

= Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down =

Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down is the fourteenth studio album by American musician Ry Cooder . Following his 2008 album *I , Flathead* , Cooder pursued a more political direction with his songwriting , inspired by the late @-@ 2000s economic crisis and protest songs of the past . Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down was written and produced by Cooder , who recorded its songs at Drive @-@ By Studios , Ocean Studios , and Wireland Studios in California . He played various instruments and worked with musicians such as Flaco Jiménez , Juliette Commagere , Robert Francis , and Jim Keltner .

Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down features topical songs with socio @-@ political subject matter about 21st @-@ century America , including economic disparity , social injustice , politics , war . Its music is rooted in Americana and incorporates traditional styles and musical language from historical sources such as country blues , tejano , and American roots music . The record has been noted by critics for its eclectic musical range , allegorical songs , working @-@ class perspective , and Cooder 's sardonic lyrics .

When Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down was released by Nonesuch Records on August 30 , 2011 , it charted modestly in the United States but relatively higher in Europe . Cooder expressed disillusionment with the music industry in response to the record 's poor commercial performance . Critically , the album was a success , earning him widespread acclaim and comparisons to folk singer @-@ songwriter Woody Guthrie . According to Slant Magazine 's Joseph Jon Lanthier , " the orchestrated indignation of [the album] incorporated a protean Greek chorus of economic victims and beat Occupy Wall Street to the punch by several weeks . "

= = Background = =

After an 18 @-@ year hiatus from solo projects , Cooder returned with a trilogy of sociopolitical , Southern California @-@ themed albums , comprising *Chávez Ravine* (2005) , *My Name Is Buddy* (2007) , and *I , Flathead* (2008) . The albums examined various disenfranchised peoples through humorous , scholarly lyrics and esoteric musical styles . After completing the trilogy with *I , Flathead* in 2008 , Cooder worked on The Chieftains ' 2010 album *San Patricio* . Cooder became inspired to record Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down by the late @-@ 2000s economic crisis and past protest songs . In interviews prior to the album 's release , Cooder expressed strong anti @-@ Republican and anti @-@ banker sentiments in discussion about the political and economic climate . Before conceiving the album , he wrote and recorded the song " Quicksand " in 2010 , as a response to the controversy spurred by Arizona Senate Bill 1070 and other anti @-@ illegal immigration measures in the United States . In an interview for *The Australian* , Cooder said of his decision to pursue a more political direction with his songwriting :

I was still working on the Flathead record ; that was during [George] Bush 's time . I was looking at things and paying attention to events , politically . So I started trying to write political songs because it 's good to have something you can do other than just sit and fume about everything . After Barack Obama got elected I started thinking about other stories that might be good to do . It occurred to me that the social and political problems that we 've been having , well [...] it 's deja vu all over again , as the man said .

In early 2011 , Cooder was inspired to write the song " No Banker Left Behind " , and subsequently the rest of the album , by a headline about bankers and other affluent people who had profited from the bank bailouts and resulting recession during the late @-@ 2000s . In an interview with Kai Ryssdal on *Marketplace* , Cooder cited the song as the starting point for writing the album and stated , " ' No Banker Left Behind ' originated with a line from Robert Scheer 's Truthdig blog . I read this pretty regularly , and when I saw this , this metric I thought ' no banker left behind . ' " He compared the album 's content to Woody Guthrie 's songs about the Dust Bowl era during the Great Depression and said of his own songs , " What I like in the idea of these songs is if you follow the logic of each tune ? this happened and this happened and you can see that at the end , this is the result , you just didn 't see it this way before , you never thought of Wall Street in terms of Jesse

James and bilingual heft . "

Recording sessions for Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down took place at Drive @-@ By Studios in North Hollywood , Ocean Studios in Burbank , and Wireland Studios in Chatsworth , California . The album was written and produced entirely by Cooder , except " Lord Tell Me Why " , which was co @-@ written by session drummer Jim Keltner . Cooder also worked with vocalist Juliette Commagere , accordionist Flaco Jiménez , bassist Robert Francis , vocalist Arnold McCuller , and drummer Joachim Cooder , Cooder 's son . Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down was mixed by Martin Pradler and mastered by recording engineer Bernie Grundman at his Hollywood studio Grundman Mastering . Most of the album was engineered in Pradler 's living room .

