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# **Praise for Owen Temple and previous projects**

"Owen Temple takes on the job of Texas troubadour with grave intent... One has to admire Temple's focus on his craft, which he continues to burnish in smart and tuneful ways."

-Jim Caligiuri, Austin Chronicle

"Temple's songs are sophisticated and enlightening... He writes with a folksinger's eye, observing intimate, interior details of every day life, and painting big, mythological sketches..."

-Eli Messinger, Hyperbolium

"Owen Temple sings the truth. In the narrative folk tradition, the Austin-based singer-songwriter pens tunes that tell stories in plain-spoken yet persuasive fashion. His characters could be real, and many times they are. But there's no doubt that Temple is nourishing his muse with the realities of life around him... Musically, Temple keeps to his spacious merger of bluegrass, blues and folk."
-Mario Tarradell, *Dallas Morning News* 

# OWEN TEMPLE RINGS ON A TREE

*Rings on a Tree* is the ninth released album from Austin, Texas-based songwriter Owen Temple.

The new record is a concept album -- an examination of family history and the way every interaction we have reverberates for generations.

"It's clear that our lives are a distillation and expansion of the lives that have come before us," Temple said. "Every life, every interaction of matter and energy that happens, reverberates through the universe in an ever-expanding field. Waves of behavior that cause other waves of behavior, not just in one life, but in all our lives."

Recorded with producer **Gordy Quist**, the album has the feel of a live performance with stellar contributions from **Josh Flowers** on bass, **Geoff Queen** on pedal steel, and **Rick Richards** on drums (Ray Wylie Hubbard, Gurf Morlix). **Walt Wilkins** and **Kelley Mickwee** lend harmony vocals to the songs.

The project includes songs written by Temple and cowrites with Hal Ketchum, Walt Wilkins, Kelley Mickwee, George Ensle, Nathan Hamilton and Brandon Bolin.

# **FOCUS TRACKS:**

- 1. The Song of Us
- 2. Watch It Shine
- 10. Are We There Yet?
- 4. Beautiful Accidents
  - 6. Fork in the Road



# Owen Temple Takes a Long Look Forward and Back on His New Album 'Rings on A Tree'

# The Collection Investigates His Family History and The History of Humankind with His Usual Blend of Humor and Honesty

Owen Temple's new record, Rings on A Tree, is a concept album - an examination of family history and the way every interaction we have reverberates for generations.

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"Every life, every interaction of matter and energy that happens, reverberates through the universe in an everexpanding field. Waves of behavior that cause other waves of behavior, not just in one life, but in all our lives.

"During the Covid lockdown, I wasn't writing much on my own, but when a friend would call and say, 'Let's go to a park and write a song,' I'd always go. These meetups resulted in a reexamination of what's important in life. We wrote songs that looked at the intergenerational interactions that created a certain wisdom, insights that transcend our narrow view of the present."

As the songs accumulated, Temple saw them taking a spiritual, philosophical tone. "I was haunted by the ideas of our great-grandparents. Shadowy photos and mysterious documents from their eight lives give us clues about how these people have major consequence on our lives, even if we don't understand exactly how. If you trace the branches of any family tree back far enough, you can see we're all connected. That inspired the song 'Rings on a Tree' and the entire album."

Temple organized the songs into three five song sets: Big Bang, Pantheon and Tree of Life. "Part 1 - Big Bang is about beginnings, investigating the consciousness we all share. Before any stories are made, there is I AM, my ancestors and yours, the beginning of knowledge, the awareness of being a finite, mortal human. The perspectives on 'Days,' 'Watch It Shine,' and 'Beautiful Accidents' are all perspectives of squinting to see where we first appear on the historical map of space and time. 'Always Becoming' acknowledges the forward motion and the constants of change, growth, and evolution.

"Part 2 - Pantheon contains songs about connecting with our ancestors and our lineage. 'Fork in the Road' is about the path not taken and the continual choice of our next steps. 'Can't Stop Won't Stop' and 'Virginia and Hazel' are songs about great-grandparents and the concerns and experiences they had when they were young people that then had consequences for us, their descendants, in our lifetimes. 'Are We There Yet' is about the intergenerational car trips in all of our lives - the older people in front, the younger people in the back, wondering where we're going. 'Churches and Cantinas' is anthropological, studying the impulse toward redemption that those two institutions (represented by two people in the story) seek each in their own way.

