



James Olin Oden

The Craic is Free



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Guitar, Vocals, Bones - James Olin Oden
Vocals - Caitlin Cary • Double Bass - David Pitts
• Uilleann Pipes - Eric Hahn • Fiddle - Claire Byrne

*"The whiskey has price but the Craic is free..."
was a phrase stuck in my head for years.
I knew it had to be a song, but what exact
form it would take I could not tell. It all started
to gel one night at the local AOH Irish Fest
in Raleigh, NC where Chris Douglas Mogenson
was playing the Highland Pipes as a few of us
who had a wee bit to drink "danced".
It was great Craic!*

As long as there is company, and Craic's in the house
We'll drink of friendship's creathur, all through the night,
The whiskey has a price, but the Craic is free,
Come on friends and neighbors won't join along with me.
(chorus)

I've heard many a tale make a strong man cry,
Of war and famine, how fools die,
But while there a chance lets be of one accord,
The whiskey has a price but Craic is free.
Well hearing your laughter, and seeing your smile,
There ain't nothing better I've seen in while.
A rich man drinks his whiskey, it's precious and dear,
but we'll taste of friendship's sweet camaraderie
(chorus)

Now what do I hear to my surprise,
but the pipes they are playing into the night.
Friends get to stepping, by circles we go round,
In true love and friendship the Creator's crown.
(chorus)

(repeat first verse and chorus)

The Traveller's Hic

James Olin Oden

Guitar, Bones, Whistle - James Olin Oden
Mandolin - Justin Johnson •
Step Dancing - Scott Johnson

*The term traveller refers to those who are
born to or choose a nomadic lifestyle.
In Europe (and in many a song)
they are often referred to as gypsy's.*



Bring on the Night/Sidhe Beag Sidhe Mhór

James Olin Oden/Turlough Caolan

Guitar, Tony Dixon Low D. Vocals - James Olin Oden

Vocals - Caitlin Cary • Double Bass - David Pitts • Uilleann Pipes - Eric Hahn

This is a song of immigration and pining for a lover left behind. I wrote it really more as a metaphor of the break-up of the Irish Wolfhounds. It was metaphor for that thing you just can't have, but from afar is so very lovely, and almost glow's. In the instrumental portions Carolan's "Sidhe Beag Sidhe Mhór" is played. It is a lovely tune that Eric Hahn played as my wife, Katherine, walked down the aisle. The name means "little hill big hill" and refers to hills all over Ireland where it is said the Tuatha De Danan retreated after the invasion of the Milesians.

Slowly the day slips away into the night,
As I lay in dreams gentle sway, my lass is in my sight,
(chorus)
She's fairer than the moon and the stars,
She lightens up my heart.
But in the day she's so far away, and I have no respite.
As it season pass, and I go to mass I fervently hope and pray,
To see my lass as the tears amass, and down my cheeks stray.
(chorus)
As each dram pass, and drunkenness amass she's almost in my sight,
Oh I'm one drink away from dreams gentle sway, and I will see her light.
(chorus)
Bring on the night



It Couldn't Have Been the Whiskey

James Olin Oden

Guitar, Vocals, Carboney D Whistle - James Olin Oden

Double Bass - David Pitts • Fiddle - Claire Byrne

Who hasn't sat amidst the blur of a soul crushing hangover remembering the wonderful time they had the night before and being in utter bafflement that such a good thing should cause such pain? Interspersed in the song is parts of the chorus to the old Gaelic drinking song "Bimid ag Ól" which means "We be drinking", and indeed we were.

