



VIRGIL

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|-----------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|
| 1. Blue Lick Road | (4:36) | 5. Hit The Road Again | (3:55) | 9. Sad Little Girl | (6:04) |
| 2. Mysteries of Love | (2:59) | 6. Modern American Love | (3:36) | 10. Dirty Trouble | (4:53) |
| 3. Best Wishes & Sin | (3:33) | 7. Satisfied Woman | (3:49) | 11. The Rich Men | (3:27) |
| 4. What's Her Secret? | (4:23) | 8. Goodbye | (4:13) | 12. Something's Changed | (5:43) |

Simple, well-crafted, captivating and memorable original tunes from a gifted songwriter, social commentator, and master storyteller—decades in the making—with a distinct retro approach to Americana that is both fresh and timely with the resurgence and growing popularity of a true American art form.

At age 19, with guitar in hand, Virgil came to Los Angeles with dreams, ready to be a rock star. Four decades later—with a lifetime involvement and successful career in the field of art—Virgil's self-titled album of all original songs is a celebration of his 60th birthday.

Master guitarist Ken Emerson collaborates; taking us on a road trip across the country with references to classic guitarists from San Francisco, Tulsa, Austin, Memphis, New Orleans and Chicago.

With Andrew Ellison on drums and the musician and recording engineer J.P. Hesser pulling it all together in the studio, the original tracks on Virgil are an inspired musical journey through the artist's life—so far.

"I'm sure there are many of us who had their dreams fall by the wayside, and I hope to inspire others with a message that it's never too late. You never know where life is going to take you next."

—Virgil

Virgil never hesitates to tell people that he arrived in Los Angeles in 1978 with his guitar in his hand. He was still in his teens and like so many who come to Hollywood with dreams, he was ready to be a rock star. While playing local clubs and recording songs, he found his music didn't fit in an industry that had moved on to an increasingly commercial electronic-Pop-MTV and New-Wave style of music culture. The country-folk-rock singer/songwriter tradition had fallen out of fashion, and what was considered cool at the time was not the kind of music he was interested in creating.

Four decades later, with a successful career in the field of art celebrating the materials and processes that date back to the beginnings of human expression, Virgil's self-titled debut album of all-original songs is being released in celebration of his 60th birthday. The time has come for the songs he had quietly written over the decades to be shared with the world. While aging rock and country stars are still touring, with fans remembering their youthful looks and moves, there is a benefit to appearing on the scene already a little worse for wear.

"It's important for all of us to embrace dreams that fell by the wayside, and to inspire others... it's not too late to record that album, write that novel, or begin creating works for exhibition and performance." Virgil—a gifted songwriter, social commentator, and master storyteller—says.

With the resurgence and growing popularity of American regional roots music, and the remarkable story of country music's humble beginnings—when it was termed hillbilly—through all its tangled roots of people and places to be viewed as a true American art form, the timing of this new release *Virgil* is perfect.

"Virgil is my middle name and, as it has always seemed to me to represent another time and place, I have rarely made people aware of it," he says. "Both of my grandfathers were named Virgil, and therefore the name represents my roots. It is central to my identity, and the ideal name for what this collection of songs shares of me," he says.

He admits that sharing his songs with friends and associates who were unaware of this aspect of himself was admittedly scary, so he needed to do it within the context of a project, created in collaboration with others. His work as a curator, writer and director of the Beatrice Wood Center for the Arts has always been concerned with sharing the work of others. Aside from presenting musical performances at the Center, there didn't seem to be a place for his personal explorations. Yet, it was these experiences, and the encouragement of trusted friends and professional musicians who came to perform at the Center, that made clear to him that his passion for music and songs unsung was very much alive.

"Looking back, I see how so much of my career in craft art was born of a fascination with the instruments my Uncle Claudie, Aunt Angeline and friends played in the living room of their Southern Ohio farmhouse," he says. "Guitars, mandolin, banjo... the forms, materials and sounds seemed magical to me."

Just as his maternal Grandpa Virgil passed away a few miles from where he was born, Virgil's music is ultimately tied to the place and time where he was first inspired. He was young and there wasn't a significant challenge to the music his relatives played then. They called it country or hillbilly. Today it would fall under the label Americana or American Roots.



Grace and Virgil Wallace



Marie and Virgil Wallen



Dancing in Grandmother's kitchen

He's not good with memories, blaming the domination of an internal life where the spirit resides, fantasy lives, and songs are born.

