

# VOLUME 3. JAZZ CHUMP

## ARTIST STATEMENT

This isn't your usual *American Songbook* record.

I didn't approach these standards like museum pieces. I wasn't trying to replicate Ella or Sinatra, or polish them until they glowed. I came at them the only way I know how — through the blues, through Texas, through scars.

These songs have been sung a thousand different ways. But rarely with a voice like mine. I don't mean technically — I mean emotionally. I didn't clean them up. I cracked them open. I slowed them down. I let the grief show. I gave them a swing, but I also gave them weight.

This is *The American Songbook* rewritten from the bottom up — rearranged, rephrased, re-felt. It's not nostalgia. It's a reclamation.

## ABOUT THE ALBUM

This album is built on improvisation — not just in the piano or the phrasing, but in the way the songs themselves were approached. I kept the arrangements loose. Some tunes have restructured forms. Some have B sections replaced with solo passages. Some were re-harmonized on the fly.

I sang these standards like they'd never been sung to me. I let my voice go wherever the moment needed — bluesy, cracked, off-balance at times, but always honest. The piano plays behind, around, or sometimes against the vocal — like two old friends arguing over a memory.

There's no big band, no string section, no brushed drums. Just me. One mic. One piano. And the history these songs carry.

## TRACK NOTES

Improvisation is the heart of this album. I didn't come in with polished arrangements or fixed ideas. I let the songs unfold in real time — reshaping melodies, bending chords, rewriting forms on the fly. Sometimes I changed the structure. Sometimes I just change my mind.

This is less about honoring the canon and more about challenging it — not out of disrespect, but because these songs deserve to keep growing. I wasn't trying to preserve anything. I was trying to feel something.

### **“STORMY WEATHER / SUNDAY KIND OF LOVE”** *by ARLEN & KOEHLER / BELLE, LEONARD, RHODES & PRIMA*

This mashup is about contrast — the longing for peace and the reality of chaos. One song begs for shelter from the storm; the other aches for love that's steady and sacred. I lived through both. I combined them because I couldn't choose — I was in love during a hurricane, and I kept pretending it was Sunday.

### **“DON'T GO TO STRANGERS”** *by KENT, MANN & EVANS*

The quiet plea in this lyric always hit me hard: stay, even if things feel off — stay, even if I'm not enough. That was me, bargaining with someone who had already left emotionally. I slowed it down so every word could linger, like the last thing you say to someone before they disappear for good.

### **“MEAN OL' MOON”** *by WALTER MURPHY & SETH MACFARLANE*

This one's gentle on the surface, but it cuts deep — blaming the moon because it's easier than blaming the person. I used to stare at the sky at 3AM, wondering how I could get away from the abuse. This song wraps that ache in lullaby chords. It's a nighttime confession you whisper to nobody.

### **“I COULD HAVE TOLD YOU”** *by JIMMY VAN HEUSEN & CARL SIGMAN*

Regret isn't loud — it's subtle, slow, and it shows up in the voice. This song is about watching someone fall for a lie you've already lived through. When I sing it, it feels like talking to my younger self. Or maybe to someone I couldn't save. Either way, I sing it soft — like I already know how it ends.

### **“LET'S DO IT (LET'S FALL IN LOVE)”** *by COLE PORTER*

People think of this one as playful, but I found something else in it: repetition, ritual, routine — all the things we mistake for romance. I sing it slowly, with a wink and a sigh. It's not about falling in love. It's about realizing you've done this before, and you'll do it again, even if it breaks you.

**“CRY ME A RIVER”** *by ARTHUR HAMILTON*

This is the ultimate kiss-off — but I didn’t deliver it with fire. I let it simmer. Because sometimes “you made me cry” isn’t a scream — it’s a tired truth. I recorded this in one take, thinking of all the times I was told nothing had changed, when everything had. The river had already flooded. I’m just naming it now.

**“SO THIS IS LOVE”** *by MACK DAVID, AL HOFFMAN & JERRY LIVINGSTON*

Taken from a fairy tale, sure — but there’s sadness in this melody. In my version, the glass slipper never fit right. The clock struck midnight years ago, and I kept pretending the magic was still there. This isn’t the beginning of a dream. It’s the end of one you didn’t want to wake up from.

**“GEORGIA”** *by HOAGY CARMICHAEL & STUART GORRELL*

“Georgia” always felt like a person more than a place. I leaned into the melancholy — the in-between of memory and loss. There’s no train home, no phone call coming. Just the hum of what used to be, still echoing in your head. This one isn’t about going back. It’s about knowing you can’t.

**“I FALL IN LOVE TOO EASILY”** *by JULE STYNE & SAMMY CAHN*

A beautiful lie we tell ourselves when we’re lonely. I’ve lived this one — the rush, the collapse, the silence after. I sang it like someone learning the lesson too late. The melody is simple. The feeling isn’t. It’s not about falling in love. It’s about falling for the same mistake, again and again.

**“NO MORE LOVIN’”** *by FOREST CHUMP*

I wrote this one at a time when I couldn’t tell if I was being gaslit or just going crazy. She said nothing had changed, but everything had — this isn’t a breakup song. It’s a realization. A cold, clear, piano-lit moment where the truth finally stares back at you.

**“YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT LOVE IS”** *by GENE DE PAUL & DON RAYE*

This is the last thing you say before walking out the door. Not in anger — in resignation. I slowed it down to make the lyric ache. Because it’s not about bitterness. It’s about the sorrow of giving everything to someone who never knew what to do with it. Love without understanding is just damage.

**“THE THINGS WE DID LAST SUMMER”** *by SAMMY CAHN & JULE STYNE*

A slow, unhurried take that lets memory breathe. I strip away the swing and let the melody drift, holding each phrase like something too fragile to set down. Bittersweet and spacious, it lingers in the room like the season it remembers—gone, but still warm in the air.

## RECORDING CONTEXT

These songs were recorded live — one mic, one piano, and no safety net. I played a modeled Bosendorfer 280VC using Modartt's Pianoteq plugin, which gave me the depth and dynamics of a concert grand in a space that didn't have one. **James Viega** tracked the session — capturing the bare stripped down nature contained within.

There were no charts, no overdubs, no vocal comping. Most takes were done in one or two passes, guided entirely by feel. I didn't edit out imperfections — I leaned into them. The air, the breath, the hesitation — it's all part of the story.

This isn't how most people approach *The American Songbook*. But for me, improvising with no plan and no polish was the only way it felt honest.

## A PERSONAL NOTE

I studied jazz theory for many years under one of Steinway's premier jazz artists, **Paul English**. I learned the rules, memorized the changes, and paid my dues. But when it came time to record these songs, I had to let all that go.

This album isn't about proving what I know — it's about feeling what I've lived. I didn't want to sound like anyone else. I wanted to sound like someone who made it through something.

Every track on here is improvised — sometimes fragile, sometimes fearless, always real. If it wavers, that's because I meant it to.

— Forest Chump