(chorus)

It couldn't have been the whiskey that left me in this state,
A bottle of finest, the best for goodness sake!
The company was the kindest, ceol, ól agus craic!
It couldn't have been the whiskey, no! It must be something else!
Allen was a buying dram's for everyone,
The music was a flying so fast I couldn't keep up,
So I started singing, "Bimid ag Ól", [We be drinking]
It couldn't have been the whiskey, no! It must be something else!
(chorus)
Now Ted he was joking, as was off' his style,
Laughing and cavorting, "Ag póghadh na mban",
[and kissing the ladies]
The ladies were a dancing, it was such a sight.
It couldn't have been the whiskey, no! It must be something else!
(chorus)
Now I'll truly own, we were up rather late,
The room it was a whirling, I had to take me seat,
"bimis ag ól is ag rince le ceol"
[we be drinking and dancing and playing music]
It couldn't have been the whiskey, no! It must be something else!
(chorus)
Now Katherine was a screaming in the morning time,
"Now 'There's the Day' darlin', you'll get no rest this time!"
The whiskey she was cursing, "Oh no, it's not to blame!"
It couldn't have been the whiskey, no! It must be something else!
(chorus x2)



Map of Ireland

James Olin Oden

Carbony D Whistle, Classical Guitar - James Olin Oden

Irish songs speak of so many of the places in Ireland. The Rocky Road to Dublin, the Cliffs of Moher, The Plains of Kildare, and The Road to Lisdoonvarna are all songs that along with many others paint a vivid map of Ireland.

Listen Louder

James Olin Oden

Classical Guitar, Vocals - James Olin Oden

Mandolin - Justin Johnson • Vocals - Caitlin Cary • Double Bass - David Pitts

Sitting in on an Irish session at a Samhain celebration I was having trouble keeping up with the music. I was new to Irish music, so it was no wonder. Still I was mostly getting it right or so I thought. Talking to one of the players about this I got some totally unexpected advice. The man said, "James, you need to learn to listen louder." I'm still working on that.

We've all got so much to say, but lack the patience to hear one another,
A world full of voices that can't be heard, cause we're all talking over each other.

Spent my life playing the tunes that resonate in my heart,

All of me and little of you, It's no wonder we're so far apart.

(chorus)

Gotta listen louder, Gotta listen hard, Gotta listen louder, If you ever wanna be heard.

See the people screaming at one another, cutting down, showing disdain,

Too damn busy proving their points to hear what each others saying.

Why you want to talk to me about love, it's a waste of your precious breath,

Why don't we just get to loving one another, and the'll be nothing more to say.

(chorus)

There I was trying to play along, I put my whole heart in it,

Wasn't working out, what was wrong, the old man said, "You gotta listen louder"

His words they cut to the bone, didn't want to admit I was wrong,

Gotta cut the earth before you sow, the seeds that are gonna make you grow.

(chorus)

I can see we don't agree, well that's alright with me.

I love your spirit, I love your smile, we don't have to agree.

(chorus)

Love Is

Daniel Forsyth of Driftwood

Guitar, Vocals, Bones, Greg Elkin's Alien Head Shaker - James Olin Oden • Vocals - Emily Musolino • Double Bass - David Pitts

This song is about true love. Not the kind that rides the whim of emotions, that fills up books of poetry, and rolls off the tongue so easily with the words "I love you". It's about the kind of love that even when the word is not spoken, people recognize it for what it is. Why? Because "Love Is".

Maybe she will walk with you,

Maybe she'd let you hold the shoe,

Maybe she'd run, Maybe you'd fall,

But what's it gonna take for you to realize

Everyone flies by the seat of their pants.

Holidays wear you thin,

Holidays come and go the same,

Hollow little thought in the back of your mind,

Wrap your presents up in a paper bag,

Who cares what kind of dough you spend on your gifts.

You know the right words,

The words you're waiting for,

You know the the right shadows when they fall,

Well you'll be waiting for years for that day to come,

But don't you wait too long, no don't you wait too long.

Cause everyone falls in love,

Everyone makes the change for love,

So don't you let it get you down,

Or cause you any grief,

Cause love is not a loan that you pay on time,

Love is not a crutch that you think is fine,

Love is not a book, man, to keep you in line,

Love is not a rule for you to break or live by,

Love is not a word that you should throw around,

Love is not a stone for you to cast when you are down,

Love is in your eyes and love is in your hand,

And Love doesn't care if you are a fool or a rich man.