When he was eight years old, his family arranged for him to inherit the guitar of a distant relative when they first moved from Southern Ohio to Northern Michigan. He remembers it entailed driving out to a farm in the country to retrieve it. For some time, it only had two strings, which kept him busy enough until the family made a trip to the local music store to get a full set. The music store encouraged taking guitar lessons there, but he just couldn't get into their method, which meant learning to carefully pluck out the notes to old songs he had no interest in playing.

Growing up in the 1960s, it was obvious to him that indeed the times were a-changin', even with his limited historical perspective. Through television, the carnage of the Vietnam War was broadcast into living rooms every day, along with the massive demonstrations of those who were protesting against it.

"The fight for equality and civil rights was playing out in front of our eyes, and I was aware of the disagreements and tension that were part of it in our household," he says.

In the 6th grade, Paul Voorheis, a teacher at the elementary school he was attending, offered guitar lessons. He and a friend were thrilled: "We told him we wanted to play Beatles songs, and he agreed to teach us just that. It was inspiring to be learning to play them, but also discouraging, as most 6th graders can't make an old acoustic guitar sound like the songs on Sgt. Pepper."

When he was in the 7th grade, Andrew Ellison trans-

ferred to their school from the neighboring county. His father was a poet, his mother was a psychologist, and Andy was a drummer.

"All my friends wanted to grow their hair long like rock stars. Our parents didn't allow it. They were afraid we'd become hippies. Andy Ellison not only had long hair, he had his drums set up in the living room, making him instantly the coolest kid I've ever met," Virgil recalls, with a story of carrying his electric guitar—a Japanese Teisco purchased at a local store for \$29.95—and his little amp over to Andy's house, trudging through the snow to jam—something they have continued to do on occasion for decades.

His interest in art, literature, and creating within a conceptual framework can all be traced back to the record albums of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Like millions of other music fans, he would listen to the music and study the covers in depth. Singer-songwriters were sages and rock musicians were iconic. Album art was embedded with coded messages that provided a deeper understanding. The combination of being able to read the lyrics, as well as hear them, had him writing down his own ideas, poems and stories.

He bought a copy of the album *Hendrix in the West*. Hendrix's performance of *Johnny B. Goode* cemented Virgil's suspicion that he wasn't ever going to be a great lead guitarist—but that was fine with him, as something else was happening. He learned two guitar chords and wrote a few songs. He learned a third guitar chord and wrote a dozen songs.



Christmas morning
c. 1967 with Darren Wallace



Andrew Ellison c. 1977



In middle school

As he grew, his tastes changed and expanded. He got into glam rock, progressive rock, and the bands that were playing at CBGB in New York. While he appreciated a great Pop song, he was strangely drawn to music that was un-commercial and performed by artists and bands that were less than successful.

At the age of 15, Andy Ellison introduced him to Brandon Dickerson, pointing out that they were likely the only two people in all of Northern Michigan who were fans of the Velvet Underground. He and Andy were already writing songs together, as well as composing avant-garde instrumentals with friends Mark and Matt Manker.

As the years passed, they all played music together in different bands. While their separate bands tended to play cover tunes, when they played together, they explored original music.

“I enjoy collaboration and this was the beginning of my collaborative explorations,” he says, tracing the idea of collaboration back to being a fan of The Beatles, who broke up when he was ten years old, leading him to be as familiar with their work as solo artists as their work together. It was obvious how working with different musicians allowed the ex-Beatles to go in different directions than they ever would have together.

Ultimately, Virgil’s music didn’t sound like The Beatles or any of those other teenage interests. Its roots were in the music he’d heard in Southern Ohio and Northern Michigan growing up—Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Joe South and Kris Kristofferson. Rock n’ roll emerged when his parents were teenagers, but Rock music was born in his lifetime and made a major impact. Gram Parsons and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band

made it clear that there was something hip about the sort of old-time country music that was favored by those who seemed at the time to be terribly unhip, and he found validation in their work.

In his junior year of high school, Virgil was called into the office of a school counselor, who had the unfortunate job of assisting him in selecting the right classes to prepare for college.

“I’m not worried about that,” he explained. “I’m going to be a rock star.”

“Well, you might want to have something to fall back on, in case that doesn’t work out,” the counselor replied.

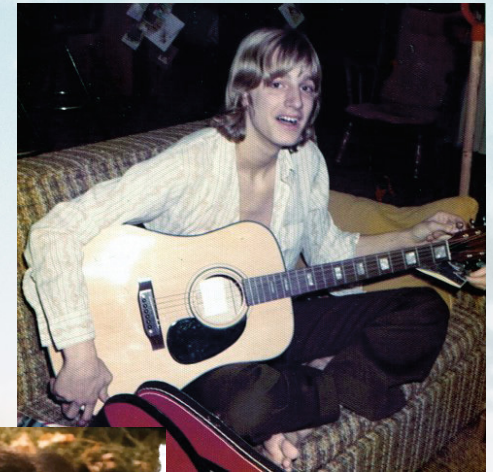
“I’ve thought about that. If that doesn’t work out, I’ll be a writer,” he said.

