This Week in History:

This land was made for you and me

by Isabella Kulawik | ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR | SHE/HER/HERS | imk24001@uconn.edu

I was around the age of five when I first heard this song:

"This land is your land, this land is my land

From California to the New York island,

From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters;

This land was made for you and me."

It was mystifying. I had never listened to lyrics that had felt so intrinsically right. Even at a very young age, the lyrics resonated with me, creating a sense of pride for my country in a way that I had yet to fully understand. On Feb. 23, 1940, Woody Guthrie wrote the timeless folk song "This Land is Your Land," with lyrics that people in this country today may have forgotten the true meaning of.



Woody Guthrie, the man who created 'This Land is Your Land." Guthrie grew up around music in a small town. PHOTO COURTESY OF IMDB

Guthrie was introduced to music at a young age, with his childhood being rather carefree. His father was a small-town politician and businessman in rural Oklahoma and, before the Great Depression, quite prosperous. Things took a turn for the Guthrie family when the stock market crash left the business in shambles, and his mother died of a mysterious illness.

With his family split apart, Guthrie eventually took to the road at 15 with his guitar and harmonica, playing songs for migrant workers and others he met along the way. Eventually reaching the American West, he sought notoriety as a western singer, making appearances on the radio. He was also inspired by those around him to write his own music about the plights and poverty people faced during that time — "This Land is Your Land" being one of them.

At the time, Irving Berlin's song "God Bless America" was playing on the radio constantly, irking Guthrie with lyrics that he felt glossed over the wealth disparity and poverty in the country. Guthrie's song was originally titled "God Blessed America For Me," with those lyrics being repeated throughout, but he ended up changing it to "This land is made for you and me" when recording it in 1944. Shortly after, Guthrie joined the Merchant Marines to fight in World War II, and during his time in service, he boosted morale with his singing and guitar.

Guthrie's music career would be cut unfortunately short in 1954 when he suffered from the same illness that killed his mother; Huntington's disease. The genetic disorder is autosomal dominant, meaning that Guthrie only needed to have inherited one copy of the mutant gene to have it. In his later years, he was visited at the hospital by the many artists he inspired, and "This land is your land" would become an important song during the Civil Rights Movement.

When Guthrie wrote this song, the country was in a state of turmoil and strife, with uncertainty for what was to come. In fact, it was perhaps similar to what the world feels like now. Music is important; it accompanies the movements that shape our country into what it is today, and it will be interesting to see what artists of this era will create.

"Nobody living can ever stop me

As I go walking my Freedom Highway

Nobody living can make me turn back

This land was made for you and me."



LOGO BY COLBI LORANGER, ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS



Irving Berlin, the man who wrote "God Bless America." This song was one of Woody Guthrie's inspirations for "This Land is Your Land." PHOTO COURTESY OF IMDB

Mumford & Sons get cheerfully vapid on "Prizefighter"

by Elijah Polance
STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/THEY/THEM
elijah.polance@uconn.edu

It's been some time since the U.K. folk-rock act Mumford & Sons have been in the public eye. While relatively prolific in the 2010s, the group slowed down in the 2020s, waiting until 2025 to release their fifth album "Rushmere."

But the band quickly followed up with the release of "Prizefighter" on Friday, Feb. 20. Unlike their prior efforts, it's a guest-heavy effort with Aaron Dessner's production, writing credits from both Finneas and Brandi Carlile and plenty of features from popular contemporary folk-pop stars.

Country star Chris Stapleton makes the first appearance on the opener "Here," a duet with lead vocalist Marcus Mumford. In alternating verses and a shared chorus, the two men present all their emotional shortcomings and baggage and put it on the table — a preview of the album's themes of reflection and growth. While the mixing feels flat with a distinct lack of instrumental texture, the track is catchy enough to invite listeners into the album.

"Here" also begins the album's trend of the guest artists overshadowing the vocal contributions from Mumford & Sons. Stapleton's voice sounds less raw than typical, but still exudes more emotion than Mumford, whose pitch-corrected singing sterilizes any conviction that might have been there. It's a different vocal style from Mumford & Sons' earlier days where they sounded more acoustic and loose.

