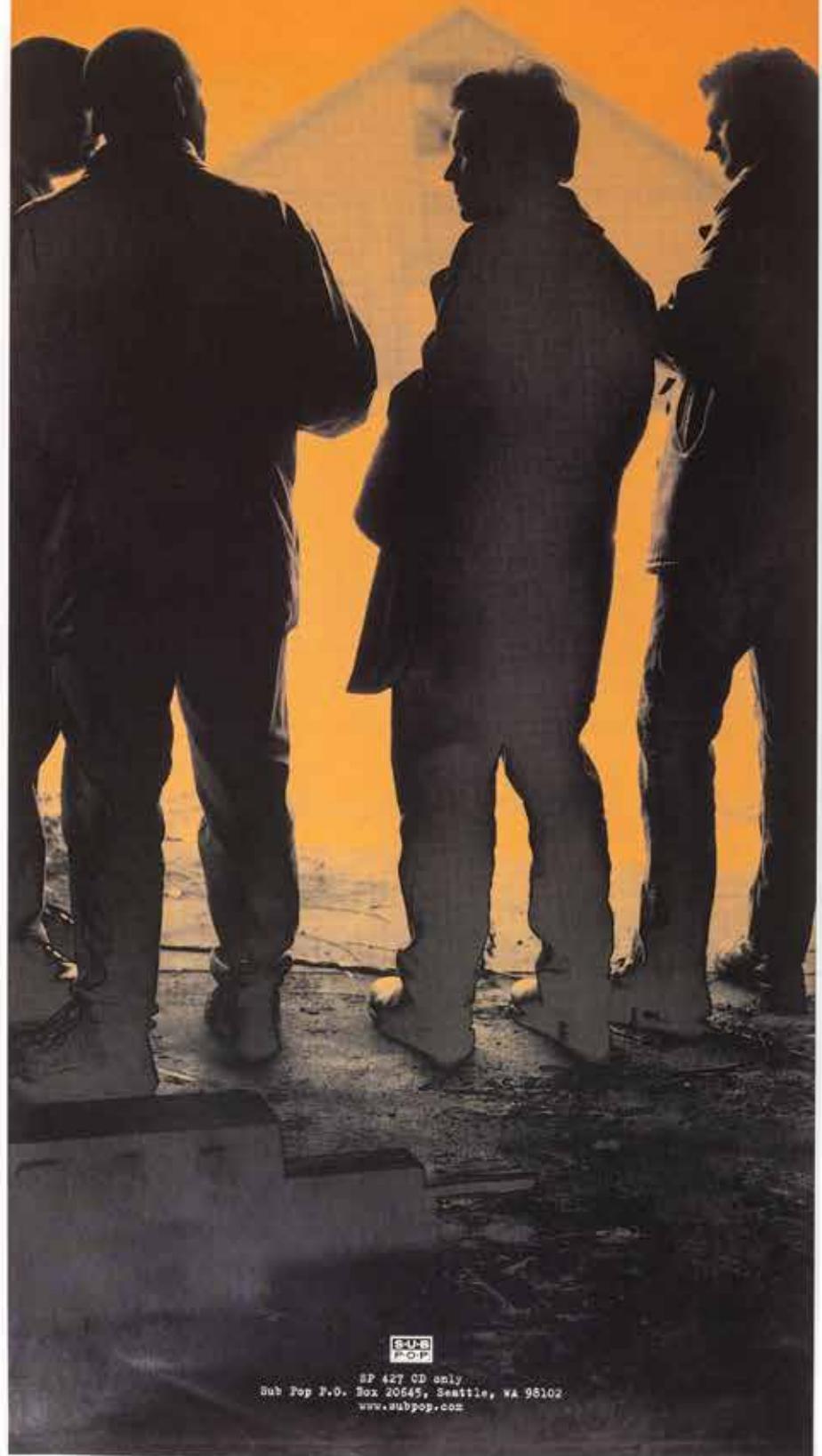
Tom and I recorded "Let That Show" the same night as "Cut You Free." I remember liking it, but it was one of the first songs to get scratched from the *Overcome* master list because I thought it was too country. Which is ridiculous, really. But at the time, I wanted to make sure *Overcome by Happiness* was many country miles away from being pegged as country. Again, had I panicked? (See above.) "Let That Show" slid behind the filing cabinet. In mid 2000 when we started recording the record *The World Won't End*, I came across the recording included on this LP. By then I saw the song with new ears. I wrote the middle eight the song needed, and we cut a version that fit nicely on that album.





