

VOLUME 6. STUDIO CHUMP

ARTIST STATEMENT

Volume 6 is the closing chapter of *The Birth of Forest Chump* — but it's also a new beginning. After the stripped-down recordings, the digital exorcisms, the jail cells, and the psych ward laments, I wanted to give these songs the full treatment they deserved. This time, my hands were on the steering wheel more as an arranger than as a constant performer, shaping the music in the spirit of **Bill Evans and his Trio** — giving the rhythm section room to breathe, lead, and respond.

I play piano only on a handful of tracks, leaving much of the conversation to the band: Grammy-winning drummer **Derrek Phillips**, and **Harmoni Kelley**, bassist and vocalist for **Kenny Chesney** — both masters of feel, finesse, groove, and fire. The focus here isn't about one instrument dominating, but about the interplay — the kind of give-and-take that makes a band sound alive.

At the console, **James Viega** — longtime engineer and producer for **Garth Brooks** and **Trisha Yearwood** — brings the final polish, making sure every detail is clear without ever flattening the emotion.

But the heart of it is still the same. These are songs that survived rough demos, jailhouse scribbles, and psychiatric holds. Here, they rise with new life. The arrangements are lush, but the stories are raw. Every line, every chord, came from lived experience — I just had the luxury of sharing the load this time.

This volume is about reclaiming sound and space. It's about not just surviving, but thriving — louder, richer, and with a band behind me that knows how to feel it all.

ABOUT THE ALBUM

This isn't a repeat — it's a reinvention. Some of these songs first appeared in Volume 2, written during and after a complete personal collapse. But here, they've been rebuilt from the ground up — restructured with new arrangements, new players, and, in some cases, entirely new life. Volume 6 is where the songs breathe different air — not stripped down, but stood back up.

We tracked it all at **Yellow Dog Studio**, the kind of place where the walls listen. I played piano sparingly, choosing instead to approach the music as an arranger, much like **Bill Evans and his Trio** — letting the rhythm section drive the conversation. **Derrek Phillips** (2× Grammy-winning drummer) doesn't just play drums here — he shapes the space. **Harmoni Kelley** (bassist and vocalist for **Kenny Chesney**) doesn't just anchor the groove — she gives it lift. The interplay between them is the heartbeat of this record.

At the console, **James Viega** — longtime engineer and producer for **Garth Brooks** and **Trisha Yearwood** — adds his signature polish, making sure every nuance in the band's dialogue comes through without losing the rawness that defines these songs.

This album is full-band, full-blooded, and full of second chances. It's what happens when you make it out — not clean, not untouched, but unbroken. *Forest Chump lived to tell the tale. Ryan Lee Reid didn't.*

TRACK NOTES

These songs are different — not just because they're mine, but because of how they came to life. Some were scribbled in a journal in jail. Some were written with an unsanctioned pen I kept hidden in the psych ward. Others were finished in the quiet moments when the noise finally stopped. On this volume, I'm not carrying the weight alone: **Derrek Phillips**(drums) and **Harmoni Kelley** (bass and vocals) bring a fire, finesse, and groove that turns these survival stories into something you can move to. The arrangements are built like a **Bill Evans Trio** session — conversation between instruments, space for breath, rhythm section at the center. I play piano on only a handful of tracks, and overdubbed a D6, Wurly, Hohner Pianet N, and Fender Rhodes, stepping back to shape the whole picture. At the console, **James Viega** — longtime engineer and producer for **Garth Brooks** and **Trisha Yearwood** — adds the final polish without ever taming the edges. What you hear is one-take energy, real-time chemistry, and scars that swing. These aren't just songs — they're proof that Forest Chump made it out... but Ryan Lee Reid didn't.

“COUNTRYCORE” *by FOREST CHUMP*

This one's pure satire — but it's not just a joke. I wrote it to poke holes in the formula of modern country pop: the brand drops, the fake blue-collar cosplay, the algorithmic patriotism. But beneath the humor, there's frustration. I've lived the struggle these songs pretend to represent. And I've seen what a real country looks like — it doesn't come with a marketing budget.

“EGO” *by FOREST CHUMP*

This track is a full-on confrontation — not with another person, but with the voice in your head that never shuts up. The one that says you're a failure, a fraud, a joke. That voice lives rent-free in the mind of anyone battling mental illness, and mine has a sharp tongue. I wrote this as a fight song. Not polished, not poetic — just me telling my ego to go fuck itself and finally meaning it.

“FEELIN' RECKLESS” *by FOREST CHUMP*

This one's a moonshine-fueled mission statement. Part Houston hurricane, part rodeo clown in orbit, it's built for big bass and bad decisions. The lyrics are loud, the beat hits like a punchline, and the whole thing is proudly unhinged. It's not about getting it right — it's about turning it up, knocking it down, and waking up the next morning with a grin and no regrets. Good times are the philosophy. Reckless is the brand.

“DON'T SCOOTER BRAUN ME” *by FOREST CHUMP*

This one's about being used — emotionally, creatively, and professionally. I wrote love songs on demand to hold a relationship together that was already falling apart. When someone takes your talent and turns it into leverage, it stops being collaboration — it becomes control. This is me taking the pen back.