Lead single "Rubber Band Man" brings a bit more to the table, opening with catchy fingerstyle acoustic guitar and jubilant swells in the chorus. Hozier makes an appearance, and while his harmonies with the chorus don't offer much, the soft delivery of his verse is one of the most tender and genuine moments on the album.

The track is almost great, but the writing holds it back. The chorus opens with the lines "You're a world away / But you're still the same" and ends with the even more overused sentiment "Nothing lasts forever, babe / You know it breaks my heart." There's no end of lyrics that have already been said a million times across the album, and "Rubber Band Man" isn't even the most egregious. The mountain of cliches makes it hard to get invested in any of these songs, whether they're trying to communicate sadness or catharsis.

Take "Run Together," which builds layers of vocal harmonies, strings and synths atop calming banjo to communicate a sense of adventuring. The band maintains a good ebb and flow of the louder and quieter moments, staying spirited and engaging. But the chorus, built around the lines "When we run, we run together / When we're apart, we fall apart / I will love you, now and ever," fails to communicate anything meaningful. What could've been a defining anthem shrinks into a jumble of phrases of unoriginality that won't make you want to run anywhere.

The band does the best job minimizing these sonic and lyrical issues on "Conversation With My Son (Gangsters & Angels)", which unravels as a parent telling a message to their child. The presence of musician Amelia Meath enlivens the harmonies that fill what begins as a mellow folk composition. But everything swells exponentially on the ending refrain, which builds into the most cinematic and emotionally resonant point of the album.

The title track takes a quieter approach than the rest of the album. Mumford sounds tired and worn down as he reflects on a past relationship and where he might've ended up if it hadn't ended. While it moves slowly, the harmonies with guest vocals from Justin Vernon, frontman of Bon Iver, ensures it doesn't get too boring.

The ninth track, "Icarus," uses the Greek myth of Daedalus — who fashioned wings for himself and his son Icarus to escape imprisonment, only for his son's wings to melt upon flying too close to the sun — to trace a love story. The song starts awkwardly, with both Mumford and the featured Gigi Perez, who exploded in 2024 with her song "Sailor Song," singing louder than the instruments demand. But it soon develops into a heavier rock sound that lets Perez really let loose with her powerful singing.

While most of the featured artists' presence make sense given how their own music builds on or relates to Mumford & Sons' sound, Gracie Abrams' appearance on "Badlands" feels more random. While Abrams helps give the song life, her vocals don't fit the best with Mumford during the empty refrain "Don't look down now / I'm not done here yet." They mesh better on the slightly more lyrically emphatic chorus, but the track would probably work better as a solo effort from Abrams.

The final run of three tracks might be the strongest connected effort. "Shadow of a Man" comes across with respectable conviction, while "I'll Tell You Everything" and "Clover" are slower introspective cuts that close the album in a satisfying way.

"Prizefighter" is far from a terrible album, but it's not great. There are plenty of engaging instrumental moments, but the sterile mixing and plain harmonies make it hard for anything to land. But the biggest downfall is the lack of lyrical nuance and substance, which really takes away from every emotional moment the band tries to get across.



A promotional image for Mumford & Sons' upcoming "Prizefighter" North America tour. "Prizefighter" is their newest album, and was released this past Friday, Feb. 20. PHOTO COURTESY OF @MUMFORDANDSONS ON INSTAGRAM.

RATING: 2.25/5

CLASSIFIEDS

Policy: Classifieds are non-refundable. Credit will be given if an error materially affects the meaning of the ad and only for the first incorrect insertion. Ads will only be printed if they are accompanied by both first and last name as well as telephone number. Names and numbers may be subject to verification. All advertising is subject to acceptance by The Daily Campus, which reserves the right to reject any ad copy at its sole discretion. The Daily Campus does not knowingly accept ads of a fraudulent nature.