“Well, you might want to have something to fall back on...” the counselor repeated, going on to try to explain in depth the odds of finding success in a music or writing career.

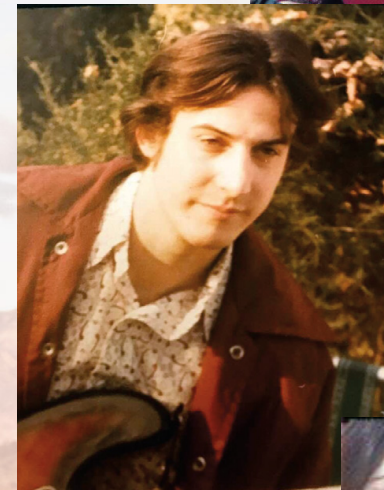
“That’s cool. If that doesn’t work out, I’ll become an artist,” he said.

That was the end of that meeting. Virgil wasn’t physically thrown out of the office, but the counselor made it clear that he should leave.

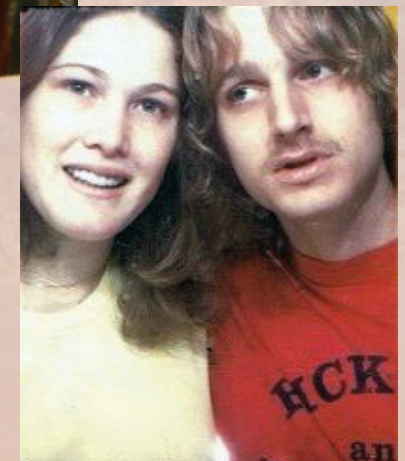
“I lived in this beautiful town called Petoskey, but knew that I had to go to either New York City or Southern California,” he says. “There was a big world, full creative individuals out there, and I needed to be where the action was,” he says.



Virgil at 15



Brandon Dickerson



With Sheryl c. 1980

“Fact is, even in high school I knew that I didn’t want to be a big rock star,” he admits. “Rather, I hoped to be like those who I was a fan of, who remained true to their art and were unrecognizable to the masses, with just enough fans to allow for recording an album every other year and playing small venues,” he says.

About the time he graduated from high school, his friend Brandon moved to Los Angeles. Several months later, Brandon invited his other bandmate and friend Andy to come out. “I thought, ‘man, I’ll never get out of this little town,’ and envied them terribly,” he says. One day Brandon called and told him that, if he could be there within the week, he had a place to live and a job. “I quit my job, packed up my stuff and jumped on a plane.” Virgil says. Brandon and Andy picked him up at the airport and they went back to the small single apartment they would call home for the next few months.

“Wait until you meet Sheryl at work tomorrow,” they told him that night. “You’re going to dig her.”

The next morning, they all went to work together and he met Sheryl. He did indeed dig her. He was nineteen and she was eighteen, and they’ve been together ever since.

“I gave up my adolescent dreams of rock n’ roll debauchery for love,” he laughs. “But don’t publish that... I think there’s a song there.”

In Los Angeles, much to his surprise, he discovered he wasn’t the only kid who sat on the edge of his bed strumming a guitar, writing songs, and believing that he was going to be the next big thing. They were legion, they seemed to all be in Southern California, and he recognized that many individuals were more talented than he was, not to mention more ambitious. Even a desire to be just famous enough to have a loyal following who allowed

him to release albums and tour small venues wasn’t likely to happen.

Brandon’s brothers, Travis and Lindy, arrived in Los Angeles, driving a converted bread truck and kindly bringing Virgil’s giant album collection with them. The brothers and Andy formed a band together. His music was different than their collective sound, and Virgil formed a band called Endangered Species with a punk rock drummer who transformed even his ballads into songs that were played at breakneck speed. They played the club scene and recorded a couple albums worth of material.

One night after a gig, December 1980, word spread around the club that John Lennon had been shot and killed in New York City.

“It didn’t make any sense—and still doesn’t—and I stayed up all night waiting for the morning papers—which confirmed the horrible news. It was the last time our band performed together and we went our separate ways soon after. Something inside me shifted and I just didn’t want to continue making music—and for several years I didn’t. I suppose it seemed like the day the music died for me,” he says.