PERNICE BROTHERS

OVERCOME BY HAPPINESS



Original Sub Pop Promotional Poster

CRESTFALLEN

Oh, I need some time to make sense of something
I lost somewhere on the ride.
Thought I was fine.
When she speaks she's like a mime.
It's hard to read a simple mind.
Turns me inside out in a way I can't define.
Oh, I need somebody who won't see through me.
Was happy living a lie.
Thought I was fine.
Then it breaks without a sign.
It's hard to read a simple mind.
Leaves me looking back for a thing I'll never find.
It's a long way to fall
When you find out how it never was.
It's a long way to fall
When you find out it never happened at all.
Then it breaks without a sign.
It's hard to read a simple mind.
Got me looking back for a thing I'll never find.
It's a long way to fall
When you find out how it never was.
It's a long way to fall
When you find out how it really was.
It's a long way to fall
When you find out it never happened at all.

OVERCOME BY HAPPINESS

Never think to ever look around.
Never see it coming at you
With your head in the clouds.
Looking like a fool
Drinking like a clown
Worried you'd be nobody.
Not so far from that now
You don't feel so overcome by happiness
You're broke
Do you think you might scrape your life together
Just in time to find you've got no peace of mind
When everybody wants a piece of your pretty white ass.

Move around, never moving on
Waiting for the thing to happen
When it's already gone.
Looking like a fool
Drinking like a clown
Worried you'd be nobody
Not so far from that now.
You don't feel so overcome by happiness
You're broke
Do you think you might scrape your life together
Just in time to find you've got no peace of mind
When everybody wants a piece of your pretty...

Even if you held the sun
In the color of your eyes
I would never be so blind.
And you don't feel the weight rushing out of your life.
Don't see the light dying out of your eyes.
You don't feel so overcome by happiness
You're broke
Do you think you might scrape your life together
Just in time to find you've got no peace of mind
When everybody wants a piece of your pretty white ass
Your pretty...
I don't feel...

SICK OF YOU

There's a roof over there.
You could prove it to me there.

CLEAR SPOT

I feel better, now you're gone.
A minute in the sunlight can
Take away a whole life still
There's something about you.
Once or twice
Everything was lined up straight.
There's nothing you could ever trust.
There's something about you.
Hit a clear spot.
Did you think that I would call?
'Cause sometimes I don't feel like talking at all.
I feel better, now you're gone
A minute in the sunlight is
Nothing you could ever trust
There's something about you.
Hit a clear spot
Did you think that I would call?
'Cause sometimes I don't feel like talking at all.
I feel better now you're gone.
A minute in the sunlight is
Nothing you could ever trust.
There's something about you...

DIMMEST STAR

Who were you when I woke up
With a bad dream on my head?
How you said I made no sense.
And you showed me how it was
All the world broken for me.

I could say that I was less
When I never knew your face

How you say I make no sense.
Can you show me how to live?
All the world open for you
Stretched out so far I never knew.
I flashed my light into your car
Kiss me dimmest star
Don't ever leave
Don't ever leave
Don't ever leave
Until I make up my mind
Don't ever leave my troubled life.
All the world open to you
Stretched out so far I never knew
I flashed my light into your car.
Kiss me dimmest star
Don't ever leave...

MONKEY SUIT

See myself off in my monkey suit each day
And I walk a slow fish ladder
Made of concrete and the bones of people.

Ten more minutes till my monkey train pulls in.
Where the bums all shine like poisoned angels.
The smell of diesel's stronger than mine.

Don't want to live inside it
Don't want to waste it dreaming.
Don't let me disappear
Inside this monkey suit that I'm wearing.

