

THE GREAT UNKNOWN

PETER MITCHELL

1984 - 1995

In the darkest north

In the deepest south

I set the word birds free

Every time I opened my mouth

Now in the distant east

And in the dying west

There are flocks of lonely screams

Looking for a nest

6 December 1986

ANOTHER SONG WRITER DREAMS AND BURNS OUT YOUNG

My songs are killing me. Every moment that I leave "that rare spirit on the shelf" the cancer of neglect gnaws away at my mortality. I go about in the world, like a chaotic bloodhound trying to scratch my living and leave my mark, and all I can hope to do is forget.

It was not always this way. Starting from the early seventies through to 1990 the songs were almost always on my mind and between 1983 and 1985, with Ian Mitchell, Siegfried (Ziggy) Mirza, Tim Rollinson and Jane Hewetson, I built a full time band around them. We were **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY**.

It was a great time to be young and living the rock and roll dream but, like other aspiring bands in Sydney during the mid-eighties we were chewed up, and spat out, by a music industry that was wrestling with vast, international market forces. The principal dilemma was how to capture a great live band, as **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY** had some claim to be, and package them up nice and neat so they might take their place in the age of video rock.

In Australia this dilemma was solved by comparatively few bands. Hunters and Collectors, Midnight Oil and INXS are examples of those that successfully answered the challenge. If you consider that they succeeded at a time when record companies and publishing houses were looking to sign power pop keyboard duos who looked great on TV, their achievements speak of the exception rather than the rule.

My songs were buried in a band struggling on a budget that usually left us with nothing after playing a four hour gig. The PA and petrol took all the money that beer down throats and bums on seats dragged in. Money was so tight that we were concerned and bemused to discover our manager, a somewhat shadowy publican with wharfie connections, had paid for the recording of our single, **SKELETON SONG** and **AMERICAN AMERICANS**, with certain "illicit substances". Owing to a subsequent supply problem he could not "pay" for the actual release of the record.

Our income, never more than break even, was mortally wounded by the introduction of strict fire regulations, towards the end of 1984. The effect was to close many of the clubs and pubs in which previous generations of Sydney bands had found work. By the middle of 1985 we had given it our best shot but, for many reasons, **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY** burned out young.

With the band's demise I gave up the dream and drifted to University and the rest, as they say, is mediocrity. Those who know me will be aware that I have always considered myself a songwriter first and foremost. I have not been able to make a living in my chosen field and this has been a source of great frustration. There is cold comfort knowing I am in good company. Few poets ever survive directly on the earning capacity of their words alone. My problems in life are the bitter fruits of this frustration. Sadly, I have used it to excuse and justify all I have become.

It is time to lay it to rest.

(Insert my pen drawing of the headless clown)

THE PROJECT: SALVATION THROUGH "THE GREAT UNKNOWN"

Laying it to rest has meant embarking into **THE GREAT UNKNOWN**. The aim is to present these songs as best I can so that they may have a life of their own in the world and no longer cry out to only me. Some of these songs were written for, and played by, **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY**. Most were written and recorded after the band and some were written many years before.

I have worked at my four track recording machine, in a series of lounge and rehearsal rooms, for many hours over the last ten years. These recordings are mostly, therefore, brought to you by "Rank Amateur Productions" and, while I am proud of the song quality, the recordings themselves are not perfect. They were made as demonstration tapes for future projects that, as the years rolled by, did not eventuate.

When I finally got a "real job" in 1990 the music was locked away. It has been dragged kicking and screaming into the light every now and then but, as I have now joined the ranks of the "no longer young", I realise that these songs will never reach their perfect, imagined rendering.

THE GREAT UNKNOWN is a collection of the best recordings, many of the best songs and is accompanied by this book in an attempt to alleviate some of the difficulties of sound quality and allow the fullest possible access to the lyrics. They have been remastered, as well as the original technology would allow, on to Digital Audio Tape and from there onto Compact Disc. There are many other songs that I might have wished to include, after all I have written close to a thousand songs, but to have done so would have made production costs prohibitive.

I have included two **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY** songs that are in a recorded format that will allow transfer onto these Compact Discs with acceptable signal to noise ratios. I also include three songs recorded by my latest band **THE RUDIMENTS** in a professional studio in September 1994.

[Photo of THE RUDIMENTS at the party]

HERE'S SOME GOOD SHOTS OF EARLY ME

Apart from my work with Ian Mitchell, the full range of which will be seen throughout **THE GREAT UNKNOWN**, my most important musical collaboration has been with my friends Trevor and Kathleen Dunham. Trev and I started together as kids in 1974 but, between 1976 and 1984, I regularly travelled to Canberra where we worked solidly at producing each other's songs and at our writing. The results are there in upwards of forty hours of recordings. Some of my best songs are trapped on those old tapes gathering dust. I hope one year to have the energy to hire a Tascam 144 machine, probably from a museum by then, and with Trev, re-master those old classics. My recording work with Trev and Kath goes on to this day and it saddens me that none of our songs together can be included on this collection. I owe Trev a lot. He has been, and remains, one of my greatest influences.

I have enjoyed the wild jams, gigs and occasional recordings, including videos, that Tim "Timmo" Hewitt, lately with his wife Cathy, has put on. In the early days Timmo and I combined our names and the **HEWCHELL** "muck arounds" have assumed legendary status. Timmo and I first played music together in 1971 and it goes on to this day. The recordings we have made are more likely to be noted for the spontaneity and fun we had making them rather than for any dedicated musical endeavour but they are truly born of the spirit of rock and roll.

Timmo is one of the great performers of our age and the **HEWCHELL** stage show is always a chaotic blast, with splashes of the Blues Brothers and The Rolling Stones, mixed in with elements that, may only be described as unique. One memorable gig at a High School "Battle of the Bands" in 1976 we were joined by drummer Cliff Grigg, who later enjoyed some success in Spy Vs Spy. Timmo dressed as a Hillbilly singer while I wore a leotard, green tights and a purple top hat. The effect was reasonably devastating and we received special mention from the judges as the "most entertaining" act.

The three of us toured around northern New South Wales, with Paul Cole on organ, as the Methodist Youth Group Band. We played a set made up of rock songs, with a spiritual theme, designed to get the nation's young back into church. The encores were usually something quite different, however. One night in Macksville, after the main show, we let loose with the somewhat provocative song choice of "Honky Tonk Woman" which clearly scandalised the local devout. The entire effect was made all the more striking by our road crew setting off a smoke bomb which eventually gassed out the church. The scene had more in common with the "sulphurous pits of hell" than a house of God. We found out later that the Minister who had booked us was sacked by the community. Unfortunately for him he had managed to get the wrong young people back into church.

Timmo, Trev and I together share a sordid rock and roll history. With various other school friends we were in bands called The Grubs, Omshafarat and Zenith. I've still got a tape of us murdering Deep Purple's "Space Truckin'" down at "Dang's Place" from 1973.

In the garage and even on the roof of the garage at Jubilee Road in Armidale, we thrashed our hearts out. You can imagine the racket we made. We had no real drums and so we made do with coat hangers for sticks, an upturned plastic bucket for a snare drum and a cardboard box that we kicked for a bass drum. The microphone and two cheap guitars were all plugged through a borrowed ten watt amplifier which howled and grunted in protest.

Without warning, one day in 1974, my Mother threw open the garage door and stood on the step. All we could see of her was an angry silhouette as our eyes had not adjusted to the day light pouring in around her. She screamed above the din "If you have to hit that bucket can you at least hit it in time!". We learned a lot about the importance of timing from this experience.

