

## ***One Tough Town – Track-by-Track***

1. "Whistle Blow" The harp is played through a Wurlitzer Piano speaker, for those of you keeping score. "What's the matter, ain't you never seen a grown man cry?" seems to me to be a fine question to ponder.
2. "Sweet Poison" Written with John Hadley. From an earlier song of mine that didn't work. Just bring it to John and witness the amazing results. Whites are whiter and the colors brighter. Use as directed.
3. "Who's The Dummy Now?" Incompetent ventriloquist. Disgruntled dummy. I identify equally with both. That's why we wrote it.
4. "Little Mustang" Jack Irwin is playing the slap box. A drum you sit on. Dave Roe slaps the bass with a vengeance. Sergio twangs with abandon. I wrote the song in Floyd, Virginia. Henke was a friend of mine who has gone on to graduate. "Little Mustang" is the secret of life.
5. "No Lies" Written by Dutchman Rudy Van Dam. It was in waltz time. We moved to 4/4. Little bit of Waylon. I play the lead guitar on this. Don't ever forget that.
6. "Oh Yeah (Dead Man's Shoes)" Hadley and I again. I wanted to put as many saints in it as possible. It can't hurt. I think of the song as Flannery O'Conner goes to New Orleans. The break sounds like I'm having a wrestling match with the Bill Huber's trombone and losing.
7. "Snake Song" From the great Townes Van Zandt. Sergio pulls out all the stops. If The Morman Tabernacle Choir went bad and started a thrash band, I think this would perfect for them.
8. "Panama City" Gwil Owen and I wrote this in Panama City, Florida. I pitched this to the Chamber of Commerce as a possible theme song for the city. They laughed. Why must they laugh at my mighty song?
9. "Sweet Potato" One of the first songs I wrote with John Hadley. Kind of a vaudeville, Ukelele Ike ditty. It also pokes fun of Texas. Being from Rhode Island originally, I have a moral obligation to do that whenever possible.
10. "See How The Mighty Have Fallen" Saul and David battle for power in the Old Testament. Such a powerful story. Bobby Daniels leads the choir during this one. I met Bobby when he played Satchel Paige in a musical about Dizzy Dean I was involved with. Great actor and musician. He was one of the writers of "The Super Bowl Shuffle." Where else can you get this kind of information?
11. "One Tough Town" A vaudeville comedian is propelled into the distant future. No longer does he travel from city to city, but from planet to planet, and solar system to solar system. The food's more interesting and the accommodations are a step up. But the circuit is still the circuit and the basic facts of show biz remain the same. Earth is one tough town.
12. "Postcard From Mexico" What a weird song! John Hadley is as much to blame as me. A low-rent *Body Heat*. Instead of William Hurt, Strother Martin. Instead of Kathleen Turner, Cyndi Lauper.
13. "Rainbow's End" Bobby Daniels is a one-man Mills Brothers. That would make me Bing Crosby, I believe.

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## A FEW WORDS FROM DAVID OLNEY

In the early summer of 2006, I felt like it was time for me to record another CD. But when I'd make the effort to get started, my mind would just shut down. I couldn't figure out what was going on. I had always enjoyed recording and was proud of the work I had done in the past. Why was I balking now? It seemed to boil down to my not knowing what I should sound like. It was as if, in some way, I had forgotten who I was. I paced around for a couple of weeks and came to the conclusion that if I didn't know what I should sound like, I would have to go to some new place, physically and mentally and emotionally, to find out.

I knew Jack Irwin only slightly. Mostly from running into him at a local coffee shop. I knew he had a studio. I decided to do some guitar and vocal demos at his place. Jack is an easy guy to work with and a thorough professional. I told him I wanted to record a project at his place. I said that I was not clear in my mind as to how it should sound but that I wanted it to be different from my past endeavors. He said okay and the game was afoot. I told Jack I wanted to record with people I had not worked with before. I did not want to fall into any pattern from the past. I wanted to use a tuba. Did Jack know a tuba player? Yes he did. Bill Huber. I wanted to record with a banjo player. I knew Richard Bailey from Brown's Diner, a local watering hole. I'd heard of his playing without having actually heard him. We had discussed playing together a few times so I asked him to join the party. As far as a drummer was concerned, I just wanted someone to beat on anything that wasn't a standard drum set. Jack recommended Craig Wright. The first session was scheduled with Bill and Craig and Richard. Guitar, tuba, banjo and percussion (Craig beat on a parade drum about the size of Utah, plus assorted other things). The first song was "Sweet Potato." The first take went fine but I felt like maybe I could loosen up a bit on another take. This time I shouted out weird comments about potatoes, lobsters and crawfish. It felt great. So we were off and running. For the next session, Jack brought in Dave Roe on standup bass. Dave could slap the hell out of that thing. We started that night with "Sweet Poison." Jack suggested I use an old Charlie Christian era Gibson electric. Tremolo. Reverb. Oh, yeah. Those two sessions marked out the poles of *One Tough Town*. On the one hand, a semi-sloppy (in the best sense) New Orleans sound. And on the other, a raucous rockabilly thing.

