

ROSANNE CASH - The River & The Thread

A Feather's Not A Bird

I'm going down to Florence, gonna wear a pretty dress
I'll sit atop the magic wall with the voices in my head
Then we'll drive on through to Memphis
Past the strongest shoals
Then on to Arkansas just to touch the gumbo soul

A feather's not a bird
The rain is not the sea
A stone is not a mountain
But a river runs through me

There's never any highway when you're looking for the past
The land becomes a memory and it happens way too fast
The money's all in Nashville but the light's inside my head
So I'm going down to Florence just to learn to love the thread

A feather's not a bird
The rain is not the sea
A stone is not a mountain
But a river runs through me

I burned up seven lives and I used up all my charms
I took the long way home just to end up in your arms
That's why I'm going down to Florence, now I got my pretty dress
I'm gonna let the magic wall put the voices in my head

A feather's not a bird
The rain is not the sea
A stone is not a mountain
But a river runs through me

John Leventhal: Guitar, Bass, Percussion, Organ, String Arrangement

Shawn Pelton: Drums

David Mansfield: Violin, Viola

Amy Helm, Catherine Russell, Curtis King, Tabitha Fair, Tawatha Agee, John James:
Background Vocals

The Sunken Lands

Five cans of paint
And the empty fields
And the dust reveals

The children cry
The work never ends
There's not a single friend

Who will hold her hand
In the sunken lands?

The mud and tears
Melt the cotton bolls
It's a heavy toll

His words are cruel
And they sting like fire
Like the devil's choir

But who will hold her hand
In the sunken lands?

The river rises
And she sails away
She could never stay

Now her work is done
In the sunken lands
There's five empty cans

John Leventhal: Guitar, Mandolin, Bass, Drums, Organ
Catherine Russell, Curtis King, Tabitha Fair: Background Vocals

Etta's Tune

What's the temperature, darlin'?
A hundred or more
Horses pawing at the dust
Violets wilting by the door
But you pour your strongest coffee
And I'll take the battered wheel
We'll drive straight down the river road spread
A blanket on the hill

What's the temperature, darlin'?
Now don't stare into the past
There was nothing we could change or fix
It was never gonna last now
Don't stare into those photos
Don't analyze my eyes we're just a mile or two from Memphis
And the rhythm of our lives

A mile or two from Memphis
And I must go away
I tore up all the highways
Now there's nothing left to say
A mile or two from Memphis
And I finally made it home

There were days you paced the kitchen
There were nights that felt like jail
When the phone rang in the dead of night you would always throw my bail
No you never touched the whiskey and you never took the pills
I traveled for a million miles while you were standing still

What's the temperature, darlin'?
As the daylight fades away
I'll make one last rehearsal
With one foot in the grave
We kept the house on old Nokomis
We kept the polished bass guitar
We kept the tickets and the reels of tape to remember who we are

A mile or two from Memphis
And I must go away
I tore up all the highways
Now there's nothing left to say
A mile or two from Memphis
And I finally made it home

What's the temperature, darlin'?

John Leventhal: Guitar, Bass, Drums, Organ
John Paul White: Harmony Vocal

Modern Blue

I went to Barcelona on the midnight train
I walked the streets of Paris in the pouring rain
I flew across an island in the northern sea
And I ended up in Memphis, Tennessee

I keep my head down
I keep my eyes on you
It's a big, wide world with a million shades of modern blue

Everybody 'round here moves too fast
And it feels so good but it's never gonna last
Everything I had is twice what I knew
But I don't have nothing if I don't have you

I keep down my head down
I keep my eyes on you
It's a big wide world with a million shades of modern blue

Will you still be there when I round the curve?
Will you hold my hand when I lose my nerve?
I went to Barcelona and my mind got changed
So I'm heading back to Memphis on the midnight train

I keep my head down
I keep my eyes on you
It's a big wide world

I keep my head down
I keep my eyes on you

I keep my head down
I keep my eyes on you
It's a big wide world with a million shades of modern blue

John Leventhal: Guitar, Organ, Harmony Vocal
Dan Rieser: Drums
Tim Luntzel: Bass
Jake Leventhal, Rick DePofi: Background Vocals, Percussion

Tell Heaven

When you're like a broken bird
Tell heaven
Battered wings against a darkened day
When your worries won't let you sleep
Tell heaven
When the tears won't ever go away

If you got no one to love
Tell heaven
There's no one on the telephone today
When every story falls apart
Tell heaven
Nothing good seems like it'll come your way
Tell heaven
Tell heaven

With heavy hearts and empty rooms
Tell heaven
You don't have to know what you will say
The empty sky may never take our burdens
But something good will someday come our way
So tell heaven
Tell heaven

John Leventhal: Guitar, Bass, Drums, Organ
Catherine Russell, Tawatha Agee, Curtis King, John James: Background Vocals

The Long Way Home

Dark highways and the country roads
Don't scare you like they did
The woods and winds now welcome you

To the places you once hid
You grew up and you moved away
Across a foreign sea
And what was left was what was kept
Was what you gave to me

You thought you'd left it all behind
You thought you'd up and gone
But all you did was figure out
How to take the long way home

The Southern rain was heavy
Almost heavy as your heart
A cavalcade of strangers came
To tear your world apart
The bells of old St. Mary's
Are now the clang of Charcoal Hill
And you took the old religion from
The woman on the hill

You thought you'd left it all behind
You thought you'd up and gone
But all you did was figure out
How to take the long way home

John Leventhal: Guitar, Percussion, String Arrangement
Shawn Pelton: Drums
Tim Luntzel: Upright Bass
David Mansfield: Violin, Viola
Catherine Russell, Tabitha Fair, Curtis King: Background Vocals

