

1. I'm Fine Bein' Me (2:47) (Valerie Smith) Up-tempo / Bluegrass and Folk. ISRC: TCAFQ2109586

This song represents reaching a place in your life where recognition of self-worth and acceptance of life around you finally come to pass. The music industry can be challenging, and it is easy to lose yourself and your grasp on what is essential in life. As a mother, I have always felt that my daughter must see demonstrations of self-love and confidence.

2. Heartbreak Hill (2:49) (Gary Scruggs & Tony Arata) Up-tempo / Rockabilly. ISRC: TCAFQ2109590

I love singing and moving to "Heartbreak Hill"; it has the nostalgic feel of Johnny Cash's rockabilly days. Dave Roe played bass for Johnny Cash, and he does on this cut for me as well. This one is just fun to sing and to move with - it's a toe-tapper for sure.

3. On That Train (3:44) (Jude Johnstone) Slow, Smooth Ballad / Folk. ISRC: TCAFQ2109597

Written by one of Johnny Cash's favorite songwriters, Jude Johnstone, the lyrics cleverly approach the subject of regret, wishing we would have dared to take a chance for love and life.

4. Dancin' With the Stars (3:40) (David Lauer, Bobby Johnston, Jerry Salley) Swing. ISRC: TCAFQ2109600

You can never beat a laid-back swing tune like "Dancin' with the Stars," which is all about happiness, contentment, and love. Jerry Salley (composer) and Donna Ulisse add their clever harmonies as icing on the cake! This song also allowed me to work with one of my old band-mates, Andy Leftwich (mandolin). It puts a smile on my face!

5. Heart of Sorrow (3:19) (Claire Lynch & Frank Serio) Drivin' beat / Bluegrass. ISRC: TCAFQ2109602

"Heart of Sorrow" offers up a swampy, soulful bluegrass tempo number for this album. In life, we lose, and our hearts get broken, which brings us to the blues. It's all just part of the rocky process of being human.

6. The River Whispers (3:00) (Claire Ulanoff and Marissa DiBlassio) Mid-tempo / Folk / Bluegrass. ISRC: TCAFQ2109613

I love walks in nature because when we can't find the answers to our complicated lives, nature will often bring us comfort. Rivers have always been a symbol of peace, hope, and love for many years. While traveling and playing music with the legendary Tom Gray, he encouraged me to go river kayaking with him, and it turned out to be a spiritual experience for me during a time of healing.

7. I Found (4:06) (Joshua Keogh) Mid-tempo / Folk / Contemporary Bluegrass. ISRC: TCAFQ2109618

"I Found" is my cover of a popular song by the Indie rock group Amber Run. I fell in love with its clever melody and lyrics, which strongly appear in our recorded version. Radio DJ of "Unreal Bluegrass," Steve Martin, says it best: "Valerie Smith possesses one of the more interpretive and sensitive voices in all music. She feels lyrics deeply and wants the listener to feel with her. 'I Found' is the perfect opportunity for Valerie, with strong backing by Liberty Pike, to reach deep down and then stretch back out to the audience. Ultimately the song describes life, gliding over unexpected obstacles and finding love where it wasn't supposed to be. The serendipity of joy. Valerie Smith takes you with her, breathing with you as you find smiles and happiness." Thank you, Steve!

8. Big Red (3:20) (Daniel Crabtree) Driving Bluegrass. ISRC: TCAFQ2109619

One of my favorite songwriters describes a historically famous horse race that was nicknamed "Big Red" (Triple Crown winner Secretariat). The song also represents what sheer focus and determination can do for one facing challenges to achieve goals. There is a lot to be said for starting out slow but coming in strong at the finish line.

9. Do You Know Where Your Heart is Tonight? (3:20) (Jeff Walter) Mid-tempo acoustic Country. ISRC: TCAFQ2109628

A soulful country two-step song that explores how complicated interpersonal and family relationships can be when people travel a lot for their jobs. I have traveled all of my life, and my heart has not always been in the right place, and it is easy to develop a bubble around yourself and lose communication with your loved ones.

10. The Great I Am (4:05) (Feat. The McCrary Sisters) (Mike Lane) Upbeat Gospel. ISRC: TCAFQ2109632

This rousing number was written by Pastor Mike Lane when he was about to give a sermon. I love the soulful sounds and lyrics which celebrate a power more significant than ourselves, the power of faith. The McCrary Sisters sang the background on this track, and they really brought it home for me.

11. Heaven is Holding You (2:59) (Ann Miller) Smooth ballad/folk. ISRC: TCAFQ2109633

My daughter, Josie Smith, graduated from high school this year, and the idea of her moving out of the house to college was a tough pill for me to swallow. I indeed suffer from separation anxiety; she is the result of the best thing I ever did in my life ... being a mother. I think we all wish safety, hope, and love for all of our children.

12. A Dollar Looked Mighty Good (3:47) (Valerie Smith/ Ashley Lewis), Mid-tempo / contemporary bluegrass/folk. ISRC: TCAFQ2109635

Ashley Lewis and I wrote this song based on an excerpt from my great grandmother Maggie Brooks' journal, which I found in an old trunk about 7 years ago. She had finally escaped from a violent marriage and learned to earn her own money by doing various jobs. Maggie became a very successful businesswoman in Plattsburg, MO., owning and operating a general store and a hotel. She was pretty proud to earn her own dollars and rise above her many early life challenges.

13. Enter In (2:33) (Claire Lynch and Irene Kelley) Upbeat bluegrass Gospel. ISRC: TCAFQ2109637

I love the simplicity and traditional feel of the lyrics and melody of "Enter In." The song is a genuine sing-along, and being a former music teacher, I love encouraging people to join in the fun! I am a fan of the music these two fine women made and was tickled to pull this one out of their music vault.

14. Unchained (4:18) (Jude Johnstone) Slow, acoustic blues. ISRC: TCAFQ2109640

"Unchained" is another powerfully written song written by Jude Johnstone. It was actually one of the final songs that Johnny Cash released, and I'm proud to cover it. During the pandemic, emotions were high and turbulent, and I reflected upon many things. This song is about being truthful with yourself and trying to become a better, stronger person. Once we can see ourselves clearly, we can become unchained from the perceptions that hold us back from loving relationships with ourselves and others.

Band

Ann McCrary, Tambourine 10 | Andy Leftwich, Mandolin: 1,2,4,5,6,8,10,12 & Fiddle: 10 | Bob Minner, Guitar, 1-9,11,13, 14 | Cody Kilby, Guitar: 12 | Dave Roe, Bass: 2,3,6,10,11,14 | Donna Ulisse and Jerry Salley, Harmony Vocals: 4 | Evan Winsor, Bass: 12 | Joe Zauner, Banjo: 1,7,8,9,13 | Kevin McKendree, Synth Strings: 3,14 & Strings: 6 | Lisa Kay Howard-Hughes, Mandolin: 1,2,7,9,13 & Harmony Vocals: 1,2,5,6,7,8,9,12,13 | Rob Ickes, Resophonic Guitar: 14 | Sammy Shelor, Banjo: 5 | Stephen Burwell, Fiddle: 2,4,5,8,9,12,14 | Tanya Dennis, Harmony Vocals: 3,14 | The McCrary Sisters (Ann, Alfreda, Regina) Harmonies: Track 10 | Tim Carter, Banjo: 10,12 | Tim Lorsch, Strings: 3,11 | Tom Gray, Bass: 1,4,5,7,8,9,13 | Wally Hughes, Resophonic Guitar 2,6,9,13 & Fiddle: 1,7,13 & Harmony Vocals: 1,2,5,6,7,8,9,12,13