Cause love is, Love is, Cause love is.

Pastures

James Olin Oden

Classical Guitar, Bodhran, Bones - James Olin Oden

Steel Guitar - Justin Johnson • Double Bass - David Pitts

This an instrumental song I've been carrying around since I was 19. Lacking words I think it speaks clearly of a youthful joy of life and of the dance of which we are all part.



Another Tip in the Jar

James Olin Oden

Guitar, Vocals, Clarke C Whistle - James Olin Oden

Vocals - Emily Musolino • Double Bass - David Pitts

I remember walking into the Pour House in Raleigh, NC, and was at once enthralled by this beautiful voice coming from the stage. I thought surely she must be some great star. Some days later I returned and went to the bar and ordered a beer. The bartender that waited on me was that very singer that had before so touched my heart. This is a common story.

She's got a pretty voice,
She melts my heart of stone,
She takes me there,
Every time...

You know the kind,
A voice that damn near blew my mind,
I just assumed,
She'd go far...

(chorus)

A few days later to my surprise I see her tending the bar.
I look in her eyes, I see the fire,
I hope and pray she'll go far.
But for now, here's another tip in the jar....

Time and time again,
She moves the crowd,
Causing them...
to feel...

I'm so numb with drink,
So much pain its hard to think,
She reaches through to my... heart...
But for now, here's another tip in the jar...
But for now, here's another tip in the jar...



The Rare Auld Mountain Dew/ Chief O'Neil's Cavalry March

Traditional

Guitar, Vocals, Chieftain D Whistle, Bodhran, Bones - James Olin Oden

Vocals - "Jeffro" Holshouser • Double Bass - David Pitts • Uilleann Pipes - Eric Hahn

This one the many moonshiny tunes of Ireland, which gives great claims as to the potency and efficacy of Poteen (pronounced P'cheen, and is the Irish word for moonshine). Over the years as I sang it, it morphed into a more Southern tune. I think we hold similar values here, so it works. As, an aside, the best bluegrass I have ever heard came from a bluegrass session in Donegal, so it goes both ways.

The tune at the end is "Chief O'Neil's Cavalry March". You'll find that same tune on the end of the song "Donald McGillavry" on Silly Wizard's "Live Wizardry" album. When I was in Killarney at O'Connor's Pub, I personally heard an uilleann piper play it (I believe his first name was Henry). He had such a grand style of playing, I call him the King of the Pipers. I loved the tune so much I went home and learned it.
(chorus)

Let the grasses grow and the waters flow in a free and easy way,
But give me enough of the rare auld stuff that's made near Galway Bay,
And policeman all from Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim too,
We'll give them the slip, and we'll take a sip of the rare auld mountain dew.
There's a neat little still at the foot of the hill, where the smoke curls up to the sky,
By a whiff of the smell, you can plainly tell, there's poteen boys nearby,
And it fills the air with a perfume rare, and betwixt both me and you,
As home we stroll we can take a bowl of the rare auld mountain dew.
(chorus)

Now learned men as use the pen have writ thy praises high,
Of the sweet poteen, from Ireland green, distilled with wheat and rye,
Away with yer pills, it will cure all ills, be you pagan, christian or jew,
So take off your coat and grease your throat with the rare auld mountain dew.
(chorus)

The Irish Washer Woman's First Dram

James Olin Oden (Sort of Traditional)

Carbony D Whistle, Guitalele, Bones - James Olin Oden

This variation of the "Irish Washer Woman" done as an air. I like to think of the auld dear coming home

*and pouring herself a wee dram, and the smile on her face
when she tastes the first drop.*

So Many Years Ago

James Olin Oden

Guitar, Vocals - James Olin Oden • Vocals - Caitlin Cary •
Double Bass - David Pitts

*When I first started learning Irish music I met many talented
musicians. A few though had an arrogant air about them. I
was careful not to spend too much time with them, and con-
tinued looking for people from which to learn that were kind
and humble. Over the years I have been rewarded by meeting
some of the sweetest people ever to play an instrument (and
some that don't play at all, but whose songs are just as
sweet). This song is about that search.*

