

## Part 1 - Making The Album

This is the second consecutive album that Garry West has produced. Was he the only/obvious choice to produce “**Great Big World**” or did you consider other producers.

You cut this album at The Parlor Studio in Nashville. Tell us about the studio – is it a new set-up, is it a large studio. Last time around you recorded at Jack Clement’s old studio, The Sound Emporium.

You, Alison Brown, Gary West and Stuart Duncan played on “**State Of Grace**” and on this album. Were the other musicians who contributed to “**Great Big World**” friends of Garry’s or folks you knew. Discuss the contribution particular players made to the album or to particular tracks.

How long did the “**Great Big World**” sessions last - days/weeks. Were a lot of the songs cut *live*, or did you use *overdubs*. Were you present throughout all the sessions.

Do you want to comment on Garry West’s contribution to this album as a musician and producer.

Last time around the album cover artist was Howard Finster, tell us about Terry Cannon and his paintings. Where did you first see Cannon’s work.

Liner Credits – comments on – Dr. Ronnie Payne; Ralston Bowles “Carwreck Conversations” – led with a Mark Heard song; have Apple Computers been in touch yet; Freyda Epstein

This is your fourth Compass Records album. Does your contract involve recording more albums for the label.

What’s your own personal summation of this, your eighth solo album.

## Part 2 - The Songs [all composed by Pierce Pettis unless indicated otherwise]

Were all the songs on “**Great Big World**” written after you recorded and released “**State of Grace.**”

“Another Day In Limbo” Mark Heard – your 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive lead with a Mark Heard song. Why did you pick this particular song.

“Alabama 1959” – How long did it take you to write this song. Because of the memories that it obviously brought back was it a hard song to write and retain focus. I’m guessing here that based on the movies, the song could have been much longer.

“Great Big World” David Wilcox/Pierce Pettis – How long have you known Wilcox. Tell us about writing this song.

“Rodeo Around The World” - Dana Cooper/Pierce Pettis. How and when did you meet Dana Cooper. Tell us about writing this song with him. Tell us about Pat & Vickie Murphy who are mentioned in a liner credit

“Black Sheep Boy” - What does George think of his song.

“Cracker Jack Ring” – Where did the idea for this song come from.

“Leonardo” - Had you read Dan Brown’s “**The Da Vinci Code**” before you wrote this song, or is their appearance in the public domain coincidental. Have you ever seen the Mona Lisa and The Last Supper [the latter hangs in Santa Maria Della Grazia, Our Lady of Grace, in Milan]. Did the lyric of this song involve you undertaking a lot of research. If yes, what else did you discover about Da Vinci and Machiavelli.

"Shady Grove" Lee Ann Brown/Pierce Pettis - Is your collaborator Lee Ann Brown, the poet [founder and editor of Tender Buttons Press]. Tell us how you met her and about collaborating on this arrangement of a traditional song.

"Anybody's Girl" Claire Lynch/Fabrizio Casalino/Pierce Pettis – How did the writing of this song come about, since I understand Casalino is Italian. You've written songs with Lynch before, but tell us about Claire and Fabrizio. Tell us about Fred Folsom's risqué Shepherd Park GoGo Club paintings.

"You're Gonna Need This Memory" Irene Kelley/Pierce Pettis – How did you meet Irene Kelley.

"Love Will Find You Again" Lindy Robbins/Pierce Pettis – Tell us about Lindy Robbins

"Song Of Songs" – Ref. this song, and my Folkwax album review comment "Song of Songs is a *celebration of love as God intended it to be experienced between a man and a woman*," and then I added "Pettis' lyric is a sensual honouring of this vital human emotion." Tell us about writing this song.

Your song publishing company is called Slapfight Songs. Tell us how you came up with that name.

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Pierce Pettis "**Great Big World**" Compass Records

After all these years it's a case of which Mark Heard song will it be, rather than, will Pierce lead off his next album with one of Mark's songs? In the case of "**Great Big World**" it is "Another Day In Limbo," an energetic and upbeat number concerning "*angels with dirty faces*," a *white/black* [or *saint/sinner*] condition that's subjectively explored within many of this album's cuts. The song first appeared on Heard's 1992 album "**Satellite Sky**." Heard had produced Pettis' 1991 Windham Hill album "**Tinseltown**," and his friend passed during August the following year. This is Pierce's fifth album since "**Tinseltown**," and the second in a row to be produced by Garry West, co-owner of the Compass label with his wife [and fellow musician], Alison Brown.