Andy had moved back to Northern Michigan by then, but Virgil and Brandon continued to get together. Brandon had become an accomplished songwriter, and pretty much the only time Virgil would be inspired to play guitar and sing was when they’d play each other new songs or write songs together. There were years that passed when they saw little of each other, then they’d get together as though it had only been a week or two and would again start writing songs and playing together.

In the late 1980s, Virgil was befriended by a Southern folk artist named Howard Finster, who told him that he’d

received a vision from God that he was to be involved in the art world—and that he would share Finster’s work on the West Coast. By 1990, he had become an art dealer and had created an art gallery in a converted three-car garage behind the house where they lived in West Los Angeles.

One day, sitting at a stoplight on Beverly Glen and Wilshire, he looked over and saw Brandon driving the car next to him. Virgil got his attention and they pulled over and exchanged contact information. Brandon had been attending UCLA and they’d fallen out of touch. Soon, the two of them were getting together on a weekly basis writing and recording songs in the converted garage art gallery.

A shift had taken place and their collaborations came fast, embracing a classic country and folk-rock sound. While the influence of Bob Dylan was apparent in Brandon’s complex lyrics, and his progressions and melodies tended to be more expansive, when they were together they wrote straight out of folk and country history—love songs, cheating songs, and songs that spoke of heartbreak and the road.

At each weekly gathering they would write at least one song together, recording it to make sure it wasn’t lost. This went on for several months and then one evening, when he was leaving, Brandon mentioned that he was going to Michigan for a week or so and that he’d be in touch when he got back.

A few days later, Virgil received a call from Andy to say that Brandon had died. It was the last thing he expected to happen. It took time for Virgil to fully process the news, and a very long time to come to terms with it.

“I was unable to go back out into the garage gallery and play my guitar and unable to listen to our songs,” he

recalls. “I had long wanted to write a novel and decided that the best way to deal with the loss was to write a fictional story of a guy losing his close friend.”

Virgil used the last song they wrote together as the jumping off point and then used the other songs to inspire the story line. He imagined that it would become a musical and the world would hear the songs they wrote together and everyone would know who his friend Brandon Dickerson was. By the time he finished the novel, he began a sequel and by the time he finished that one, he was into the third book in the trilogy. He enjoyed being able to take the characters backward and forward in time and ultimately wrote a couple more novels as part of what he called *The Ordinary Project*.

Something odd happened then—he became a professional writer and art curator. There wasn't interest in his fiction, but he was contracted to co-author a book on contemporary craft art, and then another and then another. Soon he was curating museum exhibitions and writing the accompanying books, as well as writing countless articles for international publications.

Fortunately, Virgil's guitar was patient. In 2001, he decided to start into a new music project and purchased a small multi-track recording unit. Attending an art fair in Chicago, he took it with him to Northern Michigan, as he'd convinced Andy, and Mark and Matt Manker to collaborate on the project. They had all played music together back in high school, and were all friends with Brandon, so naturally they chose to record one of the songs the two had written together. Andy, Mark and Matt had a band called *Atwood Green*, which had existed in one incarnation or another since they were in high school and, as his fictional trilogy was called *The Ordinary Project*, they put together an album's worth of material under the name *Ordinary Green*.

The band eventually recorded three albums, and presented a single live performance at Legs Inn in Cross Village, Michigan, but then the work of running the Beatrice Wood Center for the Arts in Ojai, California became all-consuming, and over a decade would pass before the decision to record this new album.

In authoring and co-authoring a number of art books, Virgil became friends with Binh Pho, who had emerged as a leading figure in the field of woodturning—though he'd go on to become known in the contemporary glass field, explore bronze, and ultimately be viewed simply as an artist, rather than fitting comfortably in any category. He wrote Binh's biography, *River of Destiny*, in conjunction with a museum exhibition, and then collaborated on a fictional work, *Shadow of The Turning*, for which Binh created a dynamic new body of work to serve as illustrations.

Shadow of The Turning allowed him to revisit the characters from *The Ordinary Project*, who had been born of the loss of Brandon and not being able to play music. The theme of the book concerned the marriage of computer programming and human programming, resulting in corporations controlling human life. Only rock n' roll could save the world, with a virus embedded in the music destroying “the program” and setting everyone free.

“The book was launched with a touring museum exhibition of Binh's work, and I was pleased to have my life as a writer and art curator married to my music—at least conceptually,” he says. “It felt like everything was connected and the possibilities were endless.”

Through the Center, Binh was introduced to Maryann and Michael Cord. Binh and Michael—both creative iconoclasts—got along famously.