The other musical collaborator I have worked closely with is Nick Hawes in England. In 1975 we played guitar, and sang my few fledgling songs, in the cold garage at 19 Page Furlong, Dorchester-on-Thames. In 1994 I returned to England and visited Nick and his family. I was amazed to find that Nick still remembers and plays those young, sad and simple songs. I was embarrassed that I remembered almost nothing of what I had written but there was no denying, or escaping, the hours of tape that exist as proof of this other life. We called ourselves **GOLDEN MYST** and re-invented and re-worked every teenage cliché known to humanity. Some of the musical ideas are surprisingly interesting, possibly because of their inherent naivety. To return to England one day and work with Nick is a new found ambition, not least because Nick has become a fine songwriter.

SHOTS FROM THE RIM OF A RECORDING HISTORY

I have recorded albums of songs for many years. The first, **ALMOST HUMAN** and **FAR CRY**, were recorded in December 1982 on a Tascam 144 four track cassette machine. They were made up of songs written from 1977 to 1982. The song "Far Cry" is the only one from these sessions to make a return appearance, although in its 1985 incarnation.

In my innocence I sent these albums off to all the record companies listed in the phone book and soon after began my impressive collection of rejection form letters. I am no longer affected by rejection as I have been rejected by experts. I did receive one encouraging letter Chappell Music Intersong who had kind things to say about my work and asked to be kept in touch with anything else I wrote.

From late 1983 through to early 1985 **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY** made many recordings. We recorded over thirty songs on the 144, which were distributed throughout Sydney's rock circuit as demo tapes to get gigs with. Six songs in an eight track studio at Alexander Mackie art college in Paddington were recorded but never used. We laid down seven professionally recorded songs at JMC Studios in Elizabeth Street, Strawberry Hills. From these sessions came the abortive single **SKELETON SONG** and **AMERICAN AMERICANS**. These songs were played on 2JJ's demo show and several times thereafter during regular programming. This recording and airplay got us some interest, again from Chappell Music Intersong, who actually remembered me from my earlier albums, and from Hot Records. They are the first two songs on **THE GREAT UNKNOWN**.

Despite the interest no contract was forthcoming. I have thought long and hard about why I did not take the advice of the industry people and tailor my music more overtly to the tastes of the market. It was suggested that I abandon the band and concentrate on getting a deal as a writer through a publishing house but the band was my life at the time. I could not imagine myself playing music without them. Perhaps I have always been too close to my music for my own good. So be it.

In 1985 I made the first recording on the Fostex 250 machine. The result was the **WOLF IN A RIDING HOOD** album which was sent forth into the world, again via phone book and post office, only to return bloodied, but not bowed, with more rejection letters. The songs on the first Compact Disc, starting with "Written All Over Me" and following, are the best **WOLVES**.

In late 1985, and early 1986, Ian and I spent many hours arranging and recording an epic called **A BROKEN MAN**. This piece is composed of ten thematically linked songs and runs close to thirty minutes. It is our great art piece and some of it stands as our finest technical work. It is too long, unfortunately, for inclusion here.

In 1986 I made **GHOST AROUND THE TOWN**. This is probably my strongest album to date and is included in full, starting with "Romantic Women", on the second half of the first Compact Disc. Several of these songs, especially "Romantic Women", seemed very marketable to me and so they were sent off with some hope and were received back with more rejection letters in tow. I got the message then. No one was going to offer a contract to a word centred songwriter, no matter how catchy the music, unless the package included a pretty face, a great voice and a crowd pulling live show. I have not sent my music to any one from that day until now. I intend, however, to fly in the face of obscurity again for **THE GREAT UNKNOWN**.

In 1987 I made **MUSIC FOR SUNDAYS IN WINTER**. This album begins the second Compact Disc of this collection. The mood of this work, and of my life from that time on, is reflected in the title song's lyric;

*Some people hold together
But you know I'll more likely splinter
And I'll spend the rest of my life
Writing music for sundays in winter*

In 1988 I recorded the **ARID MAN** album and from it I include the songs "Here's A Good Shot" and "Take It From Me". From 1988 to 1990, with Ian back from his second world odyssey, we recorded many songs in the "mountain retreat" at Hazelbrook. We taped jams with some of our favourite players, including Trevor Dunham, Tim Hewitt, Judy Mitchell, Peter Cozens, Howard Dawson and Tim Phillips.

We also put a band together, to play at parties, which I called **THE SONG**. It was made up of various players and also included anyone who got up and joined in. We often recorded our rehearsals and the best recordings from this period were later put together for an album called **SPONTANEOUS BY DESIGN**. This album was not distributed and only one master copy made. Despite this we always thought of it as one of our finest achievements. The majority of the songs on the later half of the second Compact Disc, starting with "Grateful", are from this album.

Playing "live" we have usually enjoyed a great drum sound but, because of technical and resource limitations, this was rarely captured on our recordings. Recording drums in a home studio is one of the most difficult tasks and so, as a compromise, we have mostly used a drum machine to suggest the full sound we aspire to. The drum machine, for all the help it has been over the years, was put aside for **SPONTANEOUS BY DESIGN**. There may be some loss of sound quality, but the "feel" of this music is closer to how I imagine my music should sound if we had the resources to record it all again in a professional studio.

From 1990 to 1992 I re-worked, acoustically and with keyboards, many of my earliest songs. I gave these recordings the title **HALF REMEMBERED SORROW**. None of these songs are included here owing to of resource limitations.

Since 1990 the rambunctious stream of words and music that is my life, has been held in check somewhat by my relatively late developing interest in earning a living. Despite this the river rolls on and the fire still burns. On 28 November 1992, now living at Baulkham Hills, I teamed up with old friends Ian Mitchell, Ian Woolsey, Judy Mitchell, Timmo Hewitt and new bass player Colin Sharp, under the name **LEGENDS OF OBSCURITY**, for a "let's get the band back together" blast that has continued, in one form or other, to this day.

In September 1994 Ian Mitchell, Ian Woolsey, Colin Sharp and myself, recorded three new songs of mine, and two of Ian Woolsey's, at Damian Gerard's Studios, Ultimo. The results were good enough to warrant making a hundred cassette copies and distributing them to friends and family. The band is called **THE RUDIMENTS** and the cassette is called **I WANT YOU TO BE WITH ME** and from it I have included three songs. These are the last songs on the second Compact Disc. To make **THE GREAT UNKNOWN** as representative as possible, despite the time and money constraints, I have also included two of my more recent home recorded songs "I Would Not Call It Love" and "Holy To Me".

I have not intended this run down of my recording history to be exhaustive, although it may have exhausted many of you to read. I have endeavoured to give you the key recording periods to allow greater access to the songs and to give anyone new to my work an idea of the origins of this music. All the songs on **THE GREAT UNKNOWN**, unless otherwise stated, are written by Peter Mitchell and performed, arranged, recorded and produced by Ian and Peter Mitchell.

These songs come from my life's experiences, from my life's longings and imaginings. To tell the story as fully as possible I have written a short life context for each song. **THE GREAT UNKNOWN** is, therefore, an autobiography in song.

BLIND DEDICATION

I have made this music with lifetime collaborator and friend, Ian Mitchell. Even when Ian was not around I wrote and recorded these songs with his "ghost" looking over my shoulder. Ian has suffered right along with me as we came to terms with the music career that never was. These days, when that old fire flares up, we drag out the gear and power through some new music and dream, once again, that this could be it. Then the dust settles and we get on with reality.

