

After years of public interest in a greatest hits record, Blues Traveler decided to give the fans exactly what they wanted. The band went straight to the fans, taking a poll on what songs they wanted to see included on the record. The resulting track listing includes the band's major hits, along with more obscure fan favorites, but there is a twist... the songs take on a whole new life with completely new, mainly acoustic arrangements.

****Receive 4 live bonus tracks when you purchase the full album****

Blues Traveler: *Cover Yourself*

Song-By-Song w/ John Popper, Chan Kinchla and Ben Wilson

1. "But Anyway" (J Popper/ C Kinchla) – Originally appears on *Blues Traveler* (1990)

Chan: This is a song that was basically written by accident in high school. The main verse riff up was something I played just to check out how my amp sounded and the guys were like, "That sounds cool, what's that?" I played it again and changed up the chords a little bit and John wrote lyrics immediately, sitting right there. We were 17 years old and we've played it that exact way ever since. This time, we were thinking we should make it more of a rock song, as opposed to this kind of light jam-bandy thing. But when we took it to a rock groove, it really changed the melody a lot. It was a big moment for us when we finished this – it was proof we could rework the core of a song we'd been playing half our lives and feel good about it.

2. "Just For Me" w/ G. Love (J Popper/ G. Love) - Originally appears on *Bridge* (2001)

Chan: Originally it was meant to be slower than it was on *Bridge*. But we started thinking it sounded too much like "Brown Eyed Girl." So we sped it up for the album version. And that's how we've been playing it a long time. For an acoustic take we knew we needed to slow it back down. At first we went reggae with it, and then we decided to just go more funky. Enter G. Love and we've got it. With the squawks and honks, it's got that G Love and Special Sauce bluesy vibe. The song just kind of lent itself to his style.

3. "Defense and Desire" (J Popper) Originally appears on *Save His Soul* (1993)

Ben: Our biggest struggle. We started working on this first and originally we had an idea for a Medeski, Martin, and Wood vibe. But it's an off-time song... whatever signature it's in isn't 4/4. We spent our whole first rehearsal messing around with it and we left pretty dejected.

Chan: He's soft-selling it. We got in a big agro band fight. It's Day One and we're all thinking that perhaps this was a really, really fucking bad idea. But the next day it all fell in place.

John: What we wound up with is the closest this band has come to acoustic Metallica . This version's a bona fide rock 'n' roll dirge. I got to scream 'Little girl, what you doin' here?' And that's always a good question to scream at somebody. This is also a cool one for us because it's one the fans surprised us by picking. It's good to know people still love a song that never really had any radio life whatsoever and wasn't even geared to be a single. It's reaffirming. And because most people don't have huge expectations for it the way they might a better-known song, you can really just do whatever you want with it. That's reaffirming too.

4. "Hook" (J Popper) – Originally appears on *Four* (1994)

John: Paul Simon was the model for this version. I think when you're working with acoustics, it's kind of hard not to emulate Paul Simon a little bit. We listen to a little "Me and Julio Down By the Schoolyard." Rhythmically, I think there's a little "Cecilia" reference too. We wanted it to be a slower version, but half way through it picks up to almost the original tempo. And it's kind of a neat little trick. For me, the coolest part of this project was finding little ways to cheat and get your original melody into a different arrangement. It's sort of a game of cat and mouse that you know you gotta keep when it works.

5. "Mountains Win Again" (B Sheehan) – Originally appears on *Four*

Chan: That was a no-brainer. We just dropped it back, really laid back bluesy. It came immediately.

Ben: John's voice on that is just phenomenal. The more I hear this record, the more I'm impressed by John's vocals. I don't think he gets enough credit sometimes as a really gifted singer. I think when people hear this record, they're gonna be like "That guy knows exactly what he's doing."

John: On this one maybe not. The groove is so big I think Ben's just hearing me hangin' on for dear life

6. "100 Years" (J Popper) - Originally appears on *Blues Traveler*

John: It's hard to explain why, but having the drums start it this time gave me a chance to put on a little Springsteen-like spin to it. It's a little Jersey – part Bruce, part Eddie & The Cruisers.

Chan: This one's funny because the original version is mostly acoustic. For this, we actually turned it around and tried to make it a little more upbeat and funky. It's the one song that we didn't need to drop down to do. We just had to do something more like what we would have done on an electric song.

7. “Lost Me There” (J Popper/ C Kinchla) - Originally appears on *Bridge*

John: It’s a good jam, originally written by this line-up - the existing lineup. So, being able to rewrite yourself is kind of a fun idea. And because it’s all the same guys spinning a different take on the same song, it almost seems like a reprise.

Chan: To me, it’s kind of Blues Traveler does Coldplay. When we were working on it, Ben simplified the chords to this kind of arpeggiated piano sound and we all said, ‘Oh that’s cool, it’s kind of Coldplay’ Obviously for us to reach for Coldplay is a stretch. But trying was a lot of fun.

