

***Liner notes:***

**Sittin' In The Middle**

All vocals and instruments: T Michael Coleman

The recording of this project began as an emotional release during the shutdown caused by the pandemic of 2020 into 2021. I started a Facebook Group, Pick It Son, focusing on my time with Doc and Merle Watson. With the uncertainty of the predicament we were in, the song Roving On A Winter's Night kept playing in my head. It reminded me of the heartbreak we were all suffering at being separated from our love ones. As the days and hours began to feel like weeks and months I decided to record and video the song and post it on the Facebook group. The comments I received expressing how it was helping them cope led me to video more songs that I had performed with Doc and Merle. I was encouraged to continue and I did. I want to thank everyone for their comments and encouragement. Not only did it help others cope, it became a great outlet for me and a way to deal with the isolation grief.

These songs were recorded live with very few corrections. Those corrections being technical in nature. Any little "warts" I let pass. It's a part of making music.

These recordings brought me home to a place I more and more realized I cherished so much; Sittin' In The Middle of Arthel and Eddy Merle.

## **1. Roving On A Winter's Night 4:22**

Traditional Arrangement

Thomas Michael Coleman

Licks And Lyrics Music BMI

My favorite song Doc ever sang. Brought me to tears more than once. You can hear the mountains in his voice like the voices of those who came before that sang this song that flowed like a stream through the valleys, down the hills and echoed through the hollers for generations. I vividly recall riding down the road late at night with Doc sitting on his bunk playing these old mountain songs. Most of which he never recorded. What a sweet lullaby I had the pleasure to experience.

## **2. Southbound 3:05**

Arthel Lane Watson, Eddy Merle Watson

Universal Songs Of Polygram International Inc

Here's a song by Merle expressing a longing he had. He wrote the melody and the guitar part in his head, but was having trouble lyrically stating what he was feeling. He went to his Dad and told him what he wanted to say and Doc helped him bring it out in lyric form.

This song reflects what we all felt after we had been out on the road for a while. When I first started with D&M we were out 210 days the first year and that continued at a steady pace throughout the years. The yearn to get back home was like an ache that grew the longer we were gone. It amplified even more after I met and married Robin.

Our Southbound train was a 26ft Winnebago Brave for the first years before we started flying everywhere out of necessity. It was always stocked with homemade goodies from Rosa Lee.

Sometimes after a long tour we would head straight home after the last gig without stopping, be it from New York, Los Angeles or Seattle. We drove eight hour shifts, sometimes changing drivers without even stopping. A neat trick that we figured out. That's how bad we wanted to see the Blue Ridge out our front windshield again.

When we were away from home missing our loved ones the compass only pointed in one direction, Southbound.

### **3.Spike Driver's Blues 2:48**

John S Hurt

Mississippi John Hurt Music Inc BMI

Wynwood Music Company Inc BMI

A tune I loved doing with D&M. Merle was close friends with Mississippi John Hurt and that's where he developed his fingerpicking style. I in turn was influenced by Merle. Happy to carry on the tradition. Such a groove in one chord. I played the spike here and also played it on the recording of the song with D&M. Then I struck a beer bottle with Merle's 9/16th deep-shell socket slide, here I used my deep-well socket slide striking a glass slide.

### **4.Sittin' On Top Of The World 3:15**

Traditional Arrangement

Thomas Michael Coleman

Licks And Lyrics Music BMI

Did this song many times with D&M. Always a fav. ...

The last verse is mine, expressing my positive desire for things to return to happier, safer times.

## **5.Lonesome Road 3:22**

Traditional Arrangement

Thomas Michael Coleman

Licks and Lyrics Music BMI

Here's a traditional song Doc would do during a set with his guitar, harmonica and vocal. When he would do it you could hear a tear drop because the emotion with which he sang hushed the air.

This song is on an album by the same name that was recorded at a Westlake studio called Studio In The Country in Bogalouza, Louisiana for United Artist.

Someone at United Artist thought that having the touring bass player record was not the best choice so they hired a studio musician to play bass.

