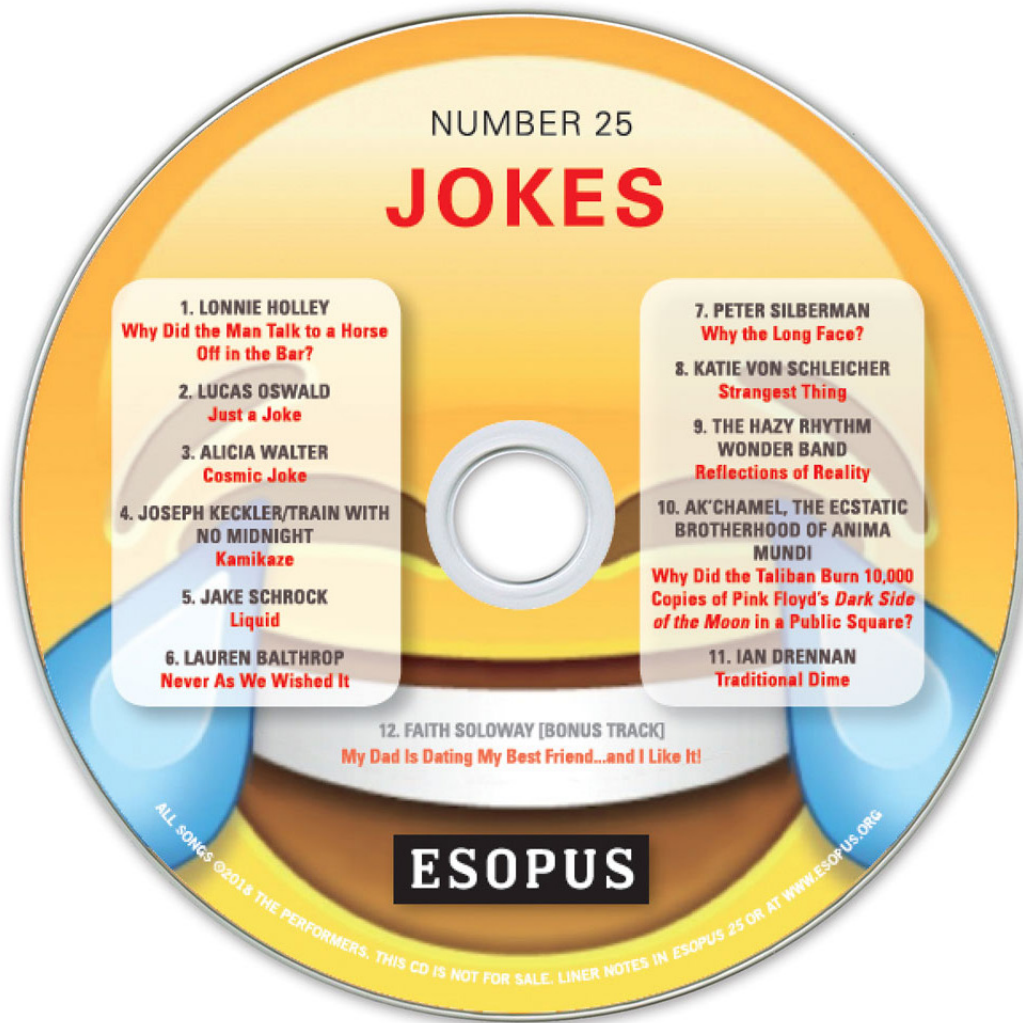


ESOPUS CD 25: JOKES

LINER NOTES



For the 25th audio compilation of the nonprofit arts annual *Esopus*, 11 musicians—Ak’chamel, Lauren Balthrop, Ian Drennan, The Hazy Rhythm Wonder Band, Lonnie Holley, Joseph Keckler, Lucas Oswald, Jake Schrock, Peter Silberman, Katie Von Schleicher, and Alicia Walter—were invited to select a joke to use as inspiration for a song. The CD appears in *Esopus 25*, which is in bookstores in early May and available for purchase [here](#).

Why did the chicken cross the road? To get to the other side.

1. LONNIE HOLLEY

“Why Did the Man Talk to a Horse Off in the Bar?”

Why?

Why, why this chicken?

And why, why this man?

And why, why crossing the road?

Why would somebody cross the road with a load of chickens?

Chickens, why would you

Why would you leave your eggs?

But why all of this

Man, chicken, women, boy and girl

Telling the same old thing

Looking for the same old thrill

Tell me, why did

Why did the water run down the hill?

And who was that girl and that boy?

Tell me what, when, and why

But when and why

Okay, now ladies, but when and why

Why did the chicken cross the road?