"Part 3 - Tree of Life presents the connection to nature that is the core of our lineage. 'Wild Seeds' and 'Rings on a Tree' are about the struggle to survive and thrive that we share in common with all life; 'Gentle James' is about an ancestor who was a farmer and the people he influenced, despite being a shy man, uncomfortable with others. 'More Like September' is a love song both to fall and to a love that abides between extremes. 'Twenty Years' ties everything up with a fantasy of meeting with your future self to receive some spiritual guidance."

Temple enlisted the help of producer Gordy Quist to bring the songs to life. "Gordy's been a songwriting collaborator for a long time. He took over The Finishing School, the revered studio of George Reiff (Band of Heathens, Ray Wylie Hubbard). I love his sonic aesthetic. We took the time to pause, after we played it through for the musicians in the studio, and ask, 'Is there anything we can do to make it more interesting?' He approached the arranging in a way that was both comfortable and challenging."

Temple and Quist played guitar and Temple's long time rhythm section – Josh Flowers on bass and drummer Rick Richards – laid down the foundation. Other players included Trevor Nealon from Band of Heathens on organ and piano, Geoff Queen on pedal steel, Dobro and guitar and invited guests adding vocal harmonies and fiddle.

The album opens with "The Song of Us," a mid-tempo country tune, celebrating a world that's changing fast, but fundamentally stays the same. Baritone guitar and pedal steel bubble beneath Temple's vocal, as he delivers a mellow benediction uniting earth and the cosmos through the breath of a single human. "If Thich Naht Hahn and Frank Sinatra wrote a song together, would it sound like this?"

Long sustained notes from Geoff Queen's pedal steel gives "Watch It Shine" a celestial aura. Temple celebrates the light within and the light that surrounds us – the shimmering of the sun, moon and stars. They're all reflected in the harmonies of the chorus. "Beautiful Accidents" describes the magical moments in life that are often overlooked until years later. Temple and Kelley Mickwee (the song's co-writer) sketch out a family's history, from first kiss to marriage and family. Acoustic mandolin and Nealon's smooth electric piano give the music a nostalgic ambience.

"Fork in the Road" is an up-tempo rocker, with a hint of R&B in its swirling organ, crunchy electric guitar and cool backbeat. The uplifting harmonies of the chorus remind us that every moment changes our lives in profound, if unrecognized ways. "Are We There Yet?" is a bluesy country tune with twanging guitars, sticks on the snare and piano keys clicking like highway mile markers on a long summer road trip. The chorus suggests a '50s rock'n'roll hit playing on a radio.

The music on the album flows smoothly, highlighting the journeys of individuals, families and humanity as a whole. "It's the arc of a hero's journey that Joseph Campbell identified," Temple said. "The idea of venturing out of your ordered life to have experiences that will change you for the better. The songs are artifacts from the paths we've walked, as individuals and part of humanity. The hope is they'll forge a connection to the past that will help us make wiser choices in the present."

Produced by Gordy Quist Engineered & Mixed by Steve Christensen Recorded at The Finishing School, Austin, Texas Mastered by Chris Longwood

# The Players

**Owen Temple** – Vocals, Acoustic Guitar, Harmonica

**Gordy Quist** – Harmony Vocals, Electric Guitar, Acoustic Guitar, Bass

Josh Flowers - Bass

Rick Richards - Drums, Percussion

**Geoff Queen** – Pedal Steel Guitar, Dobro, Electric Guitar

Trevor Nealon - Piano, Organ

Noah Jeffries – Fiddle, Mandolin

Walt Wilkins - Harmony Vocals

Kelley Mickwee - Harmony Vocals

Tina Wilkins - Harmony Vocals

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# Rings on a Tree

# Side 1: Big Bang

The Song of Us Watch It Shine Days Beautiful Accidents Always Becoming

#### Side 2: Pantheon

Fork in the Road Can't Stop Won't Stop Virginia and Hazel Churches and Cantinas Are We There Yet