8. “Runaround” (J Popper) - Originally appears on *Four*

John: To understand how challenging it was to recut this, you have to consider the genesis of the original. And I have to give Mike Barbiero and Steve Thompson – who produced the original- a lot of credit for the song’s success. Originally “Runaround” was a really slow song. I’d written it for this girl, made her cry, and then we went and did it in rehearsal as a slow tune. It was Thompson and Barbiero that fought for a tempo that swung a little. When I go back and look at how many words are in the song and how packed together it is, it’s amazing that you’re not sick of the song by the end of it. The chords are basically “La Bamba,” maybe inverted somehow, or “Shake It Up Baby.” It’s typically three or four chords, and people have been doing them forever. And so you think it’s simple and then you go and you do it and you realize there’s a little B section, there’s a C section, then... you know, it’s not as simplistic as it looks. This time, it was hard to get away from that tempo.

Chan: Very tough. This is our signature song. And most nights, there’s only one way we can do it. So we just kept breaking it down until we had something drastically different, yet still a little bit familiar. When we brought in the horns we got kind of Motown thing happening. It reminds me a little of the Irish band in *The Commitments* – a little bit rock, a little bit Motown.

John: I was pushing for a lot of rock. We do this thing live we call “Fuck Run,” where we play “Runaround” to these alternative rock chords. It’s very goth. And we do that to fake the crowd out, but I think that probably would have been just as interesting of a direction as the Motown thing. Next time.

9. “NY Propesie” (J Popper/ C Kinchla) - Originally appears on *Save His Soul*

John: This is a song that my dad wrote the words to. He’s translating the words to one of his poems that he wrote in Hungarian when he was a kid. And I sort of paraphrased it and made it a song. This time we definitely had some concrete idea early on as to what to do with it. It’s kind of a Prince thing, and it has a really great pocket and the guys really liked the way my harp solo slipped in so easily. There’s also a lot of hand-claps.

Chan: When were we recording those hand claps, Ben whipped out his cock. We're waiting for the chorus to start the claps up again and the next thing you know we're clapping along to a vision of Ben's cock hanging out. We had these big really high definition room mics on and you can actually hear his zipper come down. And then you can hear Ben giggling and snorting. We've left it for posterity.

10. "Reach Me" (J Popper/ T Kinchla) – Originally appears on *Bridge*

Chan: This is a song we always felt like we didn't quite nail the first time around. We wanted to kind of try again. And this time I think the song is much more dynamic. Plus, we had our friend David Garza come in for a nice piece of melodic Spanish guitar. It wound up being just what the song needed.

John: David adds a little Miami flavor. His part is gorgeous. To me, the new arrangement swings, but I think it's always swung. Originally, I wrote that song when I was really, really stoned, and I wasn't sure whether it was gonna be a good song the next day because I always believe if you write something when you're high, check it out the next day and see if its good. And this one, it held up. And I used that as sort of a model of 'See you can write good songs when you're stoned!'

11. "Carolina Blues" (J Popper/ C Kinchla) – Originally appears on *Straight on Till Morning* (1997)

Ben: John was baked off his ass when we recorded this. The first version we cut was about ten minutes. And we said, 'Uh, guys, it's got to be a little bit shorter than that.'

Chan: It's just John and Charlie Sexton on this one. The idea was to just strip the tune down to an old foot-stomp blues song. And that they did indeed. It's old school and very kickass.

**The Cover Yourself FAQ:
w/ answers from John Popper, Chan Kinchla and Ben Wilson**

Why Cover Yourself? And why now?

Chan: I think it started when we noticed a lot of bands we liked doing this kind of thing online – as bonus EP's available for download only. I told the band, 'We should just put one of those up there.' And with the 20th Anniversary, it would be doubly cool to do. But in true Blues Traveler fashion, we realized that if we're going to do it, we might as well do it well- as opposed to just whipping it out in one day. And then it became, 'Why don't

we get the fans included to vote on what songs they'd like you to reinterpret?' What started out as something we would just do in one day while we were down songwriting for the next studio record turned into more and more of a bona fide project.

John: Chan's right. With this band, even the things that look like easy throw-away things to do, never turn out that way. Almost immediately these guys started coming up with completely different arrangements for everything. I can't tell you how very strange it is to be singing words that I've sung for twenty years to completely different melodies.

What did Blues Traveler learn playing the songs of Blues Traveler?

Chan: I think we learned probably more than any other project we could have done. It was really interesting to deconstruct each song, build them back up again, change the melody a little bit, change the chord structure a little bit, and change the arrangement. The big lesson is that there's so many different ways to approach a song. When you're writing songs, you think the song kind of writes itself and you just follow what naturally happens, but doing this you realize that you can give yourself permission to change that process. And that's really just the beginning. Then you can look at it more objectively and really start to take it apart and build it up in different ways. It's neat to know you have so many options.

John: I think the fact that we've played a lot of these songs for a really long time, we felt strong enough in them to change them. And I think part of that is because of our audience. I think we knew that they'd see this for what it was – an exercise and a challenge. And that they'd play along with that is cool. So I think what we walked away with was confidence – the confidence that if you make a song yours enough then you can really take it to a different place and people will still relate to it.