Well that didn't work out so well because a couple days after they started I got a phone call asking me to get on an airplane the next morning. Merle met me at the airport in New Orleans, we drove straight to Bogalusa and went straight to the studio where I put bass on every track with some harmonies in one night.

The next day we were doing rough mixes when the studio owner Bill Evans told me that the band Kansas had just recorded their new album there and asked if I'd like to sit down at the recording desk and do a rough mix of Wayward Son. Of course my response was of course are you kidding me?

So great to have been able to hear all the great parts of the song like that.

## **6. Bottle Of Wine 2:22**

Thomas Richard Paxton  
EMI U Catalog ASCAP

Doc was a real fan of Tom Paxton. Me too!

D&M recorded a couple of Tom's songs. Tom was part of the "folk scare" in the 60's as Doc and I used to call it, all in fun. Doc was part of that scene in NYC. When he started playing the clubs they would be filled with the folk singers of the day because they wanted to see the real deal.

Another Tom song that comes to mind is Leaving London. I remember sitting in an apartment in Amsterdam hearing a friend play it. Doc loved the song, learned it and added a verse expressing his loneliness and desire to go home. We missed home so much after that thirty day European tour that we traded in our standard airline tickets for ones on the Concorde. I had breakfast in London England and dinner in the mountains of North Carolina. Three hours and twenty three minutes to cross the Atlantic.

## **7. If I Needed You 3:58**

Townes Van Zandt  
JTVZ Music ASCAP  
Katie Bell Music ASCAP  
Will VanZandt ASCAP

This is a Townes Van Zandt song that Doc recorded.

Here's a Townes story.

We were in Nashville playing at The Exit Inn where I played my first show with D&M with no rehearsal I might add.

I remember one time we were headed somewhere in D&M's International station wagon. In the car was D&M, me, Jack Cowboy Clement and Shel Silverstein, yep that one.

Standing on the corner stood Townes. We stopped the car, I moved to the front and Townes got in the back. He was a little over adjusted and

was “actin’ a fool” as Doc would say. The last straw for Cowboy was when he asked Doc for a light for the link sausage he came in with. We stopped at a stop light but Cowboy waited till we had attained a little speed, opened the door and pushed Townes out of the car. He rolled and got up OK as I looked at him out of the back windscreen.

## **8. Below Freezing 2:15**

Thomas Michael Coleman  
Skinny Kid Music ASCAP

Here’s an instrumental I wrote that was nominated for a Grammy in 1982 for Best Country Instrumental Performance. It was on the Red Rocking Chair album with Doc and Merle. I played the lead on it. Pretty humbling playing lead guitar with Doc and Merle. The reason it’s called Below Freezing is that it is my answer to the instrumental Windy And Warm. On the album track are Doc, me, Tom Scott and Ron Tutt.

## **9. Sincerely 2:30**

Alan Freed, Fuqua Harvey  
Alan Freed Music BMI  
Quazical Music BMI

Here’s a song we did on the ‘Round The Table Again Album. Doc had a real love for pop standards and would play them backstage before concerts. He loved these songs and even entertained the idea of recording a pop standards album before it became a thing. From this idea Doc’s album Docabilly came about. Doc fought me hard about naming the album Docabilly but finally acquiesced when he realized it was the most obvious title. Here’s my tribute to him for sharing this with me played on a guitar he gave me. Right there inside the sound hole it reads, “Made For Doc Watson.”

## **10. Alberta 3:56**

Traditional Arrangement  
Thomas Michael Coleman  
Licks And Lyrics Music BMI

This song from the “deep Doc” catalogue. Doc got this song from a Parnell Roberts’ album. Yes the actor that played Adam Cartwright on Bonanza, but of course Doc made it his own. Here’s my swing at it. We played this a lot when I first started with D&M.

## **11. Ready For The Times To Get Better 2:05**

Allen Reynolds  
Aunt Polly S Publishing BMI

Doc had a great ability of adapting a song and making it his own. Music and great songs always circle around and find the right moment to re-enter the timeline.