= = Music and lyrics = =

Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down 's music is rooted in Americana and draws on a number of styles , including blues , folk , ragtime , norteño , rock , and country music . For the songs , Cooder adapted musical language from historical sources and incorporated styles from both North and South American traditions . In his interview on Marketplace , he explained his stylistic approach for Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down , stating " to me , these musical styles and sounds are narratives as well . I mean everything about them ? if it 's an accordion , horns , the banda horns for the immigrant tunes ? they all are part of the story . And you can see it then , you can imagine the Arizona border that 's hot , 120 degrees in the shade , dusty . The banda horns are coming from some truck over there . " According to him , musical settings for certain songs were decided based on their respective compositions , such as when " the words would come to me in $\frac{3}{4}$ time , that meant corrido , that means accordion ; banda horns because they ? re exciting . "

Cooder wanted the music of each song to complement the stories in his lyrics and to serve as homages to particular traditional styles . Cooder said that he did not want to " over @-@ think it " and said of his creative process for each song 's distinct style , " It ? s taken a long time , but it becomes natural to combine an idea you have or a story you want to tell with whatever seems conducive . " Graham Reid of The New Zealand Herald writes that the music " refers to the dustbowl era , rural blues , Tex @-@ Mex (with accordionist Flaco Jimenez) and old @-@ time folk . " The Observer 's Neil Spencer comments that it is " grounded in the blues , folk and Tex @-@ Mex the guitarist explored in the 1970s , but its songs belong to modern times . "

Lyrically , the album focuses on socio @-@ political themes of power and its abuses , the struggle for democracy , the trials of the working class , and the goal of equality , with songs composed as either first @-@ person narratives or allegories . The songs deal with contemporary subject matter and topics such as immigration legislation , the emotional and physical effects of war , the dubiousness of politics , social class and race division , and white flight . Cooder 's songwriting is characterized by sardonic lyrics , satire , mordant humor , and wry observations on figures such as bankers , politicians , and militarists . Allmusic 's Thom Jurek characterizes it as " overtly political " and comments that " the depth of Cooder 's rage is quieter but more direct as the album draws to a close . " According to Bud Scoppa of Uncut , the album expands on Cooder 's previous trilogy of sociopolitical albums and their " scholarly but humour @-@ laced examinations " and " arcane musical modes " . Journalist Alec Wilkinson comments that " what [the album] shares with them is an indignation over the economic and ethical disparities of American life and the destructive and scoundrelly meanness of the privileges given to the rich . "

Nick Cristiano of The Philadelphia Inquirer writes of the lyrics , " Cooder takes deadly aim at rapacious bankers , warmongers , land barons , and the like , showing the devastating impact of their actions on ordinary folk " , adding that " He does this in a manner that mixes the scrappy populism of Woody Guthrie with the first @-@ person narratives of Springsteen in Steinbeckian Ghost of Tom Joad mode . " Robin Denselow of The Guardian notes " bleak or thoughtful lyrics [set] against jaunty melodies " and " no elaborate narratives " in the songs , while interpreting the album 's motif to be that of " a broken , divided society and the gap between rich and poor , but with the anger matched against humour . " Neil Spencer of Uncut calls Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down " an impassioned portrait of 21st century America and its injustices " , adding that " like Guthrie , [

Cooder] nails his targets with droll humour while empathising with society 's underdogs . "

Allmusic 's Steve Huey asserts that the album " reache [s] all the way back to his earliest recordings for musical inspiration while telling topical stories about corruption ? political and social ? the erasure and the rewriting of American history , and an emerging class war . " Peter Kane of Q compares it to Cooder 's 1971 album Into the Purple Valley , which featured Dust Bowl @-@ era songs , and writes that this album 's " protest songs for today 's messed @-@ up world " are " sly and humorous " . Philip Majorins of PopMatters compares the album to other songwriters ' " substantial statements " about the American zeitgeist , including Randy Newman 's Harps and Angels (2008) , Paul Simon 's So Beautiful or So What (2011) , and Bob Dylan 's Modern Times (2006) . However , he distinguishes Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down as " an attempt at the existential , providing an everyman 's view of struggle during economic downturn , class disparity , injustice , and abuse of power " , calling him " a direct voice of protest , both musically and lyrically , that will not be mistaken for being impressionistic . "