It has been a furious, dark and passionate effort and we have both loved every bloody minute of it. There is a line from a **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY** song called "Hard" which may sum us up:

*We talk about "one day"
As if we were going to make it
Still we don't even know what we were working for
But we work hard*

Special thanks also to all the friends and family who have kept the faith, especially: Trevor Dunham, Chris Clark, Nick Hawes, Judy Mitchell, Robert Thompson and Tim Hewitt. Additional thanks to fellow members of **THE RUDIMENTS**, Ian Woolsey and Colin Sharp, for rekindling the flame.

I have always needed an audience. If I had wanted to simply make money from music I would have written differently and made other career decisions. If I had wanted to make music solely for my own pleasure I would never have had to say these words out loud.

I have written songs so that I might say something others may choose to hear. Reaching a mass audience, as I learned, required business skills that I do not possess and so I am happy to present these songs to you and offer thanks to anyone who listens.

My life, and these songs, are mainly inspired by one person. She has heard this music as it came through the walls of our life together. She has supported me in every way. I have written so that I might tell her everything I am but... she knows the rest.

Thanks, Penelope, for giving this "word bird" a nest.

PETER "THE GREAT UNKNOWN" MITCHELL

1995

SKELETON SONG

*I remain in your real world
A closet companion only
The real world takes care of itself
But the skeleton gets lonely*

*I watch pre-war re-runs at night
I hunger to belong
It leaves me weak with the hunger of the strong
For the real world beyond*

*Understand about my bony hands
And my hatred for my age today
Give me a life and a land
Give me a far away*

*Lend me the words and the reasons
Why I go on so long
From the grave this skeleton, your slave
Sings this song for the real world beyond*

*Chorus: Are you still here with me?
 Over and above and above it all
 On the wind I believe I believe
 That I hear your call*

*For every new love there's an old love too
They will give you life and still be the death of you
And you learn when you learn that it all falls through
For every life in the real world there's a skeleton too*

(repeat chorus)

1984

Lead Vocals: Peter Mitchell
Drums and Synth Drums: Ian Mitchell
Guitars: Tim Rollinson
Bass: Jane Hewetson
Backing Vocals: Chris Green
Chorus melody: Siegfried Mirza
Engineered: Martin Cass - JMC Studios
Arranged and Produced: CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY

(photograph montage of the band and captions)

AMERICAN AMERICANS

*Just another man in a sultan
Medium build, black tie, black suit
This boy he's no Frank Sinatra
He's too C.I.A. for the light of day*

*Just another sly in a bow tie
A personal friend of mine
Gun gun shy in a brave brave land and
Dying in the shadow of the great man*

*Chorus: American Americans Rah Rah Rah
And say tell me boy where the action are
American Americans Ha Ha Ha*

*They only lose because nobody can win
But that only triggers the infatuation
With coming on thin in a fat situation
(Coming on thin in a fat situation)*

*Just another irate middle weight
Looking so clean, so mean, so cute
This boy he's no caped crusader
He's too C.I.A. for the light of day*

*Just another tale from the new world
Putting us out of our misery
We all either live in the palm of the hand
Or we die in the shadow of the great man*

(repeat chorus)

1984

Lead Vocals: Peter Mitchell
Drums: Ian Mitchell
Guitars: Tim Rollinson
Bass: Jane Hewetson
Backing Vocals: Chris Green
Engineered: Martin Cass - JMC Studios
Arranged and Produced: CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY

(photograph of the band at the Lismore and caption)

COAL TOWN

*Every body here is behind the times
They have their coal fires at night and their nursery rhymes
But I'm here nursing a fire of my own
Burning out in the great unknown*

*When you wander out through the coal town at night
There's a silence there in the bricks and the bones
The people and places all stand alone
Somewhere out in the great unknown*

*Chorus: You can just survive on the wages of sin
As you work yourself out, as you wear yourself in
And you can summon up all the power in the world
But you will still be here in another 27 years
And you won't see the driving rain for all your driving tears
It's a place to stay... away from*

*From here to the sea the mountains divide
And I drove up there once to find a place to hide
And I dreamed about a world where I would never be alone
But I came back down here to the great unknown*

*Now I look out my window again and again
And I see the coal town stretched out on the plain
And in the evening I watch the men go home
To burn out in the great unknown*

*Chorus: You can just survive on the wages of sin
As you work yourself out, as you wear yourself in
And you can summon up all the power in the world
But you will still be here in another 27 years
And you won't see the driving rain for all your driving tears
It's a place to stay... away from*

1979 and 19 August 1986

I was born on 28 November 1959. I wrote the main elements of this song in 1979, two years after leaving school, but re-worked it in 1986 and this explains the "another 27 years" line in the chorus. Between 1978 and 1980 I was coming to terms with some of the harsher realities of life after school. In those days I worked as a storeman and truck driver in Sydney. Like many before me I wondered how to break the drudgery of my daily toil that promised to plod ever on.

Originally the lyric had the main character climbing up "a smoke stack once in the rain" to "find a place to hide" but, by August 1986, my plan "to find a place to hide" involved a complete physical relocation. I moved, with my wife and two cats, up and away from the Cumberland Plain that Sydney is "stretched out on", to the Blue Mountains. This move suggested the third and fourth verses as they are now.

The "coal town" itself is drawn from lonely night drives down the New England Highway escaping home town Armidale. I would burn past the coal fired power stations of the upper Hunter Valley, near Muswellbrook, and go smoking through industrial Newcastle, with Springsteen's New Jersey firing my imagination from the tape player.

The young man's fear in this song, at the prospect of an anonymous and routine existence, continues to haunt me as an older man still "burning out in the great unknown". This is one of the reasons I chose *Coal Town's* refrain for the title of this collection.

FOR ALL THE WRONG REASONS

*All night I've been trying to tell you
All night about the world on my back
All night about my history of sadness
And how I'm "learning to live" with that*

*All right so I'm a political animal
All right so I'm a rag doll too
All right so I have trouble with affection
But I'm learning to love you*

*Chorus: Here I go. Here I go.
 To the four winds and the forlorn seasons
 Here I go. Here I go.
 Loving you for all the wrong reasons*

*You are exchanging lies amongst the confidences
You talk tough tall tales and true
But here am I just getting drunk and belligerent
Dutching my courage up to tell you*

*That you may be venerable and vulnerable
Live well, live right
You may be down to earth in every other way
But you can love like a kite*

*Chorus: Here I go. Here I go.
 To the four winds and the forlorn seasons
 Here I go. Here I go.
 Loving you for all the wrong reasons*

*Let's hear it for the ignorant and ugly
Whoever and wherever they may be
Let's hear it for the languishing and the lonely
And let's hear it for little old me, because...*

*All night I've been trying to tell you
All night about the world on my back
All night about my history of sadness
And how I'm "learning to live" with that*

18 October 1986

Early in 1986 we lived next door to an "evil fortress", with its own "witch", in a terrace house in "little Italy", Leichhardt. Our neighbours were obviously very unhappy people. They conceived a hatred for us on the day we moved in which had us ducking thrown, spat and verbal projectiles for the whole time we lived there. The hatred seemed to seep through the common wall and cast a shadow over everything. It is only from this distance in time that I can see the funnier side of it. Like many of the songs from this period, "For All The Wrong Reasons" reflects this undercurrent of tension and my desire for flight, without making direct reference to the situation.