## **12. All I Have To Do Is Dream 2:17**

Boudleaux Bryant  
House Of Bryant Publications LLC BMI

Gee Whiz. A lot of material was discovered in the dressing room before a show. I was noodling around on Merle’s guitar one evening before the show playing this song. It caught Doc’s ear and he joined in. I had come up with an arrangement and Doc liked it so much that he wanted to start doing it on our shows. Frosty Morn would do this as part of our set with Doc later on. It was on the Live and Pickin’ album on United Artist. The cover of the album showed only D&M on the cover. No me. D&M felt so bad about this that they brought Robin and I with Josh to LA to attend the Grammys awards.

The label liked the song so much that we went into the studio in Nashville and recorded it to be released as a single. On the session was D&M, me, Buddy Emmons on steel and Kenny Malone or Jim Isabel on drums, can't remember, along with Alan Reynolds and Garth Fundis singing harmony with me. I believe Mitch Greenhill produced the track. Mitch and I sorta did tag team producing for D&M in those days. It was a treat and an invaluable learning experience to be able to produce some of their albums and later on after Merle left us, Doc's albums.

The writers of the song Felice and Boudleaux Bryant told Doc that his recording was their favorite version. High praise.

### **13. Ballad Of Joey And Julie 6:17**

Arthel Lane Watson, Thomas Michael Coleman

Hillgreen Music BMI

Licks And Lyrics Music BMI

Here's a song Doc and I wrote together but never recorded. It is in the tradition of the mountain "murder ballad. I recently found the lyrics he dictated in an old notebook of mine and the melody I had written came back as I read them. That's the way Doc and I worked together. He'd write the lyrics and I'd write the music.

The ballad came about from a story Doc told me as we were riding along late one night. After he came to the end of the tale I got all excited and told him that this has to be a song. He agreed and committed to rendering it in lyric form and asked me to put it to music. How could I say no. It's a powerful story and because Doc was related to the characters in this tragedy it effected him very much emotionally. He found it difficult to sing it which is why we never recorded it.



## **14. Blue Ridge Mountain Blues 3:00**

Traditional Arrangement

Thomas Michael Coleman

Licks And Lyrics Music BMI

A song that captures the longing for home. Many of us are called away from our homes as we progress through life only to realize the home that lives within calls to us. It makes us who we are and paves the road back, be it real or in our dreams.

When I performed with Doc and Merle, my wife Robin and I lived there in the Blue Ridge. My favorite memory is when Robin would drive me to Doc's house to head out on the road. The route we traveled was always filled with amazing views of the mountains as we flew above the clouds nestled in the valleys.

Not only that I got to play the music that these mountains inspired.

## **15. Sittin' In The Middle 4:26**

Thomas Michael Coleman

Licks And Lyrics Music BMI

Here's my song I wrote about my experience playing with Doc and Merle. It took me years to finish this because it was so deep inside me I had to wait for it to surface. Every time I try to sing it I tear up on the last verse and find it hard to finish. I'd sob for awhile and try again. So here 'tis.

## **16. In My Life 2:32**

John Winston Lennon, James Paul McCartney

Northern Songs LTD PRS

Sony ATV Tunes LLC ASCAP

Here's the only song I did not perform or record with Doc and Merle but find it an appropriate epilogue for this recording. It relates so

many of the experiences, relationships and feelings I had Sittin' In The Middle.

“Drawing from his wealth of musical experience, T Michael Coleman uniquely combines the sounds of Doc & Merle Watson, Seldom Scene and Chesapeake with this great new recording. It reminds me of enjoying a float down a mountain stream with its smoothness...sometimes picking up speed, then settling back into a relaxed ride, giving your heart and mind the most beautiful scenery all along the way. A listen to his performances on this collection of songs makes it easy to see why he recently took his place as a member of the Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame and also, just how much 'Sittin' In The

Middle' of Doc & Merle has come to mean to him over the years. You'll enjoy this project from start to finish, again and again and again.”

*Cindy Baucom*

*Syndicated Radio Host / Festival  
Emcee*