#### Side 3: Tree of Life

Wild Seeds Rings on a Tree More Like September Gentle James Twenty Years

# The Song of Us

When the noise is a bit too much There's a way to stay in touch Drop the layers of distraction Fall into the main attraction

You're the message You're the sender You're the blessing and the receiver

> The song of us is in the waves always on both night and day breathing in, breathing slow It's the I Am Radio

Galaxies with open arms Records spin on a disc of stars that's Flashing with the frequency Signals home to you and me

Earth the station, life broadcasting Chord progression everlasting Groove so deep in rocks and bones Spirits singing from the stones

The song of us is in the waves always on both night and day breathing in, breathing slow It's the I Am Radio the dance is long, the lights are low It's the I Am Radio

Touch a tree, touch the earth Feel beyond our death and birth To rivers, oceans, clouds and rain To tears of joy beneath the pain

Loving stillness radiates Warm glow, a soft embrace That's everlasting, ever true Connecting all to me and you

The song of us is in the waves always on both night and day breathing in, breathing slow It's the I Am Radio the dance is long, the lights are low It's the I Am Radio

#### Watch It Shine

I am one more pilgrim on this road low and high Through this land of miracles I've been traveling all night

I tangled with the darkness
I swear at moments I was blind
Til the dawn came up around me
And I could see the way unwind

I am the road behind me
I am the road ahead
Lifted by this rocky ridge
Cradled by the river bed
A harmony of motion
Through the wide expanse of time
Sunlight through the heavens
Watch it shine
Watch it shine

They say there's iron in these mountains In bone and skin and mud They say iron can only come from stars So stars are in my blood

Red and blue and purple Shadows grow then fade Spread in all directions From where it all was made

I am the road behind me
I am the road ahead
Lifted by this rocky ridge
Cradled by the river bed
A harmony of motion
Through the wide expanse of time
Sunlight through the heavens
Watch it shine
Watch it shine

# Days

A place to start and a place to go A mind, a heart, and an open road It all can go a million ways Highs and lows - days

A fire at home and work to do Some hard seasons to get through Some fly like arrows, some feel like a maze A path wide and narrow - days

Sunrise, sunset What's behind and what's not yet The chance to ride the light before it fades And they're all gifts - days

You turn around, you grow and change Everything around you will do the same Cause life moves in circles and it moves in waves Blessedly simple, you get days

Sunrise, sunset What's behind and what's not yet A chance to ride the light before it fades They're all gifts - days The chance to ride the light before it fades They're all gifts - days They're all gifts - days

#### **Beautiful Accidents**

He had the smell of tobacco smoke on his clothes
Didn't look a day over seventeen years old
She had the smell of magnolia on her hair And a southern drawl that stretched from here to there
They didn't know what they were doing, but they knew it felt good
Turned out they didn't care about the why or should
He took her to the movies, she took his name
They moved to Texarkana when the baby came

Left turns and right turns get us here All the beautiful accidents over the years Look good on you They look good on you They look good on you

Right on the line, you grew up like a weed Swimming in the Red River all elbows and knees Ten years later and a few states away My first job got me down the interstate

I stopped into a place,
I didn't know what for
Hands in my pockets,
both feet on the floor
I was headed for the door,
sick of standing around
Somehow I saw you so I cut through
the crowd

Left turns and right turns get us here All the beautiful accidents over the years Look good on you They look good on you They look good on you

And when you said I do
I said I do too
Beautiful accidents
Beautiful accidents
Beautiful accidents
Look good on you
They look good on you
They look good on you
So good on you

# **Always Becoming**

Always becoming
Rolling and running
We're to and from-ing and round
back again
Grinding and grooving
Everything's moving
Always becoming not just what
we've been

Just at the threshold
With the thinnest of toeholds
Mining for fool's gold, shining for you
Rocking and reeling
Just barely dealing
Still always becoming searching
for true

Hearts, eyes, and wings Were gradual things Every spring brings something new Bright green leaves Grow to branches of trees Always becoming is all you can do

Good times and bad times
Ringing like wind chimes
These are the stories we tell late
at night
While the campfire is burning
Slow stubborn learning

