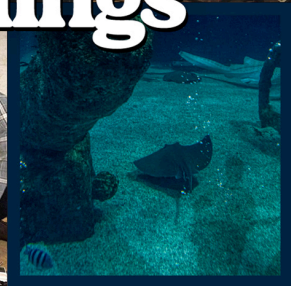
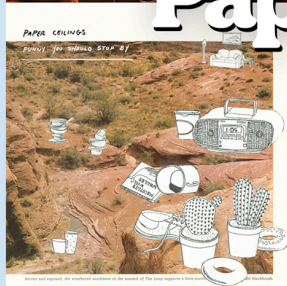




A Brief History of



Paper Ceilings



Volume II

A BRIEF HISTORY 2: MORE HISTORY

Logically, you would think *Vol. II* of this series might start immediately where *Vol. I* left off. The following few years - which I will begrudgingly call the “concept years” - involved a number of releases that can all be grouped together by the fact that they were themed in some way. An EP about pizza. Two EPs about dogs. A whole album about baseball. I love these releases, but I feel like they would take up too much space here. And so, they’re excluded. You can still buy *So Many Dogs!* on vinyl so I don’t feel too bad about skipping that one. And *Baseball* will maybe get its own separate reissue treatment someday.



After multiple consecutive themed releases, some people started referring to Paper Ceilings as a “concept album” band, which bugged me a little bit, even though I knew it was meant in a nice way. So when people started asking me what the concept for the next album would be, I started saying, “The concept for the next one is that it will be a normal album.” After all, isn’t every album a concept album?

In 2016, I left Columbia, MO, the town where Paper Ceilings really took off, and headed to the bustling metropolis of St. Louis. At the time, moving to St. Louis felt like heading to a massive place. Now it just feels like a regular place, which is mostly a good thing. I think that’s just how moving works.

With the move came a new version of Paper Ceilings. A full electric rock-n-roll version with guitar and bass and drums and sometimes saxophone. We were pretty quiet by rock-n-roll standards, something we jokingly prided ourselves on, but still, it was rock-n-roll! When you’re a folk punk singer, sometimes you’re the loudest act at the living room show. And then a few years later, when you’re a little D.I.Y. pop trio with a 10-watt guitar amp, suddenly you’re the quietest rock band at the bar. Both are fun in their own way.

I think starting the CD in St. Louis makes sense, as it feels like a clean break. Plus, the music is mostly out-of-print at this point, and I also think it's a bit underrated (though I'm by definition the most biased person in the entire world on this topic). Lots of people know "Billy Was a Punk" or "Discarded Cigarettes", but how many of you have heard the funk version of "Home Run Baker"? Or "Rob's Dub", for that matter?

Paper Ceilings has been so many things over the years, that I think the question is not what is Paper Ceilings, but what isn't it? I've toyed with changing the name over the years. It's not a particularly good name. I made it up in my dorm room in 2010 and have been stuck with it ever since. I think I wanted to call it Paper Airplanes, but unsurprisingly, somebody had already used that one. These days, the "paper ceiling" is apparently a term for the invisible barrier stopping people from getting jobs without a college degree. I learned this after someone told me they liked my "political" band name.

So yes, I could rename the band, and who knows, I still might, but what I always come back to is this: Paper Ceilings has already been folk and pop and punk and ska and dub. It's been GarageBand techno and Neil Young covers and theme songs for TV shows that don't really exist. There are songs about the Seattle Pilots and defunct mid-Missouri pizza parlors and everything in between. So no matter what else I come up with, I honestly don't think there is anything I could do where anyone could listen to it and say, "That's not Paper Ceilings." And so, the name remains.

Jesse Ceilings, May 2025



A Pretty Good Time

Release Date: January 10, 2017

1. Pigeons (intro)
2. Greeting Card
3. Walking is Good for You
4. Mini Basketball Hoop
5. They Don't Play Blondie at the Laundromat
6. One Headlight (rock version)
7. At the Grocery Store
8. Everything is What You Say

Over the years, I have tried to unlock new secrets of creativity. I've read books, tried to optimize my recording setups and all of that. Well, in my experience, it's all a waste of time. None of it works. But you know what does? A completely arbitrary deadline. I've never found a worthwhile replacement for a good deadline in anything - music or otherwise. Which leads us to January 2017, when my roommates went on a trip to New York, and I resolved to record an entire album while they were gone. There was no reason I couldn't record music when they were home. They certainly wouldn't have cared. But there is still something freeing in knowing that no one is listening. I ordered a pizza and got to work.