It is, ostensibly, the story of a man's attempt to explain every thing he loves and feels in one drunken sitting. This is an unfortunately common endeavour. It usually is attempted towards the end of a party. As such this song is something of an anthem for the "ignorant and ugly" and, indeed, the "languishing and the lonely". All of whom, from my experience, are notorious party animals.

It has been one of the best received songs when played "live" for many years. I enjoy the question that the line "love like a kite" poses. Is the "kite" a bird of prey or is it a soaring, fragile splash of colour in the sky, straining to be free of the earth? As with all the deliberate double meanings in this collection, the choice is yours.

"Learning to live" is the Motto of Duval High School, Armidale, at which I was student between 1973 and 1977.

LOVE AND WAR

*Your man in London. Your man of string
Talks on the wire. He says love will survive
So you destroy yourself for the company
Just to keep the conversation alive*

*You carry on from hour to hour
You get the power and pay the rent
No matter how hopeless, no matter how true
Your love is only alive by accident*

*Chorus: Remember the day you fell in love?
Remember the day that love walked out the door?
Well, that's just the way of the western world
Everything's fair in love and war*

*Your man in London. Your man of string
He'll tie you up from now until then
He'll say he's coming home every hour on the hour
Only to pass into legend again*

*But this is the real world. This is the life
Come what will. Come what may
All in good time you will be mine
One of these fine, blood shot days*

*Chorus: Remember the day you fell in love?
Remember the day that love walked out the door?
Well, that's just the way of the western world
Everything's fair in love and war*

1984 and 1986

I based this song on the relationship of a friend who was attempting the impossible. He was trying to persuade the object of his unrequited desire to forget about her far distant lover. There is something particularly fascinating about someone who is not there. In my own case I know I would never have won the object of my heart's desire if I had not spent 1975 being distantly mysterious in England. The association of these ideas led to this song.

When it was played by the **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY** it was known as "The Modern War". In those days the chorus went:

*Well, that's just the way of the western world
Everyone's fighting the modern war*

The emphasis was all very post punk and politically correct which, for an inner city band with a name like ours, was an asset. We were approached for several gigs, by the Communist Party, the Marijuana Party and others at the Trade Union Club, simply because we were perceived as political rockers. If they had been able to hear the largely personal nature of the lyrics I was singing we would have been run out of town but the PA was never that good.

We sometimes rehearsed in Jane's rented terrace near Victoria Barracks, Paddington and it was, indeed, like a military operation organising the guerilla forces that supported the **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY**. Equipment, transport, provisioning and propaganda all on a shoestring. High morale was comparatively cheap, however, and we usually had plenty of it.

We were driven by a desire to "...pass into legend" ourselves. I suppose we did, in a way. Ever the performer, I remember how I would regularly "destroy [myself] for the company" not only to "keep the conversation alive" but to keep an audience amused.

They really were "fine, blood shot days".

ACT OF FAITH

*When the night takes the sunshine and steals it away
That's day light robbery*

*When a nation sends an army of conscripts and civilians
That's an invasion of privacy*

*When the success and failure judge the drunken sailor
That's an act of piracy*

*And when two people worship the ground that they tread upon
Then that's private property*

*And if someone tells another they will die for them one day
They're talking about an act of love*

*When people say they know a truth that can't be shaken
Then they're lost in an act of faith. (Good luck in there)*

*And when I call your name and you answer me out loud
Then I know why I'm faithful*

3 December 1986

If you have ever travelled by bus along George Street, out through Railway Square into Broadway and then westward, into the sinking sun, down Parramatta Road, then you may be able to imagine where I was when I wrote this lyric. It was about 6.00 pm on 3 December 1986. The band's bright spot light had been extinguished and I had been lost in a deep commuter darkness for a year or so by then.

Marcel Proust was changing my world view. I remember that I looked up from *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* out at the drab world I inhabited. I examined that grey life and wondered what it was that gave it any meaning. This lyric came to me in answer.

I was astonished to find that the only meaning I could bring to my existence was an act of faith. This was disturbing for, as a committed atheist, I had been scornful of the acts of faith that sustain those who subscribe to the religions of the world. I now found myself realising how like a "true believer" I was. The episode is a testament to the arrogance of my youth. I was up to my neck in an anthill of unshakeable truths and I was only now discovering it.

The core of this song is the sense of love and reassurance that may be had from an answering voice to a call. It is often taken for granted, when we hear it, and sadly missed when the call goes unanswered. I learned from this song that personal truth needs to be stirred up every now and then. The reward for this effort is a new sense perspective.

Looking back, the only truly meaningful achievement of my life is that I still know why I'm faithful.

LOVE COLOURS THE NIGHT

*Send me off to the world but let me know the way
To be back in your arms by the end of the day
Put me out on the street beneath the broken sky
But when the work is done home to you let me fly*

*Chorus: When the clouds come in
 When the sun goes down
 You don't have to fear
 Love colours the night*

*Push me out of your life. Break the love we have known
And the darkness will fall down on you, alone
So send me to the world but let me know the way
To be back in your arms by the end of the day*

*Chorus: When the clouds come in
 When the sun goes down
 You don't have to fear
 Love colours the night*

*When you pull down the blind
When you turn out the light
You don't have to fear
Love colours the night*

12 July 1986

As a song writer I have sometimes been accused of being "too obscure" and "difficult" for easy understanding of my lyrics. This song was written to be as straight forward as I could. I began with what I considered simple ingredients. A man goes out to work. He returns home, at the end of the day, to light up the night with the fireworks of his love. The trouble was that as I wrote I began to doubt if such simplicity was anything other than a dangerous fantasy. It was certainly not a reflection of the reality of my own life at the time. Penelope was establishing herself in her career and was never at home waiting for me at night.

When my thoughts turned to the fantastic nature of the life I was trying to create, in this attempt at a direct song, I wondered how anyone would actually live in a situation like the one I had placed these characters in. I came to realise that at the heart of "old fashioned" relationships, may lie the threat in the first two lines of the second verse. Beware the colourless "darkness".

There are more sinister suggestions throughout and the end result is a deceptively simple lyric. The truth needs to be faced. I enjoy being at least a little obscure if I can manage it.

WRITTEN ALL OVER ME

*If we stay up late we can watch Captain America
Save the world from itself but that won't save us
Or listen in to the missionaries
They're dropping bibles over China but that won't save us*

*My Father the ginger bread man had a family
He worked for the government. He worked for an early grave
My Mother the waitress. My Mother the stranger. My Mother the enemy
They won't save me*

*Chorus: Of all the people in the whole wide world
You are the last one I ever dreamed would be
Killing to be written all over me
Look out*

*So the next time you wake up in the middle of someone's wildest dream
I hope it's your own
Every body suffers for one thing or another
I'm only suffering from neglect so show a little respect*

*We used to work hard on our act in the back yard
I may have believed in it all along but you were never that strong
So the next time you wake up in the middle of someone's wildest dream
I hope it's your own*

*Chorus: Of all the people in the whole wide world
You are the last one I ever dreamed would be
Killing to be written all over me*

It was seven years hard labour for a black velvet band

1984 and 1985

Guitars: Siegfried Mirza

This song was the first I wrote after the band and the first recorded on the Fostex home studio. It is made up of various ideas that had originally been written for, and played by, the band. It is, therefore, primarily a reflection on **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY** but there are elements of a bigger picture thrown in.