The remaining eleven cuts on "**Great Big World**" bear the imprint of Pettis' hand as author. Five songs being penned by him alone, and his collaborators on the remainder include fellow singer/songwriters David Wilcox, Dana Cooper, Irene Kelley and Claire Lynch. The second cut "Alabama 1959" is a wonderfully detailed observation of "*the way things were*," that finds Pierce shedding a tear while viewing some old and faded, family home movies. Aged five way back in 1959, in the second verse Pettis airs the personal, "*Daddy had hair, Mom was thin, Look at the silly clothes they wore back then*," and elsewhere references *chicken wire floats, marching bands, waving prom queens, TVA power lines, Pepsident, Lucky Strikes and b&w television*. While those youthful days "*just blew away like dandelions*," in the penultimate verse Pettis captures the nature of the times [for some citizens] in America's deep south with "*Don't use that word, my mother said, It isn't Christian, Call them coloured folks instead*."

"Great Big World" co-written with David Wilcox, is by way of a child's lullaby, and features backing vocals from Wilcox and his wife, Nance Pettit. Pierce has a young son, Owen – they're featured on the back cover of the CD liner booklet. *Hey Pierce, is that a Kelty baby carrier?* As for the song lyric, it's a fond parental deliberation about tucking tiny tots into bed, finding their favourite bear, and relating a story that's filled with drama but ultimately gives the tot the reassurance that all is well. The late Tim Hardin penned a song of the same name, but "Black Sheep Boy" on this collection is all Pierce's own work. In the liner booklet, below the song title, there's the simple dedication *For George*. The song is a beautiful and loving portrait, painted by a father, for a son who happens to be going through that awkward, gawky stage in life where there's "*mischievous in his eyes*," but no black, intentional malice in his heart. Indicative of the depth of love he feels for this noisy, boisterous adolescent, Pettis subtly employs, in the closing verse, the timeless image, "*I'm startled by the silence, The minute that he's gone, And I pray for his protection, I leave the porch light on*." Remaining with the subject of family [and friends], our human penchant for collecting souvenirs - be they memories, photographs, or something more tangible, like a baby's first shoes - is explored in the Irene Kelley co-write "You're Gonna Need This Memory."

"Leonardo" is a timely tune, particularly in the light of Dan Brown's 2003 best selling novel, "**The Da Vinci Code**." In the opening verse Pettis describes the famous painter's persona, public - *he talked incessantly about his ideas*, as well as the private – *to protect his work, Leonardo wrote everything*

*backwards*. Machiavelli, *“the calculating prince,”* a friend and fifteenth century contemporary appears in the second verse, followed by, in verse three, mention of DaVinci’s most famous painting “Mona Lisa,” and in the verse following, “The Last Supper.” Elsewhere, in relation to one of the most enigmatic men to be recorded in the pages of history, Pettis alludes to DaVinci’s contemplations on submarines and man’s dream of flight. Co-penned with Lee Ann Brown, “Shady Grove” is based on the traditional song of the same name, and while a love song, in this arrangement there’s emphasis upon the natural world – *a red fox, a blackbird drinking in the watergrass and columbine flowers.*

“Cracker Jack Ring” is one of a number of love songs on **“Great Big World”** and as the tale unfolds, for the sake of love, the narrator sells his red Tran Am in order to buy his sweetheart a diamond – *“24 karats, you know, Set in a band of fine, white gold.”* Furthermore, having proposed in a very public place, the narrator reflects *“I took you by surprise, Baby, didn’t I”* and referring to the magnitude of his investment, a number of times, repeats the mantra, *“That ain’t no Cracker Jack ring.”* “Anybody’s Girl,” co-written with Claire Lynch and Italian Fabrizio Casolino, cross-references “Leonardo” with the lines *“Raphael could have etched her features, Leonardo as well, She’s got a smile like the Mona Lisa, Like there’s some secret she can’t tell.”* In truth it’s a tale of unrequited love [for a stripper], as the narrator [*I sing my soul from a stool in the corner*] places himself inside one of Fred Folsom’s risqué Shepherd Park GoGo Club paintings. Contemplating Botticelli, Pettis describes this woman’s *purity* with *“She stands before me like Venus on the half-shell,”* and at the close of the song sprinkles some fairy dust - *“Now we all turn back into pumpkins, And she’s already out the door”* - over her beguiled audience. Co-authored with Dana Cooper “Rodeo Around The World” is a love song about a feisty couple, while “Love Will Find You Again” is a tale of lost love co-written with Lindy Robbins, in which the narrator reassures his friend that *“Love will find you again.”*

Like “Black Sheep Boy,” in the CD liner booklet, the closing cut, “Song of Songs” bears a simple dedication [to Pierce’s wife], *For Michele*. This song could equally fall into the category of, a *family* or *love song*. In a Biblical context, “Song of Songs” aka “Song Of Solomon,” has been interpreted as *“a celebration of love as God intended it to be experienced between a man and a women.”* It has also been judged, *“a collection of love poems.”* Pettis’ lyric is a sensual honouring of this vital human emotion.

All the way from *limbo* to *love*, Pettis’ **“Great Big World”** is blessed with a wealth of vision and experience, as well as possessing a worldly-wise approach as to how we can confront *the path*, as we stumble through this earthbound journey.