= = = Songs = = =

The opening track " No Banker Left Behind " references the financial bailout of 2007 and criticizes bankers and government . Alec Wilkinson of The New Yorker writes that the song " ridicules the considerations extended to the prosperous men and women who grabbed everything not nailed down during the last few years . " It features marching rhythms , mandolin and banjo riffs , and electric guitar . Cooder has described the song 's rhythm as " a kind of clog @-@ dance beat " . " El Corrido Jesse James " is played in waltz time with a horn section and accordion by Flaco Jiménez . The lyrics express a fictitious narrative by American outlaw Jessie James in Heaven , who claims to have never " turned a family from their house " when he was a bank robber . He asks God for his " trusty .44 " to persuade bankers to " put that bonus money back where it belongs " . Cooder discussed the character 's perspective in an interview on BBC Radio 4 's Today , stating :

[T] he point here is that Jesse James was a primitive white man from the 19th Century . And in those days the hero was a one @-@ man , one @-@ gun hero . It 's a very popular American myth . But what Jesse doesn 't realise [in the song] is that while he 's been up in heaven , the forces massed against him [...] He can 't overcome the growth of the corporate , military @-@ industrial equation . He can 't walk down Wall Street and shoot up the place . No @-@ one would even pay attention to him . The hero is outnumbered and outgunned . The wagons are circling , but what 's he going to do ? What 's anyone going to do ?

" Quick Sand " is a shuffling rock song that addresses the plight of illegal immigrants to Arizona . It depicts six migrants travelling through extreme climates in the Sonoran Desert to reach Devil 's Highway in an attempt to cross the Mexico ? United States border . They journey from Tamaulipas and through the mountains along Devil 's Highway . Partway into the journey , the migrants are abandoned by their coyote guide and subsequently lose one another one by one . They experience thirst , hunger , injury , and fear , culminating with the only two surviving migrants being turned away by a vigilante at the border . Cooder said of the route 's background and the narrative in an interview , " [I] t 's been a migrant trail for 200 years . People go out there and try to do it on foot , but if you make one mistake and go five minutes out of your way , you become disorientated and dehydrated . And they find these mummified bodies out there . The heat has just baked them through . And the people who live through it often refer to having a vision of the Virgin of Guadalupe flying overhead . This is a very common vision when the dehydration sets in . "

" Humpty Dumpty World " incorporates the marimba with light reggae and Mariachi influences . The song 's lyrics are sung from the perspective of God , who deplores the world He created . He makes note of incitive politicians and craven television commentators , and views it as " a ball of confusion " in the chorus line , " I thought I had built upon a solid rock / But it ? s just a Humpty Dumpty World " . " Christmas Time This Year " is an anti @-@ war song with a Mexican polka style , with Flaco Jiménez on accordion and Cooder on bajo sexto . Composed as a corrido , the song is about wounded soldiers returning home for Christmas , with dismal lyrics set incongruously to an upbeat Mexican melody . Cooder wrote the song in response to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center

neglect scandal and previous stories of neglected soldiers returning from the Iraq War . In " Baby Joined the Army " , a young man laments the departure of his girlfriend , who became uninterested in her town and enlisted in the army with the assurance that " If I get killed in battle , I still get paid . "

" Lord Tell Me Why " is a gospel song with a rolling funk groove , sung from the perspective of a lower class White man who has become disillusioned with the American dream . His ironic lyrics ask in the chorus , " Lord tell me why a white man / Ain 't worth nothin ' in this world no more . " The guitar @-@ based " I Want My Crown " was recorded with an 11 @-@ piece band and has an aggressive blues style , rumba @-@ rock groove , and growling vocals . The song is an indictment of politicians as " Judas men " who sided with oil barons and Republicans , and their greed that leads to war . " I Want My Crown " has been described by one writer as a " Mephistopheles @-@ as @-@ Right @-@ winger character study " .

" John Lee Hooker for President " is a blues song in which Cooder narrates as American blues musician John Lee Hooker visiting the White House . Adopting Hooker 's style and laconic vocal tone , he decides to run for the presidency after disliking what he observed in his visit , naming Jimmy Reed as Vice President , Little Johnny Taylor as Secretary of State , and proposing to have " nine fine @-@ lookin ' womens on the Supreme Court " . According to Cooder , the song was inspired by blues musician Gus Cannon 's 1927 song " Can You Blame the Colored Man " , a satirical piece about Booker T. Washington 's invitation to the White House by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1901 .