It was dangerous to be around me in the band days because I was so hungry for song ideas that anything said in my hearing was likely to show up at rehearsal next day in a new song. The first line was borrowed from either Ian or Jane after one of our shows at The Lismore Hotel in Pitt Street, or at The Vulcan Hotel in Ultimo. We would go back to Jane's terrace in Paddington to drop the gear and to wind down. The television was usually only full of morning cartoons, including *Captain America*, by the time we collapsed, euphoric from the gig, in front of it. Religious talk back shows were the only radio alternative. Jane adapted the *Captain America* shield design and we used it for our stage backdrop.

The last two verses express something of the bitter feelings I held at the time of the band bust up. I was angry. There had been a lack of commitment from some of the band members and this had ultimately broken us up.

The last line, taken from the old English folk song, is a reference to the hard years put in to get the music rolling only to now find myself on the other side of my "wildest dream". I felt my destiny had been betrayed and verses three, four, and the chorus, are a warning, to friends and family, to simply "look out".

The feelings of anger and betrayal lasted too long. I later wrote of this in the "The Light Brigade" when I realised that:

*My heroic indifference only took me
Five years longer than it should have*

ALL FORSAKING LOVE

*There's been trouble and there's been happiness too
So long in the making
Between Port Jackson and Botany Bay
You may still find me*

*Chorus: We are the world apart
Do you ever walk among these worldly men
With your true born native heart?
It's a risk I take for this all forsaking love
My all forsaking love. So long in the making
So long in the making*

*All over in a minute
You wouldn't believe how hard I tried to make it last for an hour
You gave away this harbour town for the industrial south
You just gave it away*

*Chorus: We are the world apart
Do you ever walk among these worldly men
With your true born native heart?
It's a risk I take for this all forsaking love
My all forsaking love. So long in the making
So long in the making*

February 1985

I wrote this song when we lived in Alexandria. It was recorded later in 1985 when we had moved to Leichhardt and so I was to be found, quite literally, somewhere "between Port Jackson and Botany Bay". This song, with its fog horn keyboards, has a waterfront feel. This, along with the reference, in the chorus, to the Australian folk song "The Wild Colonial Boy", gives it an atmosphere suggestive of early New South Wales.

There are at least two ways to view the "all forsaking love". In a narrative sense it may describe a lover who has walked out on an affair and headed off to a new life in some industrial metropolis down south. It may also be a reflection of my state of mind following the band. This reading follows on from the theme established in "Written All Over Me" and, as such, the "all forsaking love" is a reference to my music.

I have always identified with the character in Joni Mitchell's song "For The Roses". She describes a scene all too familiar to me: "In some office sits a poet and he trembles as he sings and he asks some guy to circulate his soul around". When I had experiences like this, and walked among the "worldly men with [my] true born native heart", trying to sell my "product", I was taking risks that cost me dearly.

The question in the chorus, addressed to the one who "just gave it away", is a challenge to those who choose never to take any chances. I will always be a "world apart" from people who have not known an "all forsaking love".

FAR CRY

*The campaign went well, in the shadow of Saint Joan, on the hard road
Little Miss Potential said "Nowhere is my home town"
"It's all been done before" you said
When you found your life paralleled in scripture
Remember that a thousand words ain't necessarily a picture*

*Chorus: You can keep your resistance
 While you keep on moving and so will I
 But when you're farther away than any distance
 Will you hear my far cry?*

*On the high seas in basic black rhythm your flags fly
The theme song for the nine lives you are living is "Anchors Away"
On tour your letters from the front they cloud my senses
Now and then your best regards get in behind my defences*

*Chorus: You can keep your resistance
 While you keep on moving and so will I
 But when you're farther away than any distance
 Will you hear my far cry?*

*In the Riverland I was working with the vines
Behind the times
The women at the fort call you Salvation Jane
But I say "What's in a name?"*

*Chorus: It may keep your resistance
 While you keep on moving and so do I
 But when you're lost in that nameless distance
 Will you hear my far cry?*

2 November 1982

Guitar and Backing Vocals: Siegfried Mirza

This is my Broken Hill theme song. It was written on the night bus from Adelaide to "The Hill", the year that Penelope worked at Broken Hill Base Hospital. In my own way I was paralleling Jesus when I wandered after her into that wilderness. I survived on the dole, and what work I could find, rather than embrace another biblical metaphor and get by on manna from heaven.

I worked with my father-in-law-to-be, Max Webster, at Fowlers Gap Research Station, near Tibooburra, as roustabout and research assistant. Mustering sheep on a motor bike, in 50 degree Celsius temperatures, left a permanent impression on me. At "The Hill" I worked mostly for the railways. We played a lot of cricket in the shunting yard between jobs but we also sweated hard in dusty freight wagons loading bales of wool. I worked a couple of months in The Riverland, picking grapes around Mildura.

The characters in this song are on a long journey down a "hard road". They are in love and at war with each other. They have built defensive barriers up to survive their hard journey and this prevents them fully understanding each other. That "resistance" may one day drive them apart. In the choruses I flagged this problem hoping to avoid it myself.

The most traumatic event that year was the break down of my parent's marriage in May. It preyed on my mind and, because of my own plans to marry, I paid special attention to the "far cry".

CARRYING THIS FLAG

*Now my family are all broken up
They live like the shattered glass
That you see scattered by the road
In the long grass*

*And some of them do the best they can
To improve their situation
But some of them are just too innocent
For this convict nation*

*Chorus: And I may work twenty years and I may destroy myself
 And I may keep that rare spirit on the shelf
 But no one will ever know
 That I'll be carrying this flag for you
 I'll be carrying this flag for you*

*Yes I've seen the hungry streets
And I've seen the shackled town
They have stolen away my livelihood
Because I wouldn't be nailed down*

*So I live here in this terrace house
And I walk this wooden floor
Or I sit alone sometimes in the stained glass window light
That still burns in through the door*

*Chorus: And I may work twenty years and I may destroy myself
 And I may keep that rare spirit on the shelf
 But no one will ever know
 That I'll be carrying this flag for you
 I'll be carrying this flag for you*

*When we were fools. When we were serious
We spurred each other on and on and on and on
But now that I am lost without you with me
I still go on yes I still carry on*

April 1985

My parent's separation, and eventual divorce, blew my family apart. Some still suffer the fall out from that explosion. These family elements are in the first two verses. The other verses "marry" this with some aspects of the bust up of the band. Emotional carnage is the theme.

The chorus is different. At the end of 1981 Penelope finished her degree and we came home to Armidale before setting out for her Registration year at Broken Hill. We went to visit the mother of our best friend Kate Smith. Mrs Smith had known us when we first started "going out" together in 1973 but she had always seen better things ahead for Pen. She was a little surprised when we showed up in 1981 still together. We heard from Kate, after our visit, that Mrs Smith had asked, with disappointment in her voice, whether Peter was "still carrying a flag for Penny".

It made me sound like a dreamer who set his sights too high. It implied that I was destined to fly a lonely flag forever and, because it was eerily accurate in many ways, it became a "standard" joke for Penelope and me.

The flag still flies.