# Always becoming a part of the light

Hearts, eyes, and wings
Were gradual things
Every spring brings something new
Eternally guessing
Knowing and yessing
Always becoming
- that's what we do

Always becoming
Rolling and running
We're to and from-ing and round
back again
Grinding and grooving
Everything's moving
Always becoming not just what

#### Fork in the Road

There never was a greater man than the one that just died
All his flaws and failings get swept to the side
Oh the tender mercy of a bad memory
That let's us forget what we don't want to see

In the garden of Eden, God made a mistake He shoulda said to Adam, don't eat that snake Now you read in the news all that's wrong with the world Pay a dollar to the boys, seventy cents to the girls

#### CHORUS:

People gonna do what they gonna to do till they don't Sometimes folks will let you down, most times they won't You might get hot or left in the cold Every single moment

You don't miss a lover that you've never met

It's easy to quit smoking unless you smoke cigarettes

Thousands of people that you've never known

Are walking down roads that cross over your own

I got a half a mind to leave, half a mind to stay Go on flip a coin, let chance choose the way Maybe I can love you best, by not loving you at all When you phone doesn't ring it's me

## who didn't call

#### **CHORUS**

If you're so rich,
how come you ain't smart
You've got a fast horse
but no wheels on your cart
I've been in the woodshed,
I've been through basic training
Don't piss on my leg
and tell me it's raining

All your addictions tap on your shoulder
Getting your attention, pulling you over I got a head full of pictures of places I've seen
I'm a creature of habit,
I need new routine

#### **CHORUS**

Some folks say "this life ain't enough I deserve more than the days I used up It's got to go on forever to be worth the trouble" Given one gift their demands more than double

One hour of life is more than I expected But somehow I'm here cause many

lovers connected
Matter, life, mind, culture grow
like a tree
The universe keeps going through
you and me

#### **CHORUS**

#### Can't Stop, Won't Stop

A roadster driving down a railroad track
Only one damn fool crazy enough
to do that
Yeah that's T.L. laying on the horn
Laughing at the squares since the
days he's born

There's a girl jumping fences on a pony bareback
She borrowed from the circus never gave it back
Daddy buys what she wants, she gets her way
When her daddy say whoa, he gonna hear her say

#### CHORUS:

Can't stop, won't stop You slow down You've been hearing her name all over town Can't stop, won't stop, that's for sure Somebody else will have to mind the store

He's got a brass nameplate on his door He's got a one and some zeros, six or more But banks and debits and credits and such

Nah, interest didn't interest him too much

The girl's walking with her folks on a downtown street His dad said, "that's the kind a girl you ought to meet" So he drove to her house and

brought his violin
Played Schubert's Serenade to reel her in

#### **CHORUS**

There's a baseball game between rival towns
Ours is full of pro ringers from all around They were hired by T.L. with the payroll cash
With odds of ten to one, he paid it back

There's a boy in St. Louis, her fiancé "Ah forget that guy," she heard T.L. say "Let's run off to Texas get married tonight" The news was rockin St Louis by the morning light

#### **CHORUS**

She got so tired before the baby came But saloons and casinos still called his name

Now he was jumping fences, riding bareback

When she called from home he just hollered back

#### **CHORUS**

Now she's divorced and remarried out in L.A.

The last she heard he's down Mexico way

In her head, when a violin plays He's smiling in a roadster and she hears him say

# **CHORUS**

## Virginia and Hazel

Virginia Kelley played the phonograph, it was Mamie's Crazy Blues

"Getting all dolled up," she said,
"my gams look good in these shoes"
A car pulled up and honked,
it was a breezer '24
She laid a kiss on her daddy's cheek,
scrammed on out the door
It was Hazel in the hayburner and she
pulled out the hooch
"Whattaya think, new Chaplin? Or the

juice joint on the loop?"

Oh. Virainia!

"To the gin mill!" cried Virginia.
Hazel said, "you're on the trolley now"
And they'll spend the next 4 decades
living this night down
The girls turned every head in the
speakeasy saloon
"She's the berries, she's a bearcat"
were the whispers in the room
Most were hard boileds and hoodlums
but two Jakes pulled up two chairs
They bought a couple rounds together,
then they all headed out the stairs
Oh, Virginia!