“Maryann and Michael were in the music business and, in retrospect, I'm surprised that it didn't occur to me at the time that the songs could be married to *Shadow of The Turning*,” he says.

Michael died unexpectedly, and soon after Binh was gone as well.

“I had lost another close friend and collaborator,” he says. “If John Lennon being assassinated can make me desert my music, losing close friends and collaborators has been life changing.”

By this time, he was very much engaged in caring for the legacies of artists through the Beatrice Wood Center for the Arts. Aside from Beatrice, there was her close friend Liam O'Gallagher, who had assisted with the creation of the Center and left it all of his paintings and archives. There were also the individuals who created the Happy Valley Foundation and carried on the vision of what it should be—those who inspired Beatrice Wood to build her home on Happy Valley land and leave everything to the Foundation. And increasingly his friends in the field of contemporary wood art were passing away—many of the artists who pioneered a new language in wood, as well as the collectors, and he felt a responsibility to care for their work.

“Years passed where Sheryl and I were unable to take a vacation, as our work at the Center was all-consuming and there weren't sufficient funds for a staff. I was always thinking about ways to raise funds and the idea occurred to me that perhaps the music might be part of it,” he says.

When he first moved to Southern California, Virgil watched all manner of movies late at night and they were punctuated by commercials featuring a used car dealer named Cal Worthington. Cal came across like some sort of aged country star with a lot of P.T. Barnum in him and the com-

mercials would discuss all the things he'd do to sell a car. He'd stand on his head, eat a bug, wrestle with a bear...

"And I thought, what if I said—look, I care about raising money for the Center so much that I'm willing to play my music for everyone," he says.

It was a scary thought, as no one had any idea that he played music, and his entry into playing music in front of people had involved stage fright, stress headaches, and vomiting in the alley behind LA clubs. Also, he had no interest in performing "cover tunes" and he thought it didn't make sense to be playing songs from his past that no one had any familiarity with.

"And then I turned 60 years of age and I realized that anything that I was involved with creating would go with me when I followed my friends into the next world, and that I had a responsibility to keep the music alive", he offers. "I thought—what if I looked at it as a project, came up with a concept and released the songs prior to performing them in public." He'd become an expert over the years in looking after the legacy of so many in the art world that it all made perfect sense to extend that into the music world.

He went back and made a list of all the songs Brandon and he wrote together. There were at least three albums worth of material. Some of the songs that he'd written with Andy had been included on the *Ordinary Green* releases, but they could be revisited. And then there were the songs he had written on his own over the decades—dozens and dozens of them being songs that he felt were worth recording... at least before doing the whole dying thing.

He created an initial list of songs and started into the project, recording the initial tracks himself, as professionally as he could. He knew that he would ultimately need to go into a recording studio to record vocals and get a proper mix—and was aware that a studio engineer would hate having to work with tracks that were recorded by an amateur, with the belief that it could all be fixed in the mix.

Fact is, he wasn't sure that he could pull it off, and it wasn't until he had the initial list of songs recorded with drum loops, guitar, and a scratch vocal that he knew he'd be able to do it. "While I had a general concept for the collection, I wanted for it to be collaborative, so that the songs would be transformed in the process," he says. "I knew that I wanted Andy to play drums, as he was there from the beginning and, due to our friendship with Brandon, I couldn't imagine anyone else. Andy ended up playing keyboards on a couple of the tracks as well."

He knew that he wanted the songs to have a particular feel with some traditional country instrumentation, and that he didn't exactly have the skill set to pull that off. He knew of a guitarist who would be ideal—a monster guitarist who was fluent in a variety of musical genres and could play dobro and lap steel—named Ken Emerson. Maryann Cord had introduced them and Emerson had been performing regularly at the Center. Emerson appears on over a dozen Cord International releases. Cord encouraged Virgil to ask Emerson if he might be interested in collaborating.

Ken Emerson not only agreed, but the timing was ideal, and he came down to perform at the Center and spent the following week staying there and recording the songs with Virgil. Along with the tradi-



Myrna Jacobs Photo

Andrew Ellison by Myrna Jacobs



Ken Emerson



tional instrumentation that was hoped for, Emerson also brought his Fender Stratocaster and his Gibson Les Paul, and the songs developed a sound straight off of the record albums that had been so influential to Virgil as a teenager.

Emerson's knowledge of American music genres is encyclopedic, and his playing on *Virgil* is like a trip across the country with references to classic guitarists from San Francisco, Tulsa, Austin, Memphis, New Orleans and Chicago. One minute he is playing a Keith Richards inspired lick, followed by a Southern Rock dual-guitar solo—taking everything to the next level. What started as a quiet project with Virgil and his guitar in the tradition of so many other singer-songwriters that came before grew and was transformed.