A CIVILIAN

*Gretel is a Dutch girl. She wears clogs
She wants to die like a man and to fight like an animal
She says it's hard not to fall off the log
In the lumber river near the paper mill*

*Gretel goes to school in her uniform
And she writes every thing down
She's got seventeenth century hands
And she holds them up and she reaches out*

*Chorus: All right, so she wants to be powerful
She wants to be so, so good
She only wants to be a
Wolf in a riding hood*

*Because she wants to blend in
Like one into a million
In this battle grey world
She wants to be a civilian*

*Gretel is a scared cat and a friend
She wants to fight like a man and to live like an animal
She says it's easy to climb back on the log
In the paper river near the lumber mill*

*Gretel goes to work in her delicate skin
And she holds the job down
She takes her seventeenth century hands
And she hides her modern face in them*

*Chorus: All right, so she wants to be powerful
She wants to be so, so good
She only wants to be a
Wolf in a riding hood*

*Because she wants to blend in
Like one into a million
In this battle grey world
She wants to be a civilian*

"A Civilian" was written about my wife, rather than as an examination of the plight of the "modern woman". In the end it may have become a little of both. Sometimes, beneath the dark hood, I glimpse Penelope as she was; an over achieving school girl. She has now thrown on the mantle of a grown up, over achieving, professional woman. The truth is that she only relaxes when she does her needlework, or similar home hand craft, and this gave me the image of Gretel's "seventeenth century hands".

The mathematical image in the chorus has competing readings. Wanting to blend in "like one into a million" may reflect a wish to be both swallowed up by, or to stand out from, the multitude.

Achieving a place, in the traditional world of men, is the great concern of so called "modern women". This ambition is shadowed by the fear of losing their "civilian" identity if they become just another soldier. To win the war will Gretel abandon "Little Red Riding Hood" to her fate, with Grandma in the woods, and join the rest the "wolves" fighting for power in the "battle grey world"?

The challenge is to have the best of both worlds but can anyone live as a "wolf in a riding hood"?

ROMANTIC WOMEN and TARNISHED SILVER

*I can't believe I'm here sweating beer
My head upon the block
With these romantic women
Singing along with the town hall clock*

*And like the strange, sacred pictures
People bury in their arms
Romantic women bury me
Romantic women do me harm*

*Chorus: They paint the picture and the dye is cast
They hand me a black tomorrow for my tarnished silver past
And by the stretched out highway, down on Judgement Way,
They're handing out damnation at the Terminal Cafe*

*I could be independent of them all
But strong words wear thin
With my head full of weakness
And my heart full of hymns*

*I learned love from film, book and song
And I've welcomed it whenever it was given
But I love and hate and lie in wait
Tarnished silver, romantic women*

*Chorus: They paint the picture and the dye is cast
They hand me a black tomorrow for my tarnished silver past
And by the stretched out highway, down on Judgement Way,
They're handing out damnation at the Terminal Cafe*

5 April 1986

This song appears both as "Romantic Women" and as "Tarnished Silver". "Romantic Women" is an up beat dance song, and "Tarnished Silver" is the sombre acoustic song I recorded on the day it was written. It was a deliberate musical experiment to take a doom laden lyric and see if I could make it a light sounding pop song, that you might dance to a few times before realising that the romantic women are actually the ruin of the singer. I described the effect in a letter to Ian, who was overseas in 1986, as "dancing to damnation".

The verses come from observing three beautiful, tipsy, giggling women at the Town Hall bus stop in George Street, Sydney. I was on my way home from work. It was a humid, overcast day and I had enjoyed an ale, or two, myself. At the stroke of six the Town Hall clock played the Big Ben tune and all three "romantic women" spontaneously sang along at the top of their voices.

I longed to join in but a world of convention prevented me. As the last bell tolled they laughed like crazy with the sheer exuberance of the song, oblivious to everyone but themselves. All this unattainable youth and beauty so near, and yet so far, made me feel love, lust and loathing as a single emotion.

The Terminal Cafe might be any where but I first saw this unfortunate name above the door of a rough eatery at the Pioneer Bus Terminal in Adelaide in 1982. These lyrics strike me now as very bleak but, while they may have been "handing out damnation at the Terminal Cafe", some of us were handed out a little silver polish.

BREAK THE CODE

*You can make me cry like a baby you know
You can make it all seem worth while
But all I really want, all you have to give,
Is the life still left to live*

*Chorus: Even though you spoke your mind
That silent night on the open road
It still took the fallen tears and all the fallen years
To break the code*

*You can make me feel that I don't belong
You can make me long for your smile
All that I was and all that I am
All that I will ever be*

*Chorus: If there were things I hadn't seen
If I was unaware of the cold behind the burning stare
It still took the fallen tears and all the fallen years
To break the code*

*Even though you spoke your mind
That silent night on the open road
It still took the fallen tears and all the fallen years
To break the code*

29 March 1986

Written as an expression of what may be a problem unique to me but I suspect it to be shared by many. When it comes to the subtleties of a relationship I often have the feeling that I fully understand a situation only to realise later that I am wrong.

In the worst cases, these misunderstandings last for years, until one day you realise that you have given offence through some word or action that you did not mean and, because it took too long to realise, the unintended hurt can never be forgiven. The first chorus describes this phenomenon.

We all have codes that only the trusted in our lives know. It is our way of protecting our deepest privacy. That sacred realm into which we allow only those who press the right buttons.

How do you dare to break that code when the stakes are set so high: "all that I really want, all you have to give, ...the life still left to live"?

CHAOTIC BLOODHOUNDS

*We're all chaotic bloodhounds if you stop to take a look
And we're snarling for the cameras when we get our pictures took
When you're a chaotic bloodhound it's all hunt, hunt, hunt
All chaotic bloodhounds. All only keeping up a front*

*When I was wild I loved my cage
I'd swing on the bars and act my age
Sometimes I'd lie awake and listen to the mad, mad dogs bark
My fear of the dark*

*We're all chaotic bloodhounds if you stop to take a look
And we're snarling for the cameras when we get our pictures took
When you're a chaotic bloodhound it's all hunt, hunt, hunt
All chaotic bloodhounds. All only keeping up a front*

*Nobody I know is a kid any more
None of us have ever been this old before
We have got to be happy scratching our livings and leaving our marks
It's our fear of the dark. It's our fear of the dark*

29 March 1986

The "fear of the dark" line is another I borrowed from a member of **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY**. I remember Jane's heart felt conversation with me, in that old kitchen in the Greens Road terrace, about the terrors she feared when alone in the dark. The terrors that lurked in the unwashed dishes, piled into perilous towers in the sink, seemed more of an immediate danger to me, at the time. I callously wrote her secret fear into a song without understanding the anguish it would cause.

Jane actually punched me the first time I played this song to her. She was not willing to share her private fears with the world. She saw it as a breach of trust. I assured her that not only was she not alone in fearing the dark, there was almost no chance of "the world" ever hearing the song or identifying her from it. In my defence I argued that the song makes broader use of the phrase as, in context, it refers to "the dark" that lies beyond our earthly existence. Nevertheless, she insisted that the band never play it.

Our stiffly smiling obsession with immortality, that people hope to achieve through getting their portraits made and pictures taken, is addressed in the first verse. I hear this song both as a statement about the futility of pursuing immortality and work. I saw work as a mind numbing, soul destroying prosaic ritual right up until I got the first interesting job of my life in 1990.

"Chaotic Bloodhounds" also refers to my, so called, "wild days". I was happy as a young man to push the limits in any way I could and then crawl back to the safety of my "cage". It was one of those "cages" guarded by families and made all the more insufferable as the bars are warm beds, food, washing and, by the time I was ready to be released into the wild for the last time, a diminishing supply of unconditional love.

