

2023 NSS Cave Ballad Submissions

Lyrics & Explanatory

“Torn & Frayed (Cave Suit)” - Andy Armstrong.....Traditional Song entry

Performed by Muchos Garcias on June 17, 2022 on the Midco Stage at the National Speleological Society Convention in Rapid City, South Dakota.
Lead vocal and guitar: Andy Armstrong, Vocal and guitar: Ron Adams,
Keyboard: John Lyles, Banjo: Gretchen Anderson, Bass guitar: Andy Belski,
Drums: Bill Farr.

Written 2018, Heber City Utah.

Adapted from *Torn and Frayed* written by Keith Richards and Mick Jagger.
Caver lyrics written by Andy Armstrong.

D, A, E, D

[Verse 1]

A G D
Hey, let him follow you down
D A E D
Way underground, to your leads he`s bound
A G D
Bound to follow you down
D A E D
Just a dirtbag, from way down in TAG
A G D
He`s bound to follow you down

A G D
Through crawlways and windy canyons
A G D
And dirty sumps filled with parasites
A G D
Up front, lead tape has got problems
A D A ADA
It still goes, but it gets really tight

[Interlude]

A G D



Under breakdown, that's his hometown
Yeah, and you thought he was reckless
Survey real slow, strictly as you go
Yeah, that's when he'll start getting restless

[Chorus]

A G D
Well his cave suit is torn and frayed
A G D
And it's seen much better days
A G D
Riding down the nylon highway
A D A A D A
You could cave your life away

[Bridge]

D A E D
Joe's got a lead, sounds kind of mean
A G D
Yeah, he found stout team to risk it
D A E D
Back at the lab, their loop is bad
A G D
Now who's gonna go back and fix it

[Chorus]

A G D
And his cave suit is torn and frayed
A G D
and it's seen much better days
A G D
Riding down the nylon highway
A D A A D A
You could cave your life away

“I Love the Cave Holes “ - Dave Brumbaugh.....Traditional Song Entry

My daughter Rose and I were dancing and singing to Carole King's "I feel the Earth Move" and Rose suggested I make a cave version.

(Cave Spoof of “*I Feel the Earth Move*”)

Chorus

I love the cave holes under my feet. I love the cave pearls
abound.

I feel my heart start a’ trembling, when I am underground.

Verse 1

Ooh calcite, when I see your shine – sparkling like the
stars above

Stalactites, when you’re dripping down, you fill my heart
up with love!

Verse 2

Lechuguilla – when I’m near ya, and tenderly call your
name.

I know that my emotions are something that I just can’t
tame.

I’ve got to get deep inside ya!



“I Was Dead” - Andy McKinnon, w/ “Jim Morrison’s Ghost”.....Original Song Entry

Finally got this together at the bell. It's about caving in Mexico with Carl Pierce and a cadre of madmen and women --- you know who you are (Brenda, Josh, Vicky, Trevor, and Carl, all from Pittsburgh). But it's even more about the two and a half months beforehand when, well, let's let the song speak for itself.

I wanted to write a good song for this convention in particular – it's West Virginia, my backyard karst playground since the 70s. I've always been fond of the Mountain State, and it deserved to have my best efforts at hand.

But it felt like I was in a dry spell with song writing, and it took awhile for something to come alive, including a theme. I eventually decided to write about the Mexico trip. A simple A/ D/E kind of progression started to emerge and I was finally off and running. I finished the major section of the song on May 2nd (in my basement in Pa. Furnace, PA, of course) and have made several lyrical changes and a bit of a modification to the chord structure since then. I hope the lyrics contain the element of surprise I have intended.

The next hurdle was finding a guitarist who could nicely fill in

a couple of sections with electric lead, essential for balancing out the abundant harmonica throughout the song. I needed to look no further than Steve Coraor, my daughter Leela's partner, who not only provided the “nice” leads – an understatement – but also creative fills at just the right places throughout the song.

Thus, *Jim Morrison's Ghost* is comprised of Steve Coraor on lead electric guitar and me, Andy “Rooster” McKinnon on harmonica (an F Lee Oskar), vocals (harp and vocals used a Blue Bird condenser microphone), and acoustic rhythm guitar with a Taylor 114c. Rhythm guitar was recorded with a dynamic microphone. I used Garageband and a Scarlett 2i2 interface to record the song. Steve used a G&L LASAT Cat custom guitar made by the late Mark Ross in his Alley Cat haunts in State College. His guitar had a carbon copy delay, then into Garageband including a British custom amp sim and a tremolo sim. Finally, he used an Apollo Twin audio interface. I think mostly what he used was good old fashioned guitar excellence.