Why did the man talk to a horse off in the bar?

Tell me why

C'mon, don't leave me standing

Don't leave me hanging to die

Tell me why

Now this makes me feel kind of sad

I know I probably make a lot of men mad

A lot of women asking questions

Why, why, why

Is all these humans going up and down the road?

What is all those signs at the cabin?

What is all those tears falling from?

Why, why

Why did the man go in the bar?

Why did the woman go into the bar?

Why do the children get shot down in the school?

Tell me why

Why do they cross the road?

Is it to lighten some kind of mental load?

Ladies, please tell me why

Why is there so many teardrops all going down the drain?

My, my ladies, play it for me

Let me hear it

Play it

Sing it for me, ladies,

Sing it like you're crying

Sing it like you're weeping

Sing it like you're weeping for the world

Cry out loud for every little child, boy or girl

And all the men and women

Why, ladies

Why's all this

Is it to keep from getting to the other side?

Is it to get to the

Is it to get to

Do y'all believe in getting to other side one day?

Is it to get to

Is it to get to

Is it to get to

Get to the other side?

Right down here on earth

Get to the other side

Not have to wait to get to heaven

But get to the other side

Right down here on mother earth

Artist and musician **Lonnie Holley** was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. His artwork has been the subject of numerous one-person exhibitions, including *Lonnie Holley: I Snuck off the Slave Ship* at Atlanta Contemporary Art Center (2017); *Thumbs Up for the Mother Ship* (with Dawn DeDeaux) at MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts (2017); *Do We Think Too Much? I Don't Think We Can Ever Stop: Lonnie Holley, A 25-Year Survey* at the Birmingham Museum of Art (2003); and several shows at James Fuentes Gallery, New York, which represents the artist.

His work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, among others. Holley, who has collaborated musically with Dirty Projectors and Animal Collective, debuted his first solo album, *Keeping a Record of It*, on the Dust-to-Digital label in 2013; his second LP will be released by Jagjaguwar Records in the fall of 2018.

Vocals: Lonnie Holley, Courtney Hartman, Elizabeth LaPrelle, Anna Roberts-Gevalt; fiddle: Anna Roberts-Gevalt, Zosha Warpeha; produced by Matt Arnett, Philip Weinrobe, and Lonnie Holley; recorded and mixed by Philip Weinrobe at Figure 8 Recording, Brooklyn, NY ©2018 Lonnie Holley. Courtesy of Jagjaguwar Records.

BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL.

2. LUCAS OSWALD

“Just a Joke”

Might be the end

guess we'll see

maybe everything that's happening was meant for me

with open eyes

start taking notes

so if we're blown to bits

at least I will have told you so

we saw the warning on a television show

maybe it's all just a joke

we lost control

I'm out of breath

if it's ending now, will there be any promises?

one more lie

no one could prove

now that the truth can be anything you want it to

they'll run the world like it's a television show

baby it's all just a joke

Musician and composer **Lucas Oswald** has performed and recorded with a number of bands, including Shearwater, Hospital Ships, and Old Canes. Oswald, who composed music for Isabella Rossellini's *Green Porno* and the television show *Boss*, released his solo album *Whet* in 2017.

Vocals, guitar, bass, synthesizers, samples, and percussion by Lucas Oswald, recorded and mixed by Lucas Oswald ©2018 Bearfieldinaweirdway (ASCAP)

**There once was a man who said,
“Though it seems that I know that I know,
What I'd like to see,
Is the I that knows me,
When I know that I know that I know.”—Alan Watts**

3. ALICIA WALTER

“Cosmic Joke”

“Anyone who knows me knows my laugh! I am always laughing. How could I pick just one joke, when everything tickles me? The “cosmic joke” seemed to fit me best: life itself is funny—it's hilarious! Sometimes we think we “get” what's going on, but of course we don't. We're always looking, looking, looking for answers everywhere outside ourselves. And we may feel we come closest to figuring it all out when we just stop trying to figure it all out. But of course, we still haven't figured out a thing! What could be funnier than that?”—*Alicia Walter*

Sometimes I think I know what's up

“Oh, it's like this! Or was it that way?”

Sometimes I like to trick myself I figured it out.

But then I wake up upside down

Feet in the air! How am I sleepin'?

Kick off the sheets the universe is laughing out loud.

Cause I only find it when I stop lookin' for it

I only say somethin' when I'm not talkin'

Hey, it's a cosmic joke!