As my "mad, mad dog" friends and I are tamed by our age, the depressing reality of living in a late twentieth century Western Society becomes bitterly clear. There is little choice but to be "happy scratching our livings and leaving our marks". If you are not happy with it then you will live in fear of the light, as well as the dark. If that is your fate I pity you. I lived that way for many years and chaos reigned.

THE SPHINX

*I have lived in Alexandria. The sand lion with the woman's head,
Looks down upon the town and bleeds that desert red
But every day it crumbles and leaves me in this place
With my lion heart and my human face*

*Chorus: I was fired with ambition
To see how far I could get
But in the cold, clear light of day
When the smoke was blown away
I was only burning with regret*

*And yes I have been dreaming about what lies beyond the ridge
But I'll be down in Sydney town 'til they tear the scaffold off the bridge
And I have some saintly friends and I have lived in the wild
But every one gets lonely, even Jesus was an only child*

*Chorus: I was fired with ambition
To see how far I could get
But in the cold, clear light of day
When the smoke was blown away
I was only burning with regret*

*Believe it now. Believe it now and then.
Believe that I've done all the things
That people expect themselves to do
I've lived hard and I've played hard
But I've done all the easy things too*

*But the every day will crumble down and leave me in this place
With my lion heart and my human face*

*Chorus: I was fired with ambition
To see how far I could get
But in the cold, clear light of day
When the smoke was blown away
I was only burning with regret*

12 April 1986

I was looking back at our time living in the Sydney suburb of Alexandria with this song. The name Alexandria clearly jangled dream bells in my head of romantic ancient Egypt. Despite this exotic association the song is Sydney specific in many ways. The second verse refers to two great landmarks of Australia; "the ridge" - the Great Dividing Range - and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. There is a joke that goes; "you Sydneysiders are bloody hopeless. You've been building that bridge for years and it's still covered in scaffolding" and this is one source of the image, although the execution scaffold image is an intriguing alternative, given the religious themes that follow.

The chorus reflects my thwarted musical ambition, the passionate flames of which had died down, by 1986, into a smouldering regret. The musical build up to the last line of the chorus caused conflicting emotions for Ian when he first heard it. He told me later that he wanted the line to be accompanied by a fury of sound, rather than this brooding, resigned melody. As we had shared a similar musical ambition I understood the passion but, for me, regret had set in and I could no longer rage against my fate.

The second part of the second verse has a reference to my "saintly" friend Chris Clark. Chris has been one of the greatest supporters of my music. He has been generous with his time and money. He often drove the **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY** to gigs and bought us equipment when we were desperate. His most significant contribution, however, is the many hours of intense discussion we have enjoyed on the nature of what I call "the great unknown" but that he calls "God".

We have known each other since High School but became great friends out at the Pine Forrest on my Bucks Night, the evening before my wedding. It was then we first discovered that we were both slaves to our inquiring minds.

The "only child" line refers to Jesus' claimed "Son of God" ancestry, rather than to his human family for, among them, it seems, he had a younger brother, James. Apparently James and Jesus had the same mother, and while there is little doubt that James' father was Joseph, Jesus' father appears an altogether more mysterious and "sphinx like" character to me. Chris may not agree.

BREAKING THE ICE

*I sat with my feet on the desk
Wanting to tell you but you know the rest
Just taking the time of day
Lost in the loneliness, you know the way
These feelings home in on you
And before you even know it they've torn you in two*

*Chorus: Here I am paying the price
 Breaking the ice*

*You gave me this winter world
With the hot little hands of a cold little girl
You gave me the old and the new
If I have anything I owe it to you
Who would have thought I would be
The snow man you made me*

*Chorus: Here I am paying the price
 Breaking the ice*

1980 and 14 April 1986

This song's first verse, chorus, melody and 3/4 rhythm were written sometime in 1980. I remember my one bedroom flat, of the time, in Annandale. It had natural light for five minutes only around noon because most of the windows looked straight across a four foot wide alley at a brick wall. There was one window, however, that had an aspect. It looked directly out at an advertising billboard of the Marlboro Man that towered, ironically enough, above The Great Western Highway.

From this window I could also see the sky. I had my desk under it and some of my finest moments were spent listening to "escape music", such as Joni Mitchell's "Hejira" and Springsteen's "The River", while sitting with my feet up on that desk with a cup of black coffee for company. The chorus of my "Song About Forever" also refers to this time with its "black coffee sister" image. The winter wasteland imagery was as far removed as possible from the dark humidity that I lived in then.

I revisited "Breaking The Ice" in 1986 and wrote the second verse at that time, which is also when I recorded it. I have a mental picture, during the bridge of this song (that's the mournful wailing bit between the second and third chorus) of a forlorn ice man wandering lost and alone in the "winter world".

Like many of my relationship songs this is of a broken love. My sister, Judy, once asked me why I wrote depressing songs when I appeared to be happy in love. The answer I gave was that "to be happy in love is to know, at the back of your mind, that one day you may be all the more devastated, by the loss of that love".

It sounds too neat, when written down like this, but there is an element of truth in it for all that. Paul Valery, paraphrasing and adapting the Book of Genesis, put it this way; "God created man, and finding him not sufficiently alone gave him a companion to make him feel his solitude even more".

I am not trying to establish credentials, or justify my lyrics. I am simply saying that to be human is to be, every now and then, "lost in the loneliness".

GHOST AROUND THE TOWN

*The fragile little men we were back then
Still ghost around the town
In their parent's cars and late night grease bars
It's hard to live down*

*I was scorched by the torch we held up
In the face of disaster
Brave words on our lips but still caught in the grip
Of the feelings we were trying to master*

*Chorus: So let's walk through the walls
 We've been trying to tear down
 With the strength of ten fragile little men
 It's time to ghost around the town*

*On thunder days in the rain years
We'd drive out to the dam
And all I wanted was to live forever
The last wish of a drowning man*

*We used to fall about like leaves
Sometimes real and sometimes phantom
Kicking through the autumn streets
Singing youth's silent anthem*

*Chorus: So let's walk through the walls
 We've been trying to tear down
 With the strength of ten fragile little men
 It's time to ghost around the town*

Bruce Springsteen's "Born to Run" is the anthem of my youth. "Ghost Around The Town", because of the different musical treatment and the comparatively few people who have heard it, is "youth's silent anthem". Both songs describe essentially the same phenomenon. Young kids getting their driver's licenses, borrowing a car and chasing through town, out to the local grease bar, beach or amusement park, just to "hang out" and to escape for a short time.

In Armidale the thing to do was to cruise the main street, or "drop a mainy" as we called it. The whole of Armidale's youth culture was changed forever when Beardy Street was closed to become a pedestrian mall. It forced kids out to surrounding country water holes and dams, where other excitements lurked.

My friend and main driving partner during these years was Ian Peters. Despite all the restless road miles, he eventually made the choice to stay in Armidale. This song evokes powerful memories for me of those "autumn streets" and the New England cold. I had no idea where I wanted to be, except that "anywhere else" sounded like the place to start.

When my friends left school, went to University, or got jobs and bought their own cars, we would still drive around town at night, but their futures were calling out to them. I had not heard my future call and so I just drifted south, hoping to make the "brave words" real through music.

I moved on but part of me remained. You may still see him, and the rest of the "fragile little men", at night as they "ghost around the town".