This album is somewhat of a transition album for Paper Ceilings, and so I think it's an appropriate place to start this *Brief History*. While still a solo album, the songs are a little less folky and have fuller instrumentation with electric guitars, keyboards, and drums (shoutout to my man Kyle, the virtual GarageBand drummer). These are still very much bedroom recordings, but they really laid the foundation for the new full band rock-n-roll version of Paper Ceilings that would begin performing around town just a couple months later.

Side note: For some reason, "Pigeons" has become technically the most popular Paper Ceilings track of all-time, with more than 10 million streams on various social media platforms. I had no idea there was such a thriving online subculture of people posting pigeon videos, but I fully support it.

Blessings and Talents

Release Date: November 3, 2017

9. phish-182
10. My New Guitar Pedal
11. You Don't Have to Dance
12. Home Run Baker
13. Crazy Beach
14. Nashville

In moving to St. Louis, one of my main plans was to convert Paper Ceilings into a full band. My first recruit was getting Wes Harbison to play drums. Wes was an old high school friend of mine and the former drummer of The Dead Pirates Society, Jeff City High School's most legendary (and perhaps only) third-wave ska-punk supergroup. In a weird coincidence, I think I emailed him asking him to join the band, and then ran into him at the grocery store a few hours later before he had even read my message. He was in.



On bass, I got Rob Langellier, who lived in my dorm freshman year of college. We first became friends because he thought it was cool that I owned a mandolin. See, back in 2010, mandolins were still cool. (Just kidding, mandolins will always be cool.) One of our earliest musical collaborations involved us performing a folky version of "Wild Thing" by The Troggs for a class assignment. That recording may still exist somewhere.

I'm thankful Rob and Wes both said yes to being in the band because truthfully they were the only two people I had in mind, and if they had said no, I'm not sure who I would've found instead. It might have just never happened.

Listening to this EP now, it has a lot going on. Pretty much every song is completely different than the one before it. I'm pretty sure we confused at least a few crowds when we attempted to play funk or country or whatever, but we had fun with it. I've always been drawn to the bands who don't stick to just one thing.



Funny You Should Stop By

Release Date: June 14, 2019

15. Lily's Song
16. That Way
17. Couch
18. Rob's Song
19. Rob's Dub
20. Bagel Time
21. Dancing in the Dark
22. Ocean
23. On My Wall
24. Maybe Later

Up to this point, most Paper Ceilings albums were thrown together relatively quickly, but with this one, I really wanted us to take our time and make it sound good. *Blessings and Talents* didn't sound bad at all, but it was mostly tracked live and all recorded in one day.

This album was nearly the complete opposite. It felt like it took forever. The songs themselves went through countless iterations and versions. Wes and I had a number of sessions just working on the drums. And I spent a ton of time on my own tracking and re-tracking the guitars and vocals. I about drove myself crazy mixing all of it and came close to scrapping the whole album more than once. Noah came over to do backing vocals and added some fresh ideas to the arrangements, which was really one of the only quick and easy parts of the whole process. I was kind of exhausted by the end of it all, and needed a bit of a break after that. That bit of a break that accidentally became a long break.

Still, I really love the way this one turned out. It may be recency bias, but I think it's the best Paper Ceilings record. It will never be the most popular, but I'm happy to let these songs stay the deep cuts that only true Ceiling Fans know. And if you're reading this CD booklet, I guess that makes you one of them, doesn't it?

A Band Playing Downstairs

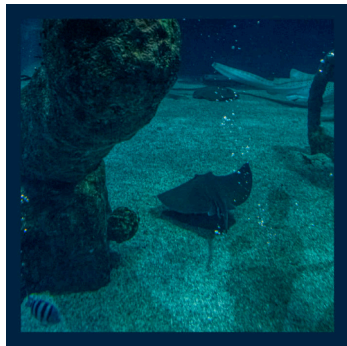
Release Date: September 30, 2022

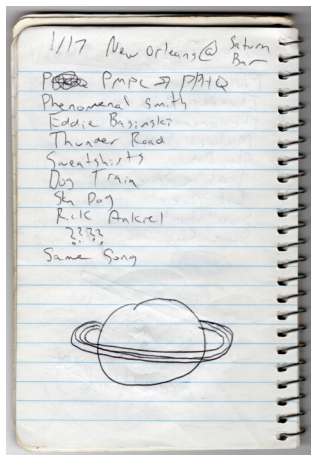
- 25. Until Now
- 26. Looking Down
- 27. Remember
- 28. Small
- 29. Amarillo (outro)

After the complexities of self-producing a full-band record with *Funny You Should Stop By*, I was very ready to do the super cliché “back to basics” thing. And so yes, this EP features a return to just me and an acoustic guitar, just like the old days. I even decided to record the whole thing with one single Shure SM57 microphone to simplify the process even more. If you listen closely, you can hear the hiss from the microphone as multiple audio tracks are overlaid on top of each other throughout the EP.