“The challenge was that with Ken's guitar playing, the songs became not only better, but in a sense larger, and I had to step up to the plate,” he says. “This is one of the reasons I love collaboration—it takes you somewhere other than where you were planning on going... somewhere you couldn't have gotten on your own.”

The next step was to identify a studio to work with to finalize the project, ideally in Ventura County, to avoid the drive back and forth to Los Angeles. Maryann Cord was asked for studio recommendations and it turned out that Jill Martini, who Cord had arranged to make a guest appearance during Emerson's performance at the Center, had just completed a recording project with her band *The Shrunken Heads* at Castaway 7 Studios in Ventura. A studio tour confirmed that it was the ideal situation—professionally outfitted with the welcoming relaxed vibe that was needed. J.P. Hesser, the stu-

dio's engineer/owner created a comfortable recording environment, and he was also an experienced professional who was always considering the possibilities. During playback, J.P. was ever tweaking and shaping sound, making each instrument more effective, while expertly mixing it into a definitive whole.

J.P. also proved to be the perfect person to follow Ken's contributions, as he was always honest about where there were flaws, and what could make a song better. At one point during a session, he vanished into the other room during playback and came back and sat down at the organ, the sound of his playing coming through the speakers via a mic'd Leslie speaker cabinet. Anyone who grew up listening to late 60s and 70s rock knows that highly sought-after sound. Ultimately he played organ on several of the songs, as well as bass and guitar.

The project came together better than imagined, but what to do with it all? Having long ago given up on the idea of rock stardom, there was no interest in self-promotion. At the same time, there was an awareness that the most honest thing was to indeed share this expansive self, resulting in this collection of songs released as *Virgil*.

When asked where it all goes from here, he admits that he has no idea.

“Though I can trace the events and characters in my life story, it's not clear how I came to run an art center on a mountaintop. That's the beautiful thing about life—particularly if you embrace the fact that you are always collaborating, whether with others or simply with life itself... you never know where it's all going to take you next.”

■



J.P. Hesser at
Castaway 7 Studios



Virgil

Virgil's songs are born of a rural upbringing and his first exposure to music.

Between 1967 and 1977—the year he graduated from high school—television shows introducing contemporary music were beamed into homes across America. Variety shows were hosted by Dean Martin, Andy Williams, the Smothers Brothers, Johnny Cash, Tom Jones, Glen Campbell, Kenny Rogers, Sonny & Cher, all sharing a wider range of what was happening in music at the time. Artists ranged from those who had successful careers for decades—the old pros that mom and dad, and even grandma and grandpa, enjoyed listening to, through cutting edge rock musicians, and crossover artists that melded pop, rock, country, jazz and blues.

Time spent in the homes of Virgil's grandparents and cousins brought exposure to The Porter Wagoner Show, Hee Haw, and an America that focused on country music, wholesome humor, and hokum. He was also exposed to considerably different tastes in music and television drawn from time spent in the home of friends.

Equally important was what was playing on the radio. There was the everyday experience of listening to the sounds pouring out of the radio in the family car, but it was the road trips that brought forth a wider range of music. The greatest influence on Virgil's songs were those road trips. When Virgil's family would drive back and forth between Ohio and Michigan, the AM radio station signals would fade out, only to be replaced by another station with a better signal, and a different style of music that was the only listening option until the signal from the next radio station down the road was strong enough to be heard.

Ultimately the experience of the road and the places along the way across America inform the narrative of most of his songs.

1. Blue Lick Road (4:36)

The album opens with a power chord—just as a teenage Virgil would have it—as this collection of music is a fulfillment of those rock n' roll dreams. Blue Lick Road was simply the name of a freeway off-ramp and some imagination about what was to be found there. The song came to life when Brandon dated a girl who turned out to be wrong for him, leading to a cautionary tale of love found there on that off-ramp.

2. Mysteries of Love (2:59)

Prior to the Tulsa guitar groove of Ken Emerson, Mysteries of Love was one of many songs written with a Bo Diddley beat influenced by Buddy Holly's *Not Fade Away*.

3. Best Wishes & Sin (3:33)

Cheatin' Songs are a staple of country music and Best Wishes & Sin is a ballad about just that, with the protagonist doomed to a life on the road. It's typical of the way the two of them were writing. "We started into it and then went into the house for a moment. Someone was in the den watching a movie with this overly passionate romantic scene. As we walked back outside, Brandon said: "That was fairly steamy stuff," and I replied "It was nice and it was rough." And so we went back to the garage and picked up our guitars and the song, and we just inserted those lines. It was typical of the way we were writing during that brief period between when we got back together in West LA and when Brandon passed away—we'd just take what was happening in our lives, or something someone said and work it in."