Guess I like to distract myself!
Look over there! What's on the radio?
Chasin' my tail, I like to play both cat and mouse

But when I finally catch a glimpse
There in the mirror - why am I runnin' like that?
Shake off this tail, I'm spittin' out the fur in my mouth

Well, I can't believe at how you aren't but you are
And then you're here but you're aren't
If you feel me

Lookin' around like there's somebody else
But it's just you and yourself
Hey, did you see you're on TV?

Well, I can't believe!
How you can think you've gone far
While standin' right where you are,
Pretty funny

Credit to that universal sense of humor
Got me again, and I can't -

Oh, I only have it
When I lose everything, yeah
I only change when I stay the same
I only groove when I don't even move

I only know when I just forget
I only wake when I'm still in bed
I only see when I'm not lookin'
I only go when I'm just stoppin'

Brooklyn-based **Alicia Walter** is the creator of Chicago indie art-rock band *Oshwa*. After releasing *Oshwa's* first two albums, *Chamomile Crush* (2013) and *I We You Me* (2016), Walter relocated from Chicago to New York, where she is currently at work on her first solo album.

Written, performed, mixed, and produced by Alicia Walter; ©2018 Alicia Walter

What doesn't become itself until it is gone?

4. JOSEPH KECKLER/TRAIN WITH NO NAME "Kamikaze"

"This is not really a joke, but more of a riddle or paradox: What doesn't become itself until it is gone? or who doesn't become himself until he is no more? This idea, that of an 'exploding subject' was introduced in a poetry collection by Gian Maria Annovi, and I decided to write this song in response."—*Joseph Keckler*

Joseph Keckler is a singer, musician, writer, and artist. He has appeared at such venues as Lincoln Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and Centre Pompidou and is the author of several plays and many songs, as well as the book *Dragon at the Edge of a Flat World* (Turtle Point, 2017).

Written by Joseph Keckler; recorded, mixed, and mastered by Patrick Derivaz; coproduced by Joseph Keckler and Patrick Derivaz; piano, vocals, loops: Joseph Keckler; backup vocals: Saire de Quincey; violin: Dan Bartfield; drums: Mike Hanf; ©2018 Talking Beast Music (ASCAP)

Autocorrect has become my own worst enema.

5. JAKE SCHROCK "Liquid"

"I wanted a more playful feel for this track based on the joke I selected. The goal was to create a wet, fluid sounding song. I attempted this with the drums by running a TR-606 through an MXR pitch transposer. I brought this effect in and out at various intensities to capture the unexpectedness of autocorrect."—*Jake Schrock*

Based in Dallas, Texas, **Jake Schrock** creates synthesizer music using mostly '70s and '80s electronic equipment, his style varying from minimal synth and krautrock to new wave and Italo-disco. Schrock is currently completing his debut album, to be released later this year.

Written, performed, and recorded by Jake Schrock; ©2018 Jake Schrock

Two elderly women are at a Catskills resort, and one of them says to the other, "Boy, the food at this place is really terrible." The other one says, "Yeah, I know; and such small portions!"—Woody Allen

6. LAUREN BALTHROP "Never As We Wished It"

Aunt Sally lived to a hundred
and every day she'd complain
but she'd hot and bitter
just to sing the same refrain
oh life's too short
why don't we go and live it
life's too short
oh it's sad to admit
but round and round we go
lost as we ever were
singin' go on lovin' livin, all is forgiven she'd say
Watch out for the puddles
full of dark muddy waters
take a sip of sadness
rest your worries on the heavy mattress
thinking life's too short
but still we gotta live it
though it's too hard
and never as we wished it
and round and round we go
lost as we ever were
hungover and tired
from the night before
What's it all for
broken heart on the floor
laughing and crying
are almost the same
find a light in the dark
drink it all up
keep filling your cup
until your time runs out

Born and raised in Alabama, singer-songwriter **Lauren Balthrop** has released two albums as Dear Georgina. Balthrop has also been a backing vocalist for Bob Weir, Kevin Morby, and Sara Bareilles and is the director of the Brooklyn women's choir *Sirens of Brooklyn*.

Written, recorded, and performed by Lauren Balthrop; drums: Aaron Shafer-Haiss; ©2018 Georgina Starlington/Starlington Songs (ASCAP)

A horse walks into a bar, and the bartender asks, "Why the long face?"

7. PETER SILBERMAN "Why the Long Face?"

"In selecting a joke for this project, a childhood favorite came to mind: 'A horse walks into a bar, the bartender asks, "Why the Long Face?"'

I love this joke for its simplicity, and fittingly, I wrote a piece that revolves around a single, economical melody. In the barebones beginnings of the recording, I accidentally discovered that its central riff mimicked the rhythm of the phrase, "Why the Long Face." Once I picked up on this synchronicity, I emphasized it through harmony and accompaniment.