All of the songs on this EP had years to percolate. A number of them date back to late 2019, as I was just trying to get back into writing after recording *Funny*, though the versions here all ended up sounding quite different than the original demos. “Looking Down” was originally supposed to be a noisy rock song. “Small” was supposed to be a full-band country song. “Remember” didn’t fully come together until I muted the rhythm guitar track during the recording process and realized it sounded better without it. And, of course, “Amarillo” is a bit of a tribute to an old song by Weird Darryl.

The cover art kind of looks like it’s another planet, but it’s actually a weird photo I took at an aquarium in Albuquerque, NM, with a shadow of me playing guitar Photoshopped into the bottom right corner. I wanted to make it feel like I was performing on the ocean floor. I think that’s about as downstairs as you can get.





Left: Saturn Bar - New Orleans, LA (January 17, 2016)

Right: Track House - Austin, TX (January 19, 2016)



Left: Bridgetown D.I.Y. - La Puente, CA (January 24, 2016)

Right: Winning Coffee - Albuquerque, NM (January 26, 2016)



Funny World - Phoenix, AZ
January 25, 2016



KJHK Session - Lawrence, KS
January 29, 2016

TOM SAUK PAPER CEILINGS JAILBOX



CAFE BERLIN TONIGHT

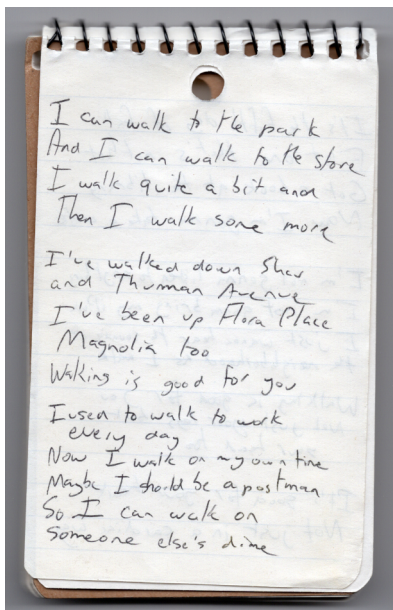
Café Berlin - Columbia, MO

June 25, 2016

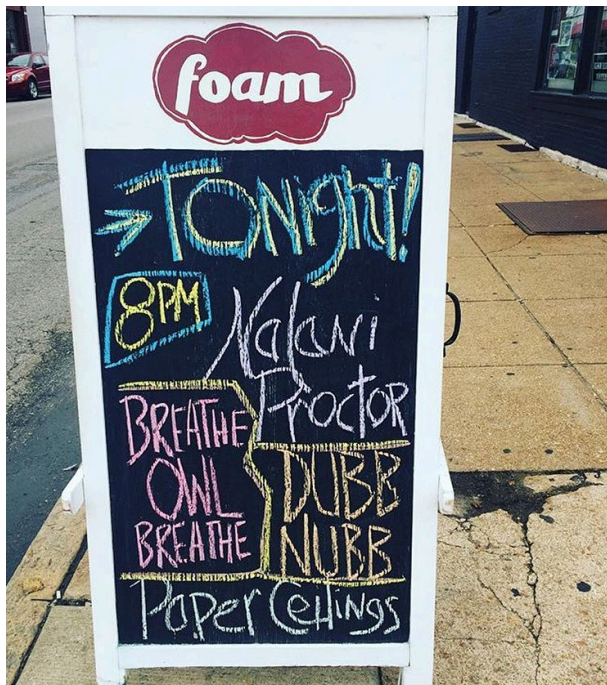


Puppy Planet - St. Louis, MO

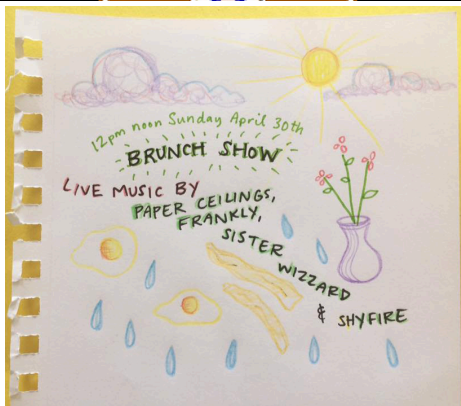
October 27, 2016



Left: Original lyrics for "Walking is Good for You" (September 2016)
Right: Kismet Creative Center - St. Louis, MO (February 25, 2017)