4. What's Her Secret? (4:23)

Men and women are naturally drawn to those who impress them as mysterious or who have some kind of a secret they know and aren't willing to share. What's Her Secret? Isn't that the question people have been asking of the Mona Lisa for centuries? Here there is a clear influence of radio, nostalgia for the AM pop of the 60s through the FM rock of the 70s, and how the songs of the 20th century were pretty much all about LOVE.

5. Hit The Road Again (3:55)

Hit The Road Again follows the troubadour on his return to life on the road, following one more failed relationship. From the beginning, the song had a country shuffle, which the version on the album takes all the way into the hills where the American music was born. "I'm Wonderbread," Virgil says. "I'm not exactly proud of the way white people have behaved throughout history, but I have to say that I'm always aware of and culturally challenged by being Wonderbread. I originally expected more of the album to have this sort of feel—sitting on the porch or around the living room and strumming and picking, but when Ken Emerson arrived with his Les Paul and Strat, it all changed."

6. Modern American Love (3:36)

Modern American Love concerns the challenges of modern love in the age of pay telephones. It grew out of a short story about a couple who get in an argument and both speed off into the night, thinking the other will come back home and that a call from the road will bring back their happy life together. In the world of smart phones and the Internet, it's difficult to imagine a time when lives could be changed by the inability to reach someone on the phone—and the role pay telephones played in making communication during travels possible.

7. Satisfied Woman (3:49)

Satisfied Woman is a song of bravado. Brandon and Virgil wrote it one night sure they'd be famous one day. The chord progression is largely Brandon, because he was always up to minor third chords and switching from majors to minors, while Virgil was more of a traditional I-IV-V chord trinity kind-of-a-guy. "In my book, three chords and the truth were good enough for the Gregorians and the greats of folk, country, rock, blues, and beyond so I stick pretty close to them," he says.

8. Goodbye (4:13)

Goodbye was a song Virgil started writing, playing with the story of a girl that Brandon had been dating, that went south. "The chording was total Brandon, while the rest of it just came out of us," he says. Ultimately, most of what folk, blues and rock musicians play is a variation on everything that came before. The lyrics to the bridge were inspired by road trips, in cars with AM radios that lost signals in the middle of the desert, and then picked up again with evangelicals, mixed with country music stations.

9. Sad Little Girl (6:04)

Sad Little Girl is based upon a true story about a woman Brandon and Virgil both knew. Her boyfriend was always complaining to them about her being overly sensitive saying "sometimes she cries for no damn reason at all." "The guy was rather inconvenienced by her sensitivity and we thought at the very least she deserved a love song," he says. Virgil on the traditional I-IV-V trinity and Brandon writing the chorus with all the other chords and dynamics.

10. Dirty Trouble (4:53)

Dirty Trouble is the earliest song on this album, written when Virgil was 19 years of age. "I went back to Michigan for the holidays and then stopped to visit my maternal grandparents in Ohio," he recalls. "I promised them I wouldn't pick up any hitchhikers, but gave one a ride from

Cincinnati to Memphis. My grandparents gave me a roll of dimes and nickels to call back to let them know I was safe in my travels, but I spent them all calling Sheryl to tell her that I was coming back to her." With an AM radio for music, driving into Memphis was a revelation. Suddenly, there was all manner of great music playing. The memory would stay with him until the car broke down in Payson, Arizona, where he stayed for a couple nights in a motel while the car was being repaired, writing Dirty Trouble. The song was born of imagination more than experience, written on his Uncle Claudie's guitar, which his grandmother had given him during his visit. "I've always had an active imagination. Sitting in a restaurant or bar, observing the human species, or seeing other motel residents come and go, the stories just float up in me. It was easy to see my travels through the lens of a guy who drank too much and woke up with the wrong woman, listening to the shifting AM radio stations driving across the country," he says.

11. The Rich Men (3:27)

As is mentioned in the song, The Rich Men was written during an election year awhile back. "It was Woody Guthrie's birthday, which reminded me that I wasn't really doing my job as a singer-songwriter. From the time I was child, my maternal grandfather was always telling me that pretty much all politicians were liars and crooks. I'm not advising anyone to make their grandchildren jaded, but I have to say that I'm never really surprised when we learn that a politician has lied to the public and press, or sold out to corporate and private interests, becoming wealthy in the process," he says.