They peeled out of the parking lot in a '28 Model A and they parked down by the river, it was a struggle buggy you might say Cause both pairs were neck and neck when a knock came on the door A strange man pulled a shiv and said "Get down on the floor"
He said "Get out of the car, give me all of your jack
If you do just what I say, ya'll might live to walk on back"
Oh, Virginia!

The stranger stole the Model A, they had to ankle back to town
The sheriff pinched the pickled crew for walking drunk around
Virginia called her mom,
Hazel called her dad
Forty dollars bail was set,
things were looking bad
She never forgot her father's face
when he saw her through the bars
They didn't speak a word on the
ride home in the car
No, Virginia!

The light of Sunday morning showed the shame on Virginia's face at the Mineral Wells Baptist Church where she sang Amazing Grace That was Granny in the twenties, now she's pearls and powder blue Secretary at the Baptist church and that's Hazel in the pew That was Granny in the twenties, now she's pearls and powder blue

Secretary at the Baptist church and that's Hazel in the pew Oh, Virginia!

#### **Churches and Cantinas**

She said a prayer to the virgin, crossed herself and sighed Blew out a single candle, she held her loneliness inside One early April morning, so tired of being alone While walking through the market, she saw a man who worked in stone Churches and cantinas

He was chiseled from the finest flesh she had ever seen
She longed to lay down in his arms with no prayer in between
At the church upon the scaffolds, he carves the hours away
She walks by and looks to heaven a dozen times a day
He builds churches and cantinas
He builds churches and cantinas

He pretends he doesn't see her, he guesses for her it's just a game But he'd give this whole cathedral just to hear her speak his name Later on at the cantina in a crowd but all alone While she's praying to the virgin, he's just praying for a home He builds churches and cantinas He builds churches and cantinas

Gather your granite, sharpen your tools You may know your craft, but God knows the rules He builds churches and cantinas not so far apart Both offer some redemption and soothe a lonely heart Churches and cantinas Churches and cantinas

#### Are We There Yet?

Sitting in the back seat, Roy on the radio Antique roadtrip, 120 miles to go Quanah Texas Panhandle Saturday night Motel 6 parking lot, they left on the light

You're twelve years old, all summer long in a car with your parents, singing old songs Windows barely cracked, daddy's cigarette burning You're reading paperbacks in a used suburban

CHORUS:

Are we there yet? Are we there yet? Are we there yet? All summer long

Blue lit swimming pool end of the day Pretty girl with her folks looking your way Game room with Pac Man, Donkey Kong too Pocket full of quarters and Bia League Chew

Big green sign says it's still a long way 100 miles from Dallas at the end of the day Passed up the Dairy Queen twenty miles ago It was on the wrong side so your Daddy said no

**CHORUS** 

Thirty years later down the same old roads It's crazy how fast these kids have grown Now you're the driver you don't cut 'em any slack You're trying to do it over while they're yelling from the back

**CHORUS** 

#### Wild Seeds

Parking lot poured out flat and gray Crack in the middle showed up one day Dirt and the rain had just enough room One week later a flower bloomed From a wild seed on the wind Found a way to grow again

We don't know where we're from Where to aim, what to become Drift and spin and settle down 'Til the next strong wind comes around A wild seed on the wind Trying to find a home again

Well you fall someplace hard and tough Put some roots down, start looking up Grow something beautiful, try to bloom Cause a strong wind will be blowing soon

We're all wild seeds on the wind Find a way to go and then Fly and land and grow again
'Til you find you're home again
We're wild seeds on the wind
We're all wild seeds on the wind
We're all wild seeds on the wind

# Rings on a Tree

The cottonwood taught me how to listen to the wind
The willow showed me how to bend
The mighty oak showed me how to stand strong in a storm
And all that can become of an acorn

The cypress tree taught me how to hold on through a flood
Keep my roots deep and I won't budge
The pine tree taught me how to reach for the sky
And the cedar showed how to lay low and get by when its dry

How I've grown, who I've come to be These lessons learned, my history Reads like the rings on a tree