Steve Coraor

intro

A Em D

the call came in october
caving in the southlands

A D
A Em

deep vertical adventure A D
i couldn't wait to try A E A

but after saying yes
my nerve began to fail me
i became an anxious mess
i was sure that i would die

harp solo

A D A Em
A D A E A

lying in my bed
with cruel imagination
i was hanging by a thread
four hundred meters high

or driving across the border
caught in a cartel death trap
or careening off the shoulder
so many ways to die

i was dead A E D
or at least i thought so A
in my head E D
i was dead A E D
instead of excitement A
i was filled with dread E D

guitar solo

A E D

so i practiced in my tree A D
till it all was second nature A Em
and i gained the certainty A D
that still i'd surely die A E A

then january came
headlong down the highway
through wind and snow and rain
to the rio grande so wide

harp solo

A D A Em
A D A E A

along with my compadres
streaking south thru mexico
to the heart of the sierra madre
where the deepest pits we'd find

rappelling then ascending

en cuevas y cascadas
but saved for the very ending
was the pit where the swallows fly

i was dead	A	E	D
or at least that's what i	A		
anticipated	E	D	
i was dead	A	E	D
dead in the future	A		
right around the bend	E	D	

guitar solo

	A	E	D
so when the birds took flight	A	D	
we descended to the bottom	A	Em	
then racing against the night	A	D	
we began the long ascent	A	E	A

the last to get on rope
i had only climbed a short way
when the rope broke and i must have awoke
cuz i was lying in my bed

but something seemed so wrong	Dm		
everything familiar gone	E		
i wasn't in my bed	Dm		
i was lying on the ground instead	E		
and then it all came back	Dm		
the weight of my worry caused the rope to snap	E		
i had fallen to the bottom of	Dm		
golandrinas (2x)	E		

but i wasn't dead	A	E	D
or at least i hoped not	A		
in my head	E	D	
i wasn't dead			
just down in golandrinas			
waiting for a sked			
i wasn't dead			
or at least i hoped not			
in my head			
i wasn't dead			
just waiting for a rescue			
in a cave instead			

harp solo fade out

	A	E	D
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“Above and Below” - Joe O’Connell.....Original Song Entry

My song is called “*Above and Below*.” I started writing it about a week ago. I thought of the first words as I was standing on a bank of the South Fork of the Blue River in Pekin, Indiana. I worked it up and recorded it in just the past few days, here in North Carolina where I now live.

I can’t really claim any caving bonafides. I’m just a graduate student who accidentally got interested in cave culture last year. This happened partly because I’m from a karsty part of the world (the aforementioned place in southern Indiana), and I’d already gotten to know another aspect of that geologic region: the famous Indiana limestone that faces so many of our country’s public buildings.

In “*Above and Below*,” I’m trying to bring these two local things—caves and stonework—together in a song. Here’s a bit more about how that came about: As I was thinking about possibilities for my next research project, I started wondering about other human uses of the limestone environment (besides quarrying stone and making stuff with it). In the summer of 2022, I visited a show cave west of Bedford called Bluespring Caverns to begin getting a sense of what draws people to underground landscapes. That was the first time I stepped foot in a cave since I was a kid on a field trip. It was also the first time I’d knowingly met people who do recreational caving.

Somewhere early in this process of looking into Indiana cave culture, I also stumbled upon the Cave Ballad Salon. This year I’m taking it as a personal challenge to dust off my songwriting and music production skills and to try my hand at making a cave ballad of my own. “*Above and Below*” is that effort.

The name comes from a piece of art: Maya Lin’s sculptural interpretation of the Bluespring cave system. Like the artwork, the song has an “above” and a “below.” The first verse is about building stone; the second is about a sinking river. The words are impressionistic. There’s nothing obvious that makes it a cave song. What I was aiming to do was to write something poetic about these two sides of Indiana bedrock—bedrock as an industrial material, and bedrock as a place to visit.

Song, vocal, all instruments (guitar, synthesizer, bass), and production by Joe O’Connell.

By a block Of Bedford They stand

Sunlit

And tan

Rubble Rabble Above

The skyline is heavy enough

From buildings Hanging



Up There

It sure is gray

In a river Of words They say

Something Still remains Unsaid

Babble Bubble Below

Into bedrock I guess

It goes

Under

Something

In there

It sure does ring

“Cover of the NSS News” - John Rosenfeld w/Pete Carter.....Traditional

In early March 2023, I needed to have a hip replacement surgery. While sitting at home waiting for my leg to heal up, I spent some time drinking scotch, smoking cigars, and being thankful that I finally finished a long term cave project in Kona HI. The January 2023 issue of the *NSS News* included the exploration of Hualalai ranch Cave and Puhia Pele as the feature article. FWIW the [inside front] cover of this issue included a photo of me taken by **Peter Bosted** in the HRC. So I listened to the 50 year old song by Dr. Hook called Cover of the Rolling Stone while being thankful. After enough scotch, it occurred to me that there was fodder here for a new caver song. After yet more scotch, I had three verses on paper. The second verse is a tribute to **Mike Houpt**, who introduced Pete to caving in the early 70s, and lived in



Nevin W. Davis, **Pete Carter**, Judy Davis, and **John Rosenfeld** at Hualalai Ranch Cave, Hawaii.