Foam - St. Louis, MO
March 26, 2017



Top: Puppy Planet - St. Louis, MO (April 15, 2017)
Bottom: Strawberry Bounce House - St. Louis, MO (April 30, 2017)



Foam - St. Louis, MO

June 1, 2017



Wes after successfully fitting the drums in the car
Foam - St. Louis, MO - June 16, 2017

7/8 Cafe B

CRAZY BEACH
GREETING CARD
DOGS IN SPACE

ONE HEADLIGHT
HOME RUN BAKER
WALKING IS GOOD FOR YOU
HOT-N-READY
DOG PARK
MINI BASKETBALL HOOP
SKA DOG
BOTH KINDS

LILY'S SONG

Café Berlin - Columbia, MO

July 8, 2017



Strawberry Bounce House - St. Louis, MO
July 30, 2017



Left: Blueberry Hill Duck Room - St. Louis, MO (July 23, 2017)

Right: Nassim recording saxophone for *Blessings and Talents* (September 10, 2017)



Alternate photo from the *Blessings and Talents* shoot
Columbia, MO
August 27, 2017

THE AQUADOME PRESENTS...

FALL FRIENDS SHOW

WHEN: FRI, NOV 10TH
DOORS e.g.: 30, SHOW e. 7pm

WHERE: 120 S. MAIN, KIRKSVILLE, MISSOURI

HOW: \$5 e the door!

WHY: FRIENDSHIP!
MUSIC! ART! EXPRESSION!

RSVP/FIND OUT MORE...

Facebook: The Aquadome

Twitter: TheAquadome.1

Instagram: the.aquadome

NO BOOZE!
NO DRUGS!
NO JERKS!

featuring...

PAPER CEILINGS
BIG TOBACCO
SLEEPING CRANES

and local Kirksville fares...

MAGGIE BLOSSOM
NOEL MOELLER

sponsored by the monitor



Left: The Aquadome - Kirksville, MO (November 10, 2017)
Right: Post-show pizza in Des Moines, IA (November 11, 2017)



Strawberry Bounce House - St. Louis, MO
March 17, 2018

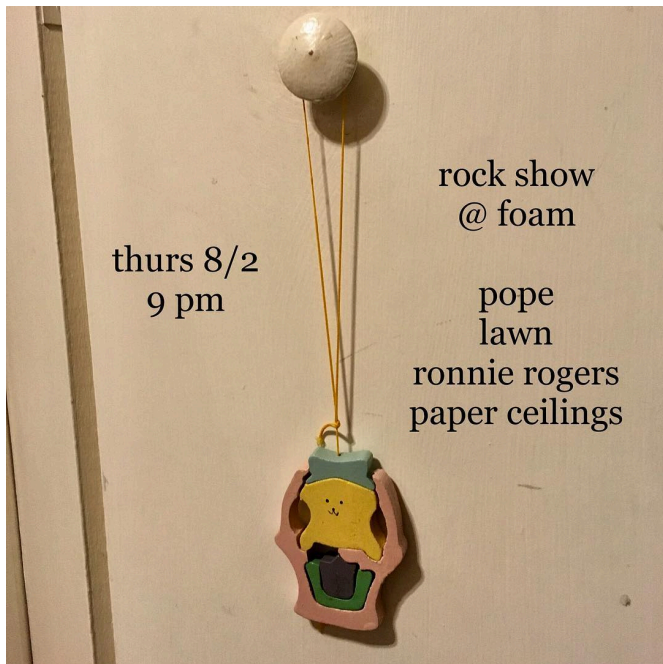
- V1 Avoiding bells and rum' n' Gos
 You take the train so you could gaze out
 the window
 We and I have some questions for you,
 we wrote them all down
 please drop us a line from Flagstaff town
- C1 Did you take your guitar?
 Are you gonna FaceTime w/ your dog?
 Did you make any friends on the train?
 Happy trails, Handsome Rob
- V2 Digging trails in the desert dust
 Not technically the desert, but what's fact-
 checking us?
 We've got some more questions for you out there like
 we don't mean to pry, we're just curious
- C2 Do you sleep in a tent?
 Have you used your chainsaw yet?
 What's the weather like out there?
 Well it's pretty hot I bet.
- [Bridge]
- C3 What's your favorite kind of cactus?
 Are you good at rock climbing or do you
 need some more practice?
 Do they let you wear your leather jacket on the job?
 Happy trails, Handsome Rob.