How much longer till my monkey ship pulls in
And I sail off to the siren voice?
I sail into the white moon?
Someone's rattling on my monkey cage all day
Where I peck away the ant hill numbers
Peck away my best years.

Don't want to live inside it.
Don't want to waste it dreaming.
Don't let me disappear
Inside this monkey suit that I'm wearing.
It takes so much to bring me around
Without so little as
The thing where you could anchor yourself down.

Don't want to live inside it.
Don't want to waste it dreaming.
Don't let me disappear
Inside this monkey suit that I'm wearing.

CHICKEN WIRE

With a drink in her hand
She will start her car and then
Seal herself for good in the garage.
She's never leaving.

There were times to be sure
It was so pure you might choke.
But it's too late in the garage
The falling ceiling

And all the walls will fade to black.
Could she be thinking of another now?

Take my hand. Pull me through.
There's so much I left undone.
But it's too late now in the garage.

And all the walls will fade to black.
Could she be thinking of another?

They found her car
Still running in the garage.
She'd come so far
To end her life
By the rusty mower and chicken wire.
By the chicken wire and a studded tire.
By the rusty mower and chicken wire.

WAIT TO STOP

It could be so easy on you.
You don't know what it's like to
Want to cry.
And I want to be with you so bad
I feel like I'm dying
Or I died.

That time you held me by the hand so slow
I thought that I was getting close.
What did I know?

It could be so easy on you
You don't know what it's like to
Want to cry.
And I want to be with you so bad
I feel like I'm dying
Or I died
That time you held me by the hand so slow
I thought that I was getting close.
What did I know?

Now I'm waiting for the wait to stop.
Waiting for the wait to stop.

But I could not wait my whole life for you
What did I know?
Now I'm waiting for the wait to stop.
Waiting for the wait to stop.
But I could not wait my whole life for you.

ALL I KNOW

Tell yourself nothing's happened.
You feel okay when you're asleep.
It's the same mistake you keep making.
You wake alone but you're not free.
All your friends may go.
And your luck may go.
But you never feel as bad as when she goes.
It's all I know.
All the time you were happy
It makes the end so hard to take.
How her voice could fill a room like singing.
The crooked moon upon her face.
All your friends may go.
And your luck may go.
But you never feel as bad as when she goes.
It's all I know.
All I know.

Some move like they were blinded.
Some never let it show.
I knew somehow I'd have to let it go.

SHOES AND CLOTHES

I was one
Long before you came around.
You nailed it in
I won't deny I felt that hammer pound.

It's not the way it started.
But that's it goes.
I woke up sick in my shoes and clothes.

Beg me to
Right before your yellow grin.
I'm not so sure
I haven't grown to lose my taste for it.

If that's the way you want it
Hold on, here it goes.
I woke up sick in my shoes and clothes.

From the mouth of a baby
Came a warning light.
Even if we could be everything
How nothing still would be right

How to read your features
In a warning light.
Even if we could be everything
How nothing still would be right.
Nothing still would be right.
I was one
Even though you were my friend.
I don't believe
I have the strength to go through that again.

WHEREIN OBSCURELY

Your colored eye and a lipstick voice
And a cough you could never shake.
I thought I'd find you in that place.
Don't wake from a restless sleep
And the plan you could never make.
The evening sunlight on your face.
And then it fades.

Find me.
I'm sick and I can't escape
The way the sunlight touched your face.
And then it fades.

There were so many times
I had to wake you from crying.
So many times I could not make you cry.
I hoped to find
Your feet on the headboard, eyes in the moon.
I always think of you that way.

FERRIS WHEEL

Ring in the new one.
Break off the seal.
I'm dizzy and lit up
Like a Ferris wheel.

Tea in the Sahara.
I cut up my hand.
Can't see for the brightness.

How the moonlight is a bitter gold.
I don't want to die.
But you never know till you fail.
Ferris wheel.

How the moonlight is a bitter gold.
Oh, I don't want to die.
But you never know till you try

Ferris Wheel
And you fail.