When I was a young man, so many years ago,
Me father set me down and these words he did sow,
“You must be off, into the world you must go,
And there finding teachers, bind knowledge to your soul.”
(chorus)

“But be careful who you choose to impress upon your heart,
Expertise and skill are not the only part,
Arrogance once sowed will leave a fallow soul,
And all you've learned will be for not.”
Well as you might have guessed, a musician I would be,
I travelled far and wide, and many I did see,
With skill so great, and wonderful indeed,
But careful I was, of who would teach me.
Remembering...
(chorus)

Now many years have passed, my teachers many,
Kindness and Joy, and sweet Humility,
And yet I still learn, with a great company,
Of brothers and sisters surrounding me.

Singing...
(chorus)

Go Through the Door

James Olin Oden

Guitar, Vocals, Tony Dixon Low D Whistle - James Olin Oden
Vocals - Caitlin Cary • Double Bass - David Pitts
Uilleann Pipes - Eric Hahn

*Words are the crude instruments by which we share our love,
and in themselves are like the lovely
stones stacked all over Ireland. But they themselves are not
the love we share, and if we focus
too much on them we miss the glory of Love itself. So go on,
stop staring at the house; go on through the door...*

Our words rough stones,
Precariously laid one upon the other,
Building walls and homes,
Delineating the boundaries of our lives.
Cold and Lifeless,
Having no breath,
The mark the paths through which life flows.
Be careful where you lay them,
Lest you impede the progress of another,
Do not cast them in anger,
For they do kill.
Do not stand before them
Staring in wonder,

Go through the door and know love.

The Flip Flop Song / Mrs. McLeod's Traditional

Guitar, Vocals - James Olin Oden • Mandolin - Justin Johnson
Double Bass - David Pitts • Fiddle - Claire Byrne

*This is a song that Micho Russell used to sing (as he would
say, God rest his soul). It's a silly song of foolish
people meeting untimely ends. Sometimes I call it the Darwin
Award song. Whatever it's called, I truly enjoy playing it.
The tune sung at the end is “Mrs. McLeod's”.*

Come listen to me sing, a very funny thing that
happened to Timmy McGee,
He went one day to Maregai to swim in the briny sea,
The weather being damp, he said he'd have a gamp,
what a very silly thing to do.
He jumped right in and the wind caught him,
and off to the sky he flew.
(chorus)
He's gone on to glory, he's gone flip-flop,
He's gone on to glory, and he's just wiped off the map,
Their searching, their searching near and far,
Their searching for McGee, but he's gone to Fiji,
And they don't know where he are.
Little Billy Prance, swore in a trance,
he'd die for a thousand pounds,
The bet was made and Billy was laid underneath the ground,
For six long months he laid there in the fine grave that they laid him,
But when they went to dig him up they did not know where they
laid him.
(chorus)
Their searching silly, for they can't find Billy
For they don't know where he are.
Tim McGee, was an engineer, he drove the scotch express,

Said Tim, be dad, I'd feel very glad, If I could win that race,
So off he went, one hundred miles an hour, Tim would be the first,
10 to 1 it would have been, but the blooming boiler burst.
(chorus)

They're searching for McGee, but he's gone to Fiji,
And they don't know where he are?
Michael McGannon, heard of a cannon, that could fire a 1000 tons,
Be Dad, says he, I'll go and see that big and mighty gun,
So off he went on fine summers day, but he did not know the cannon
was loaded,
He stepped aside to light his pipe, and the cannon it exploded.
(chorus)
Their searching for McGannon, who exploded the cannon,
And they don't know where he are!

