

Uncle Tupelo - Bio

Circa 1986 in Belleville, Illinois, Jeff Tweedy [born August 25th 1967, Belleville], Mike Heidorn [born May 28th 1967, Belleville] and Jay Farrar [born December 26th 1966, Belleville] formed a trio they called Uncle Tupelo. Farrar and Tweedy had been pals since their freshman year in high school, the common bond - a love of punk rock. Tweedy's father worked on the railroad, while his mother was a kitchen designer. The upshot of Tweedy's total addiction to music became a record store *day job*, along with the occasional writing of an article for music fanzines. Privately, Jeff had been perfecting his career as a closet guitarist and songwriter. One of Tweedy's earliest articles was an interview with Minneapolis band, Soul Asylum. Prior to mutating into Uncle Tupelo, Farrar had fronted The Primitives, which featured Tweedy [bass], Mike Heidorn [drums] and Jay's brother Wade on vocals. When Wade enlisted in the army, Uncle Tupelo became a reality.

Uncle Tupelo's debut disc was recorded in that Stateside *folk music haven*, Cambridge, Mass. during January 1990 at the original location of the Fort Apache South Studios. Produced by Paul Kolderie and Sean Slade, the resulting country-punk driven "**No Depression**," was released by the independent New York based label, Rockville Records. Eleven of the thirteen compositions were credited to Jay Farrar, Jeff Tweedy and Mike Heidorn, the exceptions being Huddie Ledbetter's "John Hardy" and the album title cut. That latter song was penned nearly three-quarters of a century ago, by the legendary A.P. Carter, his wife Sarah and sister-in-law Maybelle. *Investigation and inspiration* was the hallmark of this new breed of roots music influenced musicians.

Recorded during the summer of the following year, partly at Longview Farm, North Brookfield, Mass. with the residue of the sessions taking place at Apache, "**Still Feel Gone**" was the title of Uncle Tupelo's thirteen track, second Rockville release. All the songs were credited as band compositions, while Gary Louris [of the *musically like minded* Minneapolis band, The Jayhawks] helped out on guitar and vocals. Five days in March 1992 proved to be a pivotal period in the band's career. Peter Buck of R.E.M. had agreed to produce their third album and it was cut at John Keane's Studios in Buck's hometown, Athens, Georgia. Titled "**March 16 - 20, 1992**" it was their final Rockville recording. Their previous punk music leanings had given way to a *loose* country roots sound. Featuring eight Tweedy/Farrar collaborations, the set was completed by the Louvin Brothers "Atomic Power" and half a dozen traditional numbers that included "Moonshiner," "Coalminers" and "Satan, Your Kingdom Must Come Down."

Signed to the Warner's subsidiary Sire Records, the final Uncle Tupelo album was recorded in Austin, Texas at Cedar Creek Studios during May and June 1993. Titled "**Anodyne**" it surfaced toward the close of that year. Ken Coomer had replaced Mike Heidorn on drums soon after "**March 16 - 20, 1992**" was recorded. In addition, fiddle and lap steel picker Max Johnson and bassist John Stirratt joined the band for the recording of "**Anodyne**." For those among the readership with a penchant for minutia, Texan Johnson is the brother of protest songstress, Michelle Shocked. Apart from Doug Sahm's "Give Back The Key To My Heart" the remaining cuts on this Brian Paulson production were credited as Tweedy/Farrar collaborations. In truth, Farrar and Tweedy had been composing songs separately for a considerable time. Their sharing of the writing credits was merely a contractual formality. Further supporting the roots driven musical direction adopted during their Athens, Georgia sojourn, Lloyd Maines and the late Doug Sahm were guests on the "**Anodyne**" sessions. A few months later, Stateside, the band bid farewell as a recording unit with the six-track EP "**The Long Cut**." The title song drawn from their Austin album, was augmented by a handful of tunes taken from the band's October 15 1993 show at the Vic Theatre in Chicago. The EP liner credits Susan Miller, manager of local venue the Lounge Ax, as one of the concert promoters. These days, Susan is Mrs. Jeff Tweedy. Halfway through their U.S. tour in support of "**Anodyne**," Jay Farrar announced that he was leaving the band. Issued in 1994, Volume 7 of "**The Best of Mountain Stage**" compilation series featured a performance by Uncle Tupelo of "Moonshiner." The retrospective recording "**89/93 : An Anthology**" appeared in the spring of 2002.

Discography : "**No Depression**" [1990] ; "**Still Feel Gone**" [1991] ; "**March 16 - 20, 1992**" [1992] ; "**Anodyne**" [1993] ; "**89/93 : An Anthology**" [2002].

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