Mother Nature's been my teacher all along The rosewood on this guitar wrote this song And the sweet magnolia brought me love on a southern summer breeze And the giant redwood brought me to my knees

How I've grown, who I've come to be Lessons learned, my history Reads like the rings on a tree

And I've learned what's lost in the fall brings new beginnings in the spring and one more ring

How I've grown, who I've come to be These lessons learned, my history Reads like the rings on a tree Feels like rings on a tree

# More Like September

Spring is all show biz, goes off like a riot A season of passion that just won't be quiet

A chaos of color, flowers, and weeds All the poets rave on and on about spring

And summer's a trail by fire, by furnace Test of your faith and of dogged endurance Sweat and black pavement and sunburned skin Somehow we made it through August again

To a bouquet of pencils, sharpened and yellow
The first autumn leaves
falling from high
A breath of cool air,
there on your pillow
From a window that's finally
opened up wide
May all of these things
help you remember
That I love you more,
more like September

And winter's a bore, slow and cold Nights are too long with too many clothes A still life picture all white and grey Stuck locked inside, not like today

A bouquet of pencils, sharpened and yellow Red and orange leaves falling from high A breath of cool air, there on your pillow From a window that's finally opened up wide May all of these things help you remember

That I love you more, more like September Yeah I love you more, more like September

#### **Gentle James**

Hours before the dawn,
James opened up his eyes
Cotton bursting from the soil from the
moment he would rise
Apple trees dropped their fruit and
bowed before his gaze
Harvesting and growing crops was
how he spent his days
Gentle James

His wife Ada hugged him close and so she bore a child For each hour of the daylight, eight kids were running wild They were angels, they were devils, they worked kitchens and in fields Abundance and fertility his progeny would yield Gentle James

#### CHORUS:

If you praise his name, "big deal" he'll say He'll give the credit all away Humility, fertility will multiply and grow Sprouts spring up from his footsteps everywhere he'd go

Green thumb? He had green everything, that's how his bounty grew All his neighbors saw his barns full so that's how they knew Lord knows it wasn't bragging 'cause James barely spoke a word Who knows how the grand prize judge at the county expo heard Of Gentle James

So when his name was in the papers, his voice grew softer that day Now he spoke like a summer breeze, "aw shucks" is all he'd say He'd wave his hand, deflect the praise and reflect the Texas sun's rays Gentle James

#### **CHORUS**

The more famous that he got, the more soft spoken he would be "I don't like folks' attention" so he'd stand still as a tree
The kids grew up and had more kids - cousins, brothers, sisters
Clouds of children turned and swirled

like tornado alley twisters Around Gentle James

You can call him father, you can call him old grandpa
Newspaper called him patriarch that was the final straw
The doctor called it cancer, cells grew so fast they hurt
James walked into a wheatfield and laid down in the dirt
Gentle James

## **CHORUS**

Into the fertile land that fruitful man had gone to seed Humble happiness he harvested with hardly any weeds Patient cultivation if a husband you would be And keep your arms spread out wide like branches of a tree Like Gentle James

#### CHORUS

Gentle James

# **Twenty Years**

If yourself in twenty years was sitting with you here what would she say? Would she tell you not to worry, that there's no need to hurry the direction you were going anyway

With her hand on your shoulder, gentle touch of growing older would you ask her how a couple chapters end?
Knowing you she wouldn't tell and you know its just as well 'cause the fun is finding out along the way

But I bet she'd understand if you reached out for her hand and asked for just a hint of what's to come
She'd say your fears are overrated and what you have created will lead you to a sunny porch with friends

Now you might be waiting on specific situations and the chance to talk with her won't come again
So you ask of love and riches and

question your decisions of divorces and the choices that you made

She will smile and softly say that all along the way you follow the hunches, though it's strange
You'll do things you like to do for folks that care for you though exactly who and where and when will change

Yes there's only love and fear though it all becomes more clear as you see the past and future slowly bend
Your fears are overrated and what you have created
will get you to a sunny porch with friends

on your mind and you wonder what you would say to you
The future might reveal if you trust in what you feel that was all you really ever had to do The future might reveal if you trust in what you feel that was all you really ever had to do

So if you ever you find your future self