The Kudzu's Frantic and Regal March

(dedicated to Reno and Luzbrilla)

James Olin Oden



Carbony D Whistle, Bones, Antlers - James Olin Oden

There's the Day (Ta na Lá)

Traditional

Guitar, Vocals - James Olin Oden • Double Bass - David Pitts

This is a lovely Irish ballad whose subject is the end of any good night of drinking. Eventually, and inevitably the day will come, and all friends must scatter to their dwellings (even if be a tent or a ditch). The song was originally in Gaelic as "Ta Na Lá".

A fitful sleep the landlord had,
'Mid din and chat none of his choosing,
His daughter 'til the broad daylight,
Abusing those who stood there boozing.
(chorus)

There's the day, it's not the day,
'Tis the day, the night is over,
It's not the day, whatever you say,
It's only the moon to guide the rover.
Come landlord join us in the snug,
all drowsy thoughts of slumber scorning,
There's not a drop in jar or jug,
That we won't drain before the morning.
I'll stay in bed the landlord said,
For if I get up you'll go out quicker,
So drink your fill of swipes and swill,
But not one drop of my good liquor.
The tavern has my socks and shoes,
The landlord has my coat and britches,
By morning I've no more to lose,
So I'll go and snooze among the ditches.
But I've money left to treat a friend,



Thanks On my first album I spent gobs of time, and for this I was thankful for my wife Katherine's patience. This album seemed to take even more time and surely you were just as patient and supportive as before, if not more. Beyond that, you daily articulated your love for me, and I am eternally grateful. Grá mo chroí, my only one, I love you dearly.

Big thanks to Greg Elkins, you're the guard at the gate, a teacher par none, and you might just have a future in therapy. Thanks to David Pitts; your patience and skill in tackling all this material is much appreciated. Thanks to Caitlin Cary and Emily Musolino; you both have so enriched this album with your vocal harmonies. Jeffro, thanks for that little bit of your limitless rock roll energy you managed to bottle and sprinkle on this recording. Eric Hahn, you rock...even if it be with an Irish instrument playing Irish music, there is no other word to describe it. Justin and Nikki, my life has been enriched by your friendship; when I grow up I want to play guitar just like Justin. Claire, what an amazing fiddle player and a truly amazing person. Strength sister! Driftwood, I know you all by name, and you are all dear in my heart; your music and your lives truly articulate that "Love is". To Scott Johnson and his mom Karen Johnson, thanks so much for taking time to show what the lift is all about. To Laura Thurston, thanks for being a friend, a peer and setting an example of dogged persistence combined with a joyful spirit. To Eric Meyer, thanks for the late night listening and advice...there is more playing together in our future. To Rummy, the world is in trouble if you and I ever really get to drinking. Benton Weese, dude hugs! Lynwood, no electronic device is necessary, the love is great in you. To my Shakori Family, I'm ever speechless at your impact on my life; keep carrying on the beat. Zemo Trevathan, you possess a kingdom and your riches are plentiful; to dwell in your court is most pleasant indeed. To Ryan Roseborough, dude let's get the JaCeltFunkazz on! To Annie Nice, your strength is inspiring and your kindness towards me is always noted. To Seán Ó Sirídeán, may you sing with the boldness of Cú Chulainn. To Tír Na nÓg may the Craic always fill your homes. To Big Boss, thanks for not only for starting a company but building a community. To Clan LaFonde: I love you all...more than haggis (; To Wake District Pipes and Drums, thank you ever so much for making me always feel welcome amongst you. To Kirk Ridge, thanks so much for believing in me and giving me so many opportunities to shine. To Dean Driver and the Doodad Farm folks, you got the vision, run! To Sandra McEwen, I can only hope to do in music someday what you do in your art; completely inspiring. To Dan Leonard, thanks for the advice. To Moira and John O'Connor, Richard O'Connor and Dawn Kwietniewski, and all the rest of Clan O'Connor: you're the best family I could ever have. To all my friends and fans that have supported me so graciously over the years: I love you all, and am honored to participate in the your lives. Finally, to the Craic, may you always be present, and treasured. Let us gather together in "true love and friendship"; Let us "go through the door"; Let us "behold how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity". Let each of us of unclear vision come together and more clearly see.

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