Now, around this time, I began playing live gigs with guitarist Sergio Webb. In the beginning, it was just learning songs and lots of rehearsing. It became quickly apparent that Sergio was something exceptional. And well-dressed, to boot. So that necessitated getting him in on the recording. Jim Hoke was brought in to play clarinet and wound up doing some sax therapy as well. Not to mention his pedal steel on Panama City. Bobby Daniels lent his considerable vocal skills to "See How The Mighty Have Fallen" and "Rainbow's End."

The ukelele was the next logical step. Then the slap box.

The result of all this: *One Tough Town*.

I guess I see *One Tough Town* as a retrospective of a hundred years of American Music. Blues, country, rock, swing and all stops in between. No such vision can be complete. There's just too much to cover to achieve that kind of goal. But it has been my life's work, and my life's pleasure, to see how close I can come.

-more-



## DAVID OLNEY

Over an impressive professional career spanning four decades, David Olney has built a reputation not as a kind-hearted troubadour, but rather as a performing songwriter with a sharp literary mind that often cuts to the bone of the human condition. Whether the subject matter is heartbreak or armed robbery, Olney's cinematic style and fearless approach to lyric writing have won him a reputation as a kind of musical outlaw. Listening to his new CD, *One Tough Town*, is like watching a Sergio Leone western: it's gritty, smart and dangerous and you can't take your eyes off the screen.

In his late 50's Olney is not interested in playing it safe. *One Tough Town* takes us on a back-roads tour of American music, and while totally entertaining, shows us a side that isn't always pretty. The dark-edged title track is an allegory in which a seasoned performer informs a young colleague that of all the stops on the universal circuit, he can count on the planet Earth to be the toughest gig. "They'll put a hole in you, you can drive a truck through," he warns, "and then they holler, if you can't take a joke, well . . . f . . . you". The slow, two-beat shuffle is a perfect match for a lyric that serves as reminder of man's propensity for cruel, harsh judgment. It's the kind of song that can only be written from first-hand experience and years on the road. But as Nietzsche's old saw says, "What doesn't kill you makes you strong," and on *One Tough Town*, David Olney is stronger than ever.

Olney's first taste of show biz success came in 1975 when he fronted the band the X-Rays and began performing in clubs around Nashville. By 1978 they were one of the hottest bands on Nashville's alternative music scene, winning a slot on *Austin City Limits*, opening for Elvis Costello & the Attractions, and landing a deal with Rounder Records under which they released *Contender* in 1981. Later Olney signed as a solo artist with the Rounder/Philo label, releasing six critically acclaimed albums by 1999, followed by *Omar's Blues* in 2000 on the Dead Reckoning label. In 2003 he signed with the Austin based Loud House Records and released *The Wheel*, followed by *Migration* in 2005. Olney's songs have been covered by numerous artists, including Emmylou Harris, Linda Ronstadt, Del McCoury, Lonnie Brooks and many others, winning him a worldwide reputation as one of the best songwriters in America.

In 2005 Olney teamed up with producer Jack Irwin and the two began recording in Jack's Nashville studio along with the amazing guitarist Sergio Webb. They called in some of Nashville's top guns and the resulting *One Tough Town* is one kick-ass record. Opening with two rockin' originals, the bluesy "Whistle Blow" followed by the Elvis Presley-inspired single "Sweet Poison," the album takes off immediately. Number three pulls back the tempo a bit with "Who's the Dummy Now?" a surreal, edgy song in which a ventriloquist gets a real-world education from his dummy. We're then brought into the dark desert night with "Little Mustang." "Postcard From Mexico" (co-written with John Hadley) is another example of bare-fisted storytelling in which the narrator is seduced into robbery only to be left behind and in jail by the woman he loves. All is not lost however, as David wraps up the record with his timeless love song "Rainbow's End."

So take a wild ride through *One Tough Town* with David Olney. You'll meet some characters, get pulled over by the cops, but most of all . . . you just might find that one true love.

According to late Olney friend and fan Townes Van Zandt, "Anytime anyone asks me who my favorite music writers are, I say Mozart, Lightnin' Hopkins, Bob Dylan and Dave Olney. Dave Olney is one of the best songwriters I've ever heard — and that's true. I mean that from my heart."