Original lyrics to "Rob's Song"

March 2018



Wes arrives at band practice
July 19, 2018



thurs 8/2
9 pm

rock show
@ foam

pope
lawn
ronnie rogers
paper ceilings

Foam - St. Louis, MO
August 2, 2018



Paper Ceilings
from
St. Louis

**Run-On
Sunshine**

**Deb
Ruby**

free show!
all ages!

7-
9pm

**Thursday
October 4th**

Black Crow Coffee

722 2nd St North
St. Petersburg
Florida

Black Crow Coffee - St. Petersburg, FL
October 4, 2018

Ch: I don't wanna be anything at all
I just want to be small

① Small, like a voice in a clock radio
Like a beanbag in the window
Like a gas station donut hole

② Small, like a postcard from New Zealand
Glow in the dark star ceiling
An old familiar feeling

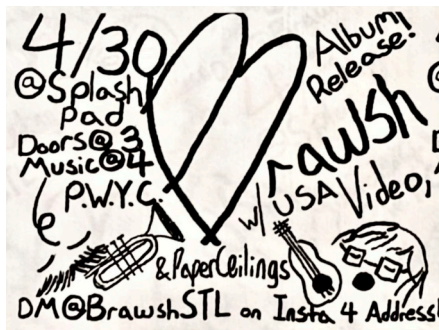
④ Small, like roses by the stairs
Like the history of chairs
Who really cares?

Small, like half-eaten shredded cheese
Like a bag that you don't need
Suburban tumbleweed

Small, like a sonata in your ear
Like a podcast I won't hear
Like a town we're seldom near

Original lyrics to "Small"

December 26, 2019



Left: Splash Pad - St. Louis, MO (April 30, 2023)
 Right: Chill Dawg Cove - St. Louis, MO (July 18, 2023)

Credits

All songs written by Paper Ceilings, except “Dancing in the Dark” by Bruce and “Nashville” by Weird Darryl & Flyin’ Jay.

Personnel:

Jesse Ceilings - vocals, guitar, bass, keys, glockenspiel, ukulele (*all tracks*)

Wes Harbison - drums, vocals (*tracks 9-21*)

Robert Langellier - bass, guitar, harmonica, vocals (*tracks 9-14, 18-19*)

Nassim Benchaabane - saxophone, vocals (*tracks 10-12*)

Noah Yacyshyn - vocals (*tracks 15-16, 20-21, 24*)

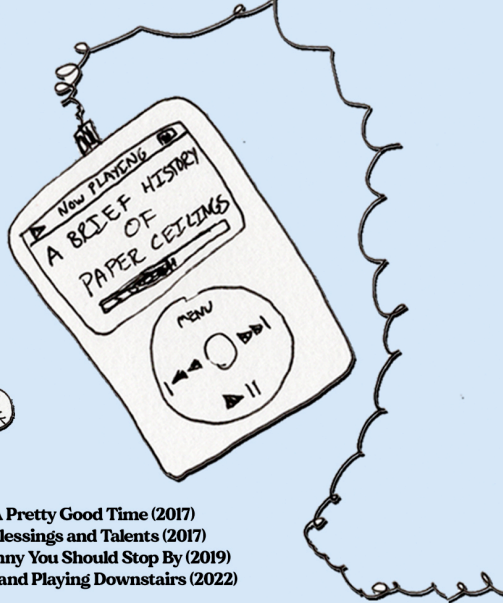
Album artwork:

Blessings and Talents cover photo by Gary Harbison

Funny You Should Stop By artwork by Allison Sissom

Other album covers by Jesse Ceilings

Lastly, many people contributed by creating flyers or taking photos. It would be impossible for me to credit everyone - in many cases I don’t even know who the source is - but again, thank you, and you know who you are.



Tracks 1-8: A Pretty Good Time (2017)
Tracks 9-15: Blessings and Talents (2017)
Tracks 16-24: Funny You Should Stop By (2019)
Tracks 25-29: A Band Playing Downstairs (2022)

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Pigeons (intro) | 10. My New Guitar Pedal | 20. Bagel Time |
| 2. Greeting Card | 11. You Don't Have to Dance | 21. Dancing in the Dark |
| 3. Walking is Good for You | 12. Home Run Baker | 22. Ocean |
| 4. Mini Basketball Hoop | 13. Crazy Beach | 23. On My Wall |
| 5. One Headlight (rock version) | 14. Nashville | 24. Maybe Later |
| 6. They Don't Play Blondie at the Laundromat | 15. Lily's Song | 25. Until Now |
| 7. At the Grocery Store | 16. That Way | 26. Looking Down |
| 8. Everything is What You Say | 17. Couch | 27. Remember |
| 9. phish-182 | 18. Rob's Song | 28. Small |
| | 19. Rob's Dub | 29. Outro (Amarillo) |