Franklin WV 30 years ago. He provided us with some excellent cave leads.

I sent it to my long time cave friend **Pete Carter** in Seattle. He worked on the lyrics to make it rhyme a little better. Peter took it to a musician friend of his in Seattle that had instruments and a recording studio. **Janey Hamilton**. She remixed the song as a country/western song from the original Dr. Hook version (folk rock), and recorded it in April 2023.

She has a full recording studio. She played all instruments (one at a time), and did lead vocals and backup vocals, then mixed it perfectly in her studio. This mixing technology has been around for a long time. 50 years ago, J. J. Cale recorded and mixed the entire album entitled, "Naturally" by himself. Famous songs included *After Midnight*, *They Call Me the Breeze*, etc. The music is not the Dr. Hook music; she remixed it as a country/western song. The tune is pretty much the same.

Well we're big cave mappers, We got Disto zappers.

We cave everywhere we go.

We talk about projects and we talk about leads at the Exploration Session show.

We map all kinds of caves, and get us all kinds of raves,

but the rave we wish we knew, is the rave that we get

if we get your picture on the cover of the NSS News.

Caving News. Wanna see my picture on the cover.

News. Wanna buy five copies for my mother.

Wanna see my muddy face on the cover of the NSS News.

I got a great old caver in Franklin West Virginia. Who's got lots of leads to check.

I spent so much dough on caving, My bank account's a wreck.

I buy all kinds of gear and drink all kinds of beer, But the buzz I wish I knew.

Is the buzz that I'd get if I get my picture. on the cover of the NSS News.

Caving News. Wanna see our pictures on the cover. (News)

Wanna buy five copies for our mothers (yeah!). (News)

Wanna see my muddy face. on the cover of the NSS News.

[instrumental]

Caving News. Wanna see our pictures on the cover. (News)

Wanna buy five copies for our mothers (yeah!). (News)

Wanna see my muddy face. on the cover of the NSS News.

We got lots of little VPI cave club groupies. who'll check any lead we say.

We got genuine foreign girlfriends, to find a cheap place to stay.

We have all the friends a lead list can buy, so we can cave with the very best crews.

And we keep finding passage, but we can't get our asses. on the cover of the NSS News.

Caving news. Wanna see my picture on the cover. (News)

Wanna buy five copies for my mother. (News)

Wanna see my muddy face. on the cover of the NSS News.

On the cover of the NSS News. (News).

Wanna see my picture on the cover. (News)

Wanna buy five copies for my mother (News)

Wanna see my muddy face. On the cover of the NSS News.

How to Find Caves in Arkansas (The Arkansas Caver) - Roland Vinyard..... Traditional (NOT JUDGED)

This is not terribly original. The fiddle tune “Arkansas Traveler” is sometimes played as a dialogue between local man and a lost stranger. Sam Hinton’s version has him sawing away only on the “A” part because he doesn’t know the “B” part. I just adapted this routine to someone looking for caves. Former caver **Tom White** does the fiddle here and did the recording. Tom has a professional studio and processes the recordings of all the Cave Ballad CDs.

A stranger walks down the road, sees an old man playing guitar over and over, always on the first part of a 2 part tune. He’s looking for caves, but doesn’t get much of a reception from the old man; he can’t be bothered.

HOWDY SIR. ANY CAVES ‘ROUND HERE?

Howdy stranger. No, they’s all square.

OH... ..WELL, CAN I TAKE THIS ROAD TO BLOWING CAVE?

No stranger, you can’t. Let that cave get it’s own road if it wants one; we need this one right here.

THAT PIT UP THERE, HOW DEEP DOES IT GO?

That’s a fool question. Everybody knows it goes right to the bottom.

I JUST PASSED A DISAPPEARING STREAM. WHERE DOES ITS WATER GO?

It goes in our buckets for cooking ’n’ drinking.

I MEAN, WHERE DOES THE WATER GO THAT YOU DON’T USE?

Don’t know, can’t see where it goes.

WELL, WHERE DOES IT COME OUT?

Right in the outhouse back there - if’n we’re quick enough.

SIR, YOU DON’T SEEM SO BRIGHT.

Well, at least, I can find what I’m looking for.

WHAT I’D LIKE TO KNOW, SIR, WHY DON’T YOU PLAY THE REST OF THAT TUNE?

You know that tune? Well, sit yourself right down and show me how it goes. Ma, get this stranger a drink. Get the good stuff out from out’n under the haystack.

(Stranger tunes fiddle, horribly, then plays perfectly in tune, . Starting on the missing “B” part)

Hey, Ma, come on out ’n’ listen to this stranger play. He looks like a city dude, but he plays like a real person.

(one more time, the whole thing now, faster...)

Stranger, after we have dinner, you come on out to the back pasture with me ’n’ I’ll show you 2 big holes. They go down clear to China.