12. Something's Changed (5:43)

Something's Changed closes out the album, as the most recent composition—written a week before Ken Emerson was scheduled to record his guitar parts at the Center. "I wanted to write a song about the political situation, and how I was feeling. It seemed that something had changed,

and we were less loving, less tolerant, less connected. As I'm always looking to get a message across without alienating anyone in the process, I decided to write it so that it could easily be taken to be about a romantic relationship that was falling apart. After all, the final message—whether about the personal or the global is that love is the answer," he says.

Musician & Vocal Collaboration

1. Blue Lick Road

Virgil: guitar, vocals
Andrew Ellison: drums
Ken Emerson: guitars
J. P. Hesser: bass, organ

4. What's Her Secret?

Virgil: guitar, vocals
Andrew Ellison: drums
Ken Emerson: guitars
J. P. Hesser: guitars
Charles Berthoud: bass
Steve Burdette: organ

7. Satisfied Woman

Virgil: guitar, vocals
Andrew Ellison: drums
Ken Emerson: guitars
J.P. Hesser: organ
James Garner: bass

10. Dirty Trouble

Virgil: guitar, vocals
Andrew Ellison: drums, piano
Ken Emerson: guitars
Reese Morin: bass
J. P. Hesser: organ

2. Mysteries of Love

Virgil: guitar, vocals
Andrew Ellison: drums
Ken Emerson: guitars
James Garner: bass
J. P. Hesser: organ

5. Hit The Road Again

Virgil: guitar, vocals
Andrew Ellison: drums
Ken Emerson: guitars
TG Remez: bass

8. Goodbye

Virgil: guitar, vocals
Andrew Ellison: drums
Ken Emerson: guitars
Reese Morin: bass
J. P. Hesser: guitar, organ

11. The Rich Men

Virgil: guitar, vocals
Andrew Ellison: drums
Ken Emerson: guitars
Michael Meadows: bass
Suburanoid: backing vocals
Richard Flores: backing vocals

3. Best Wishes & Sin

Virgil: guitar, vocals
Andrew Ellison: drums, keyboards
Ken Emerson: guitars
Reese Morin: bass

6. Modern American Love

Virgil: guitar, vocals
Andrew Ellison: drums
Ken Emerson: guitars
Charles Berthoud: bass
J. P. Hesser: organ

9. Sad Little Girl

Virgil: guitar, vocals
Andrew Ellison: drums
Ken Emerson: guitars
Charles Berthoud: bass
J. P. Hesser: organ
Genesis Barrios: backing vocals

12. Something's Changed

Virgil: guitar, vocals
Andrew Ellison: drums
Ken Emerson: guitars
Michael Meadows: bass
J. P. Hesser: organ
Richard Flores: harmonica
Genesis Barrios: backing vocals



8 WHITE.

SLIDEWELL
SPENCER
SOLE

J.&P. COATS

White Black & Colors
FOR HAND & MACHINE.

Portrait of a man in a suit

Portrait of a man in a military uniform

GOLD DUST

FLAX SEED

MUSTARD

ABSOLUTION SAVIN

The Underbar
MAX ELLISON

The First National Bank

BULLETIN
DADA



Portrait of a man in a suit

PERFECTION

YACHT CLUB

OUR MOTHER'S

COCOA

BOTTLE CAPS

SIX CORD.

L COTTON.

LARK J! & CO'S

ELL, SOLE AGENT.

MEW'S HANDKERCHIEF

MILKY WAY

THREE STAR HOPS



PERFECTION

PERFECTION

W&B

HEALTHY

HEALTHY



PERFECTION

PERFECTION

PERFECTION

PERFECTION

Recorded at:
Beatrice Wood Center for the Arts, Ojai, CA
Noise in the Cellar Studios, Petoskey, MI
Castaway 7 Studios, Ventura, CA

All songs written by Kevin Virgil Wallace.
Co-written with Brandon Dickerson on songs 1, 3, 5, 7, 8 and 9.
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Produced by: Kevin Virgil Wallace
Mixed by: J.P. Hesser at Castaway 7 Studios, Ventura, CA
Mastered by: Brian Ziegler at Radiance Recordings, Ojai, CA
Art Director & Liner Notes: Maryann Cord
Graphic Design/Layout: Amy Pace

Executive Producers: Kevin Virgil Wallace and Maryann Cord

This album lovingly dedicated to Brandy Dickerson, Binh Pho, & Michael Cord



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Visit our website at cordinternational.com
PO Box 152 Ventura, CA 93002



VIRGIL

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