" Simple Tools " is a Tex @-@ Mex ballad about the contentment of leading a simple lifestyle , with references to the decline in traditional manual skills and the view of automated work as unfulfilling . Featuring a resounding mix of mandolin and guitar , " If There Is a God " is a satirical narrative about an afterlife in which Heaven is restricted by a government bill to the wealthy . Its lyrics criticize redistricting and Republican Party legislature . The song references " The Bourgeois Blues " by blues and folk musician Lead Belly . In " No Hard Feelings " , Cooder sings from the perspective of a lowly prospector who scolds businessmen for dealing with land exclusively in business terms . He dismisses the rich and elite as " ripples " in history and is willing to tolerate them provided that they avoid conflict .

= = Release and reception = =

Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down was released by Nonesuch Records on August 30 , 2011 , in the United States . It was released in the United Kingdom on September 5 , and on September 9 in other European countries . Its vinyl LP release was on September 13 . The album 's lead single , " Quicksand " , had been released as a digital download on June 29 , 2010 . Cooder donated the proceeds from its sales to the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund . The single 's cover artwork , a piece called Nuthin ' to See Here , Keep on Movin ' ! , was designed by visual artist Vincent Valdez , a frequent collaborator with Cooder . Valdez contributed photography to the album 's liner booklet . Cooder performed with a 17 @-@ piece band at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco , California on August 31 and September 1 , 2011 , to promote the album . He was not satisfied with the promotional aspect of the shows , however , and it contributed to his general disillusionment with the music industry , which he reflected on in an interview for The Australian :

We had a 16 @-@ piece band and we played great shows to 700 people a night . But none of them bought CDs . None of them . They had a good time but they weren 't motivated to buy CDs . I don 't understand it because I came up in the time of records . Back then the business ran . You still got the tunes out . It was a crooked business , you could get cheated and there could be crooked accounting , but I still prefer it to this new thing where there is no connection to the audience through radio or retail .

In the week of September 24 , 2011 , Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down debuted at number five on the US Billboard Top Folk Albums chart , on which it went on to spend seven weeks . The record also charted at number 123 on the Billboard 200 , number 28 on the Top Rock Albums , number 15

on the Tastemaker Albums , a chart that ranks top @-@ selling albums " based on an influential panel of indie stores and small regional chains . " In the United Kingdom , Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down debuted at number 26 on the UK Albums Chart , selling 6 @,@ 000 copies in its first week there ; it spent two weeks on the chart .

Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down received widespread acclaim from critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream publications , the album received an average score of 92 , based on 14 reviews . It was called one of Cooder 's best records by Uncut magazine 's Nigel Williamson and Martin Chilton of The Daily Telegraph . AllMusic editor Thom Jurek deemed it Cooder 's " most overtly political album ... and one of his funniest , most musically compelling ones , too " , while Daniel Paton from musicOMH said much of the record was " highly satisfying satire (although also often sensitive and affecting) , combining Cooder ? s transparent love for a wide range of roots music with his engagement with politics . " Andy Gill of The Independent was impressed by how Cooder used similar characters throughout the songs in new ways , calling the album his best since 2005 's Chávez Ravine . Cooder received comparisons to Woody Guthrie in reviews written by Phil Sutcliffe of Mojo , who found the lyrics sharply written , and Neil Spencer from The Observer , who called Cooder " a Woody Guthrie for our times " and the record " a fierce state @-@ of @-@ the @-@ nation album " . In the opinion of PopMatters critic Philip Majorins , the record would not have a significant impact because of the public 's predominantly commercial tastes and a " cynical " cultural climate , but concluded , " Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down could have tremendous cathartic power for [those] who are aware of history and its knack for repeating itself . For those who are willing , this is a good place to start an education . "

At the end of 2011 , Uncut named Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down the year 's 20th best album , while Robert Christgau ranked it number 37 on his list for The Barnes & Noble Review . The record was also nominated for the 2012 Grammy Award for Best Americana Album , while Cooder was nominated in the category of Best Artist for the 2012 Songlines Music Awards .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Ry Cooder .

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = Charts = =