OVERCOME BY HAPPINESS
ORIGINAL 1998 CREDITS:

All songs written by Joe Pernice,
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THE PLAYERS:

Joe Pernice - Vocals, Guitars
Thom Monahan - Bass, Vocals
Michael Deming - Acoustic & Electric Pianos, Vocals
Peyton Pinkerton - Guitars, Vocals
Bob Pernice - Guitars, Vocals
Aaron Sperske - Drum Kit, Tympanum, Percussion

THE ORCHESTRA:

Anhared Stowe - Violin
Christine Kolberger - Violin
Katrina J. Smith - Viola
Kathleen Shiano - Cello
Susan Cavender Knapp - Harp
Tim Atherton - First Trombone
David Sporn - Second Trombone
Peter McEachern - Third Trombone
Mike Jones - Flugelhorn

CREDITS:

Produced by Thom Monahan, Michael Deming, Joe Pernice
Engineered by Michael Deming, Thom Monahan
Additional Engineering by Dave Shuman
Orchestra Arranged and Conducted by Michael Deming
Recorded and Mixed at Studio .45, Hartford, CT
Pre-Mastered by Keith Chirgwin at Waveview
Mastered by John Golden at Golden Mastering, Ventura, CA
Art by Zoe Blyth
Band Photo by Dennis Kleiman
Design by Hank Trotter

THANKS:

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OVERCOME BY HAPPINESS
25TH ANNIVERSARY DELUXE EDITION:

Executive Produced and Supervised by Brady Brock
Remastered for Vinyl by John Golden at Golden Mastering, Ventura, CA
Pernice Brothers Photography by Dennis Kleiman
Joe Pernice Cassettes, Notebooks, Guitar Photography by Colleen Nicholson
Pernice Brothers Singles, Promotional Items Photography by Joshua Black Wilkins
"Jimmy Coma" b/w "Monkey Suit" Session Photography by Bob Pernice
Liner Notes: Stephen Deusner
Design: Chad Pelton

"Jimmy Coma," "Monkey Suit," "Square World," and "Love My Way" Recorded by Thom Monahan. "Cut You Free (Demo)" and "Let That Show (Demo)" Recorded by Tom Shea & Joe Pernice. All Other Cassette Home Demos Recorded by Joe Pernice.

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Except "Love My Way"
Written by John Ashton, Timothy Butler, Richard Butler, Vincent Ely
Sony/ATV Music Publishing

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE FOR THEIR HELP IN MAKING THIS DELUXE REISSUE POSSIBLE:

Laura Stein; Sammy Pernice; Joyce Linehan; Brady Brock, John Allen, Matt Etgen, Caroline Barfield & all at New West Records; Jonathan Poneman & all at Sub Pop Records; Jason Reynolds; Andy Childs; Peyton Pinkerton; Bob Pernice; Patrick Berkery; Dennis Kleiman; Colleen Nicholson; Mike Belitsky; Rick Menck; Josh Karp; Liam Jaeger; Michael McKenzie; Rachel Lichtman; Amy Sherman-Palladino, Dan Palladino, and Helen Pai.

Though he left this plane four years ago, I would like to mention my late friend Gary Stewart. If you don't know who Gary was, look for his name on countless great records released by Rhino Records. Gary was a legit, no bullshit prophet of music. Before I was lucky enough to have a friendship with him, I was one of the lucky musicians whose music he championed. When I say he bought—with his own dough—literally hundreds of copies of *Overcome by Happiness*, I tell no lie. He kept them in the trunk of his car (along with personally bought box sets of *The Wire*), and he gave them away to people he thought should hear it. He worked *Overcome* harder than just about anyone—myself included. At one point a few years back, he offered to give me the money (his own money) to buy back the master recordings. I was floored—though not completely surprised—by his generosity, but I couldn't even begin to go down that road with him. But that's how much he believed *Overcome by Happiness* needed a longer life.

Yeah... a longer life.

For Gary Stewart (1957—2019)

This record is dedicated to Susan Pernice and Eugene Monahan.

feel better
Now you're gone

w