I've never had much success conveying humor through instrumental music. So instead, I built a mood to reflect the idiom "Why the Long Face?"—the playful way to ask "What's wrong?" A bed of soft organs and strings helped to evoke a congenial feeling, and the end result feels like a friendly comfort on a grey day."—*Peter Silberman*

Peter Silberman is best known as the founder, guitarist, vocalist, and songwriter of Brooklyn-based rock band *The Antlers*, whose albums include *Hospice* (Frenchkiss, 2009), *Burst Apart* (Frenchkiss, 2012), and *Familiars* (Anti- Records, 2014). In 2017, Anti- Records released Silberman's first solo album, *Impermanence*.

Written, recorded, and produced by Peter Silberman at The Carhole, New Paltz, NY; ©2018 Peter Silberman/Immanent Domain LLC

This lawn supervisor was out on a sprinkler maintenance job and he started working on a Findlay sprinkler head with a Langstrom 7" gangly wrench. Just then, this little apprentice leaned over and said, "You can't work on a Findlay sprinkler head with a Langstrom 7" wrench." Well, this infuriated the supervisor, so he went and got Volume 14 of the Kinsley manual, and he reads to him and says, "The Langstrom 7" wrench can be used with the Findlay sprocket." Just then, the little apprentice leaned over and said, "It says sprocket, not socket!"

Were these plumbers supposed to be here at this show...?"—Steve Martin

8. KATIE VON SCHLEICHER

"Strangest Thing"

"I love the plumber joke so much, I knew there would be no way to touch its perfection. To me it boils down to a miscommunication, and one that feels really wholesome and earnest. So I thought I'd represent this as a mixtape, where a guy intends to send this lush '50s-style romantic song to his lover, but maybe fails to tape over a way more lo-fi, loud and fast song."—Katie Von Schleicher

Brooklyn-based musician and songwriter **Katie Von Schleicher** self-released her first album, *Silent Days*, in 2012. Her subsequent three efforts—the mini-LP *Bleaksploitation* (2015), the cassette *Lobster Palace* (2016), and the full-length *Shitty Hits* (2017)—have been released by Ba Da Bing Records.

Vocals, guitar, drums, vocal, synthesizer: Katie Von Schleicher; bass, guitar, clarinet: Adam Brisbin; ©2018 Katie Von Schleicher/Rough Trade Publishing

*Why can't you trust atoms?
Because they make up everything.*

9. THE HAZY RHYTHM WONDER BAND

"Reflections of Reality"

*I often walk alone
I often wonder why the things I pass, though hard and fast,
always seem to know I'm alive
I gazed into the mirror
My reflection looked at me
He said, "You know you can't trust atoms, as you're about to see"
I asked, "Why can't I trust atoms?"
He said, "'Cuz they make up everything!
And you can't trust your own reflection until you see it in everything"
The reflections of reality may not always make you smile,
but I hope they bring you peace once in a while
As I pulled back from the mirror
The shock soon hit the mind
The mirror never goes away
It surrounds you all the time
The world reflects what we project
I thought you'd like to know
In other words, we'll reap just what we sow
The reflections of reality may not always make you smile,
but I hope they bring you peace once in a while*

The Hazy Rhythm Wonder Band is the musical project of Bruce LaSusa. LaSusa is known throughout the Hudson Valley for his guerrilla-marketing tactics that include hand-painted placards inviting audiences to a "holy organic experience" on the project's website, which features both music and videos.

Written, performed, and recorded by The Hazy Rhythm Wonder Band; ©2018 The Hazy Rhythm Wonder Band

*Why did the Taliban burn 10,000 copies of Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon in a public square?
Because it's terrible.—Neil Hamburger*

10. AK'CHAMEL, THE ECSTATIC BROTHERHOOD OF ANIMA MUNDI

"Why Did the Taliban Burn 10,000 Copies of Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon in a Public Square?"

Ak'chamel performs in homemade costumes/masks at often unconventional locales such as laundromats, parking-garage stairwells, and cemeteries. The group has created over 15 albums (and one VHS film), released by various labels around the world.

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*Here I sit, brokenhearted,
Spent a dime and only farted.*

11. IAN DRENNAN

"Traditional Dime"

Ian Drennan is a structural engineer living in New York City.

Written, performed, and recorded by Ian Drennan; ©2018 Improbably Data Songs (SESAC)

12. FAITH SOLOWAY [BONUS TRACK]

"My Dad Is Dating My Best Friend...and I Like It! [Theme Song]"

Performed and recorded by Faith Soloway; ©2018 Faith and Jill Soloway