

ABOUT THE ARTISTS:

Tui is an internationally touring old-time duo made up of Jake Blount and Libby Weitnauer. Blount hails from the District of Columbia; Weitnauer, from Maryville, TN. Both spent most of their lives on other genres of music, before moving away from home taught them a deeper appreciation of their roots. Blount is now an award-winning scholar and performer of Black string band music, specializing in the music of his family and forebears. Weitnauer is a versatile fiddler and singer known for the rhythmic complexity and precision of her playing. Tui works with traditional songs and instrumental tunes gleaned from archival recordings, at times paying strict tribute to bygone musicians and at others reinterpreting the music through a contemporary lens. The album pinpoints the intersections between the duo's musical and cultural experiences, incorporating songs from Black and white musicians, from each

musician's hometown, and from other locales ranging from Virginia to Texas. They're all presented as stripped-down duets for fiddle, banjo and voice, no less gritty and soulful for their intimacy. Pretty Little Mister is a testament to the exquisiteness of tradition and the power of youth.

TUI



PRETTY LITTLE MISTER

ABOUT THE TUNES:

1. Old Buck

Fiddle: GDAE

Banjo: gDGBD

This tune comes from Tommy Jarrell and Fred Cockerham, a fiddle-banjo duo from the Round Peak region of North Carolina. Jarrell's driving, syncopated and rhythmic fiddle playing made him one of the most famous and influential old-time fiddlers ever to have lived. Cockerham's banjo style, dominated by single notes rather than strums and incorporating slides and drop thumbing, proved equally impactful. Their work together has set a lasting standard for banjo-fiddle duos. We chose to begin the album with one of their tunes as an acknowledgement of their skill and impact on the tradition.

2. Sugar Babe

Fiddle: DDCGD

Banjo: gDGCD

Moran Lee "Dock" Boggs introduced this song to the old-time canon. Boggs, a white banjo player from Wise County, VA, worked in segregated coal camps. He often snuck into the Black camps, and the musicians he heard there shaped his unique banjo style and repertoire. Jake reinterpreted Sugar Babe in the clawhammer style, using duct tape to dampen the strings for a percussive effect (a trick learned from John Herrmann). Libby created her part in one of Eck Robertson's fiddle tunings (EADAE) transposed down a whole tone, and played the tune on Jake's five-string fiddle.

3. Went Up On The Mountain

Fiddle: DADAE

Banjo: aDADE

Libby found this tune in a Library of Congress recording of Austin Harmon. The Harmon family was from Cades Cove, TN which would become part of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The park's creation displaced the communities living inside its borders, who moved into the surrounding area and took their music with them. The Harmon family was part of that exodus. Folklorist Herbert Halpert recorded their music in Maryville, TN. Libby's hometown, in the year 1939.

4. Crazy Horse
Fiddle: GDAE
Banjo: eAEAB
We learned this traditional tune from a recording of Lyman Enloe, a fiddler from Lee's Summit, MO. Enloe is often described as a fiddler who straddles the old-time and bluegrass styles, and his music has gained increasing recognition in recent years. Our friend AJ Srubas, fiddler in the band Steam Machine, turned us onto this tune.

5. Smoke Behind the Clouds
Fiddle: GDAE
Banjo: gDGBD
Our source for this tune was a Black string band from Campaign, TN: Murph Gribble, John Lusk and Albert York. Folklorists Margot Mayo, Freyda Simon and Stuart Jamieson recorded them in 1946. The recordings are currently in the possession of the Library of Congress, where Jake first heard this tune. Gribble, Lusk and York's tunes often feature brisk melodic phrases, driven by a chugging guitar part that seldom changes chords. The words come from Roy Acuff's version of the tune, as performed by our friends The Bucking Mules.

6. Old Aunt Jessie Get Up In The Cool
Fiddle: FCGD
Fiddle: BbFCGD
This tune comes from Teodar "Teolee" Jackson, a Black fiddler who lived in Austin, TX. His style bridged old-time, Cajun and blues fiddling. Tary Owens recorded Jackson playing this tune in 1965-66. On that recording, Jackson's only accompanist is a single guitarist playing a single chord. Jackson makes up for the lack of harmonic variety by totally improvising the structure of the tune, switching between sections and harmony parts apparently at random. We created a spreadsheet to map the structure of the tune, and arranged it for two fiddles. The idea was to highlight the tune's antiphonal phrasing while retaining the hypnotic drone of the guitar part. We'd like to thank Dan Foster for sharing the original recording with Jake.