World Of Strange Design

Well you're not from around here
You're probably not our kind
It's hot from March to Christmas
And other things you'll find
Won't fit your old ideas
They're a line in shifting sands
You'll walk across a ghostly bridge
To a crumbling promised land

If Jesus came from Mississippi
If tears began to rhyme
I guess I'll start at the beginning
It's a world of strange design

Well I'd like to have the ocean
But I settled for the rain
I humbly asked for true love
There was such a price to pay

This room was filled with trouble
And sacraments deceived
Now I'm a jewel in the shade
Of his weeping willow tree

If Jesus came from Mississippi
If tears began to rhyme
I'll have to go back to the beginning
In this world of strange design

We talk about your drinking
But not about your thirst
You set off through the minefield
Like you were rounding first
So open up a window
And hand the baby through
Point her towards the ghostly bridge
And she'll know what to do

If Jesus came from Mississippi
And if tears began to rhyme
We'll have to start at the beginning
In this world of strange design

John Leventhal: Guitar, Bass, Percussion

Shawn Pelton: Drums

Derek Trucks: Slide Guitar

Catherine Russell, Curtis King, Tawatha Agee, John James: Background Vocals

Slide Guitar recorded by Bobby Tis at Swamp Raga Studios, Jacksonville, FL

Night School

Mobile like a mystery town
Water, heat and moon
Steam on the magnolia trees
Never ending rooms
What happened to that other life
We thought we lived, we two?
We traveled like spies in paradise
At the time it felt so true
In night school
In night school

What about this big old house?
Tell me all the news
What became of all those years?
Whatever will we do?
Yeah, Mobile is a mystery town
Water, heat and moon
And steam lies on the battlefields
And all I see is you

In night school
In night school

The hungry ghosts still tap the walls
Where once there was a door
I've given everything to them
Still they wanted more
Steam lies on the windowpanes
We acted like such fools
But I'd give everything to be
Lying next to you
In night school
In night school

John Leventhal: Guitar, Celeste, String Arrangement
Tim Luntzel: Upright Bass
David Mansfield: Violin, Viola
Dave Eggar: Cello

50,000 Watts

It's a hard road, but it fits your shoes
Son of rhythm, brother of the blues
The sound of darkness, the pull of yoke
Everything is broken and painted in smoke

But there's a light on Sunday
A new old desire
The sound of the whistle 'cross radio wires
Love in your future
I'll wait for you there
With 50,000 watts of common prayer

We'll be who we are and not who we were
A sister to him, a brother to her
We'll live like kings without any sin
Redemption will come, just tune it on in

But there's a light on Sunday
A new old desire
The sound of the whistle 'cross radio wires
With 50,000 watts of common prayer

John Leventhal: Guitar
Dan Rieser: Drums
Tim Luntzel: Upright Bass
Jon Cowherd: Wurlitzer Piano
Cory Chisel: Harmony Vocal

When The Master Calls The Roll

Girl with hair of flaming red
Seeking perfect lover
For to lie down on her feather bed
Soft secrets to uncover
Must be gentle, must be strong
With disposition sunny
Just as faithful as the day is long
And careful with his money
And so the open letter read
The newsboy did deliver
Three months later plans were made to wed down by the King James River

Lo, the season may come
Lo, the season may go
What love has joined together
Will forever be made whole
When the master calls the roll

Oh my darlin' William Lee
Take me to the altar
I don't have strength to watch you as you leave but my love will never falter
Oh my darlin' Mary Ann the march to war is calling
Somewhere far across these Southern lands are bands of brothers falling
My tender bride, the tides demand that I leave you with your mother
With my father's rifle in one hand and your locket in the other

Lo, the season may come
Lo, the season may go
Beware the storm clouds gather
Take heed, dear mortal soul
When the master calls the roll

But can this union be preserved?
The soldier boy was crying
I will never travel back to her
But not for lack of trying
It's the love of one true-hearted lass that made the boy a hero
But a rifle ball and a cannon blast cut him down to zero
Oh, Virginia, whence I came I'll see you when I'm younger
And I'll know you by your hills again this time from six feet under

Lo, the season may come
Lo, the season may go
What man has torn asunder
Will someday be made whole
When the master calls the roll
Though the storm clouds gather
Let the union be made whole
When the master calls the roll

John Leventhal: Guitar, Bass, Organ, Mandolin, Percussion

Dan Rieser: Drums

Larry Farrell: Trombone

Gabe Witcher: Fiddle

The Master's Choir: Rodney Crowell, Amy Helm, Kris Kristofferson, John Prine, Tony Joe White

The Master's Choir recorded by Donivan Cowart at Rodney's house, Thompson Station, TN

Money Road

I was dreaming of the Tallahatchie Bridge

A thousand miles from where we live

But the long line at the pearly gate

The keepers of our fate

None of them will congregate

Out on Money Road

A lonesome boy in a foreign land

And a voice we'll never understand

One lies in the Zion yard

And one sleeps on the river bar

Neither one got very far

Out on Money Road

Out on Money Road

I was dreaming about the deepest blue

But what you seek is seeking you

You can cross the bridge and carve your name

But the river stays the same

We left but never went away

Out on Money Road

Out on Money Road

Out on Money Road

Out on Money Road

John Leventhal: Guitar, Electric Sitar, Organ

Dan Rieser: Drums

Tim Luntzel: Upright Bass

Jon Cowherd: Wurlitzer Piano

Allison Moorer: Harmony Vocal

All songs written by Rosanne Cash and John Leventhal

Except "When The Master Calls The Roll" written by Rosanne Cash, John Leventhal and Rodney Crowell

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John Prine appears courtesy of Oh Boy Records

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