“DOUBLE WIDE ROCKET” *by FOREST CHUMP*

This is my neon space outlaw anthem. Think deep-fried sci-fi with glitter on the boots. It's two disco-damaged lovers blasting through the galaxy in a double wide — a 31st-century Bonnie and Clyde who give zero F's in zero G's. The beat's wild, the attitude's lawless, and the whole thing is one big yeehaw from the outer rim. It's chaos on purpose. 5150 at the cowboy disco.

“KISS KISS BANG BANG” *by FOREST CHUMP*

She's got charm weaponized and bad news in heels. This song came out of a place where lust and danger live right next to each other — and sometimes share a bed. It's playful, loud, and a little unhinged, just like the woman it describes. There's humor in it, but there's warning too. Because the second you're pulled in, the damage is already done. Kiss kiss. Bang bang. Good luck.

“PILLBILLY BLUES” *by FOREST CHUMP*

This one's an elegy for anyone who's been broke, doped, and laughed at their own collapse. I wrote it after the psych ward, when pills and late bills were running my life. There's sarcasm in the lines, but every word is true. It's about streaming pennies, rock bottom's basement, and how hitting the floor for a dropped pill can feel like a holy mission. This is gallows humor — Southern fried and barely holding on.

“MAGNUS'S THEME” *by FOREST CHUMP*

A companion piece to *Sebastian's Theme*, performed on a nine-foot concert grand Steinway at Yellow Dog Studio. Harmoni Kelley on bass brings warmth and gravity, with Derrek Phillips' drums framing it like a heartbeat. A quieter moment, but no less alive.

“ALL I DO IS EAT & WEAR MY MONEY” *by FOREST CHUMP*

This is what it looks like when grief puts on designer clothes. I wrote it at a time when I was blowing money just to feel something — caviar, Balmain, and the dumbest shit imaginable. There's humor in it, but it's not a joke. I wasn't living. I was spending to survive. And the more I bought, the emptier it felt.

“TROUBLE IN MIND” *by RICHARD M. JONES*

The only non-original on the album. A century-old blues standard reimaged with gospel undertones. A song of sorrow that refuses to sink — the perfect note to close this chapter.

“BUSY LIVIN' OR BUSY DYIN'” *by FOREST CHUMP*

This song came from that gray space between hope and burnout — when every day feels the same, and you're not sure which direction you're headed anymore. I felt like a cowboy with nowhere left to ride, still singing songs while the clock kept ticking. It's about motion without meaning. Life without traction. And wondering if you're living at all, or just slowly fading out.

“ROUND TOP DAYS” *by FOREST CHUMP*

Round Top was where love felt effortless, untouched by time or doubt. It's where we first went away, fell in love, and got married. The air was slower there, the nights softer, and everything seemed possible. I carry those days with a quiet kind of gratitude — for the peace we found, however briefly, and the beauty of believing it could last.

RECORDING CONTEXT

After tracking the earlier volumes in solitude — just one man, one piano, one mic — Volume 6 was my return to the studio and to collaboration. We cut these songs live at **Yellow Dog Studio**, where the chemistry was instant.

I approached this record more like an arranger than a constant performer, in the spirit of the **Bill Evans Trio** — giving the rhythm section space to lead the conversation. I only sat down at the piano on a handful of tracks, including *Magnus's Theme* on a nine-foot Steinway Concert D brought in specially for the session.

Derrek Phillips — two-time Grammy-winning drummer who's played with everyone from **Victor Wooten** to **Sly & The Family Stone** to **Hank Williams Jr.** — brought his rhythmic genius and intuitive sense of space. **Harmoni Kelley** — longtime bassist and vocalist for **Kenny Chesney** — anchored the low end with tone, taste, and a touch of Texas swagger.

While the stories remained mine — born in chaos, betrayal, and rebirth — the sound got bigger with the addition of the D6, Hohner Pianet N, and Fender Rhodes. We tracked live, no click tracks, just three players in a room telling the truth. **James Viega** — longtime engineer and producer for **Garth Brooks** and **Trisha Yearwood** — added the polish that let every detail shine without losing the grit.

A PERSONAL NOTE

After losing everything — my marriage, my kids, my name, my work, even my voice for a time — I never thought I'd be back in a studio, much less finishing a six-volume series with musicians of this caliber. But here we are.

Most of these songs were born in chaos — written in jail, in the psych ward, or in the wreckage of the life I used to live. To hear them now, shaped in the spirit of a **Bill Evans Trio** session, with **Derrek Phillips** and **Harmoni Kelley** breathing life into every bar, feels like a kind of redemption I never asked for but desperately needed. My own role here was often less about taking the spotlight and more about arranging the conversation, giving the rhythm section space to speak and filling in some of the spaces after the fact.

We didn't chase perfection. We chased feel. The kind of feel that comes from playing through the pain and laughing anyway. The kind that only shows up when you're finally free. **James Viega** made sure that freedom — the grit, the joy, the swing — was heard exactly as it was in the room.

Thanks for listening.

— Forest Chump