7. Mistreated Mama Blues
Fiddle: GDAE
Banjo: fBbFBbC
We styled our arrangement of Mistreated Mama Blues after a recording of the aforementioned Dock Boggs. Sara Martin, a Black blues singer from Louisville, KY, made a commercial recording of the song in 1920, well before Boggs. We suspect that he may have learned the song from her recording; though the instrumentation is very different, Boggs left Martin's lyrics and phrasing intact.

8. Make Me A Pallet
Fiddle: GDAE
Banjo: aDADE
Paul Brown and Mike Seeger recorded this song on Way Down in North Carolina. According to Brown, this version came directly from Fields Ward. It's also related to Lonesome Road Blues and Look Down That Lonesome Road, which Brown's mother Louise had learned from Black songsters in her childhood. According to other sources, the song's lyrics reference the hardships faced by Black migratory workers during Reconstruction.

9. Eighth of January
Fiddle: GDAE
Banjo: aDADE
This tune, once a standard, comes from the fiddling of Cuje Bertram. Bertram lived in Fentress County, KY, and was a well-respected fiddler and banjo player. Due to lack of corporate interest in Black old-time musicians, Bertram went unrecorded until late in his life. Document Records eventually published his home recordings, and respect for his clean, ornate and energetic fiddle style is growing.

10. **Twin Sisters**
 Fiddle: GDAE
 Banjo: gCGCD
 Osey and Ernest Helton, our sources for this tune, were Cherokee brothers from Asheville, NC. Osey learned to play the fiddle from a formerly enslaved Black man, and went on to develop a complex and dynamic playing style. Ernest played fingerstyle and plectrum banjo, backing Osey with rippling chords. The brothers played in fiddle competitions alongside Bill Hensley and other well-known musicians from western North Carolina.
11. **Woah Mule**
 Fiddle: GDAE
 Fiddle: CGDAE
 This tune comes from Elijah Cox. Cox was born in Michigan in the year 1842 to two parents who escaped slavery: Jim and Kizzie Cox. He may be the oldest fiddler ever to have been recorded. Cox made his way down to Texas as one of the Buffalo Soldiers, and remained there until his death. Jake first heard about Elijah Cox from his friend Howard Rains, half of the renowned duo Spencer & Rains, who generously shared his knowledge and recordings.
12. **Texas Traveler**
 Fiddle: ADAE
 Banjo: dADF#A
 John Wesley Work II, the first Black collector of vernacular music, recorded Nathan Frazier and Frank Patterson playing this tune in 1942. This Black banjo-fiddle duo seems to have specialized in fast and showy pieces. Frazier played a minstrel banjo in a bombastic, syncopated and utterly unique style that has inspired Jake since he first took up the instrument. Although we strove to retain the tune's original content and phrasing, we took it at our own pace.
13. **Cookhouse Joe**
 Fiddle: AEAE
 Banjo: eAEAB
 We learned Cookhouse Joe from a recording of Kentucky fiddler Estill Bingham. Bingham grew up playing the fiddle, learning from his father and other residents of Bell County. He played everything from gospel hymns to dance tunes. Bruce Greene recorded him in his old age.

Recorded by Joseph Dejarnette at Studio 808a
 Mastered by Mike Monseur
 Photos by Zosha Warpeha

Five-string violin by Nathaniel Rowan
 Steel-string, half-fretless banjo by A.D. Norcross
 Nylon-string, fretless banjo by Renan Banjos

OUR SINCERE THANKS TO

Jeffrey Blount & Jeanne Meserve, Virginia & Tom Weitnauer, Julia Blount & Jeff Kenny, Doris & Edward Blount, Tatiana Hargreaves, Riley Calcagno, AJ Srubas, Dan Foster, Howard Rains, Nathan Vargo, Paul Brown, Judy Hyman & Jeff Claus, Bruce Molsky, Rhiannon Giddens, and Dr. Lydia Hamessley

FOR INSPIRING US AND MAKING THIS PROJECT POSSIBLE.