BURN OUT YOUNG

*Most people in town
They are good men, good women
And it's a battle to keep them down
So I keep away
I let them come home peaceful and quiet
At the end of every week day*

*Chorus: Some days they just swing by
 And everyone hangs on your every word
 (Hangs on your every word)
 So don't just stand there son
 Burn out young*

*Now all my criminal friends
Came from good homes, good families
But they could not live in them
Now only one thing's sure
Even my criminal friends
Live within the law*

*Chorus: Some days they just swing by
 And everyone hangs on your every word
 (Hangs on you every word)
 So don't just stand there son
 Burn out young*

8 May 1984

One of the best performed **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY** songs. We played it so well, one memorable night at the Harold Park Hotel, that I thought we could really be a world class band. Later that same evening we doubled up with a three hour show at Frenchs, in Oxford Street. A desk recording was made of this second show and these days it makes for amazing listening. Our songs were long if they stretched out to three minutes. There was so much energy in the performance that you can sense the audience being dazzled by the frenetic speed of the music and the furious barrage of words.

It was first recorded at Alexander Mackie College in the eight track studio, as one of Jane's study projects, but was never used because Ziggy sang the chorus so that it sounded like "Burn Our Tongues", or possibly "Burn Oaow Chung", which seemed a mysterious message apparently addressed to the Asian Community.

It is an "outsiders" song with elements of adolescent rebellion and contempt for those "criminal friends" who eventually learned how to "live within the law". It turned out to be prophetic as I did not just stand there, I eventually learned how to live in the "good homes" and "good families" and I did "burn out young".

The bells that start and close the song bring to mind images of school bells, church and death. All of which are appropriate as they lead into the martial imagery of the next song, "War Bride". This connection suggests to me the enthusiasm for war that the young of most ages have been seduced by. In this way it is possible to see these two songs working together.

In a broader sense, the fire that "burns out young" and the fires that "burn out in the great unknown" may be one and the same. The hope is that, despite the passing years, you can keep the embers smouldering just enough so that the spark remains alive.

WAR BRIDE

*(When Johnny comes marching home again Hoorah Hoorah
We'll give him a hearty welcome then Hoorah Hoorah
The bells will ring and the girls will shout
The ladies they will all come out
And we'll all feel gay
When Johnny comes marching home)*

*When you march home
Will you have trouble being harmless here?
Year after year after year*

*When you land
They'll crawl out of the woodwork to shake your hand
Every confident woman. Every conscientious man*

*Chorus: The war bride talks across the fence
About her marriage of convenience
She has grown old beneath the blue tongued sun
When you march home you will seem so young*

*In the still life
Picture that we live in here, we get by
Year after year. I don't know why*

*Now and then
We're all a little like clockwork. A little like toy soldier men
Let the machinery wind down, I still feel dangerous when...*

*Chorus: The war bride talks across the fence
About her marriage of convenience
She has grown old beneath the blue tongued sun
When you march home you will seem so young*

7 December 1983

"When Johnny Comes Marching Home": Anon

This song was not played live by the band but Tim Rollinson, Ian and I did record a version of it on the Tascam 144 during 1984 up in Ian's roof top flat, high above Bondi Road, Bondi. It was a great view up there and for this reason we would endure the back breaking load in, up six flights of stairs, so we could rehearse and record on top of the world, looking out to sea. Far eyed dreamers of the glorious future as we were.

I always saw this song as an answer to, or an expansion on, "When Johnny Comes Marching Home". In the second half of the nineteen seventies I had often played "Johnny", with my father on piano and my sister on flute, at Jubilee Road, Armidale. Those sad E minor chords taught me how tragic a song it actually was in contrast to the usually happy version people play.

The return of the soldier, traditionally, is a time of celebration and gaiety. I was too young for Vietnam but I grew up in a post-Vietnam world that seemed saddened by Johnny's return and did not rejoice at it. The effect of this on Johnny is one aspect of this song.

I was also interested in the "War Brides" who stayed in Australia, who aged "beneath the blue tongued sun" and who talked across suburban, paling fences looking for consolation, while Johnny was away and, sadder still, even after he had marched home.

I became interested in Irish music after the **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY** and the use of "Sally Gardens" is a feature of this song. Another is the ongoing dilemma in my life: do I "take a public life for this private hell"?

The chorus had already been in several songs before finally finding a home here. I have described where I lived when I first wrote it in the story of "Breaking The Ice". My "black coffee sister" is an amalgam of Joni Mitchell, who taught me so much about music, and Penelope who taught me so much about myself and, amongst other things, how to drink coffee.

Trevor and I used this chorus in our song "Off By Heart" which lies neglected in the Tascam 144 "vault". From 1987-1988 "Song About Forever" was played with great passion by **THE SONG**. It was always too harrowing for me to sing unscathed and rehearsals, and performances, were, therefore, a personal catharsis at this time.

I have always been too close to my music for my own good. At the time it was recorded I was embarrassed at the private emotions in the vocal performance but perceptions change with time. It seems one of my best vocals now simply because of the honesty.

To find out what form my public life actually took read on to the story surrounding the writing of "Impossibly True".

DESERTED WORLD

"Loneliness is only a love away" (Drunk in the rain)

*I drank to your country
And I danced in your snow
I drowned in your sorrow
About half an hour ago*

*Ring me up and wring me out
Put your lips up to the phone
And whisper in a whisper
What it is to be alone*

*Chorus: Yes, it's a deserted world
In a crowded kind of way
But you'll forget what I say
Because love is only a loneliness away
(Because love is only a loneliness away)*

*I am over committed
Don't you understand?
From the first time that I saw you
I was a conquered man*

*I walked into your spot light
And I died on your centre stage
You opened up the book I'd been working on my whole life
And you found yourself on every page*

*Chorus: Yes, it's a deserted world
In a crowded kind of way
But you'll forget what I say
Because love is only a loneliness away
(Because love is only a loneliness away)*

26 August 1987

The main lyric in the chorus is a variation on the line written by esoteric Rock genius Jules Shear: "You see love as time between tragedies". True to my optimistic nature you will note that my variation is the reverse of this. The "drunk in the rain" introduction, however, does take the more maudlin view.

Although it was written some years after my all consuming passion for Russian literature, it is against a Russian snow scape that I imagined this love story to be set. The "deserted world" may be anywhere you live, even if you live among millions of people. This idea is repeated in the stage fright image in the fourth verse. I know only too well the feeling of dying alone in front of an audience and in the middle of a crowd.

The last two lines of this verse are inspired by an incident from my past. I was alone in Penelope's room and I found her diary. It was a beautiful book with pictures and poems from her mysterious inner world and, like a bull in a china shop, I crashed guiltily around inside. When she came in and saw me reading it I was embarrassed beyond expression and she was angry beyond forgiveness. I made some lame excuse about not knowing what I was reading and she put the book away forever.

We never really talked about it but I knew I had trespassed on sacred ground. Since that day she has either not written another poem or never allowed me to see any.

"Deserted World" is a love song and an apology from me to her.

SONGS OF A STRONG LAND

*Chorus: "In the evening and at the going down of the sun
We will remember them. We will remember them"*

*Your hair fell down like tortured willow
On the bed of nails and the satin pillow
But I put my clothes on in the dark
And ran out through War Memorial Park*

*There's a changing moon and a prodigal sun
That makes my heart beat and my blood run
So when you wake try and understand
That a weak man hides in the songs of a strong land*

*When I was young soldiers marched up our street
With fear in their bellies and boots on their feet
And I knew I was not like them
I knew age would weary me and the years condemn*

*So when you wake only to find
These words and melodies left behind
There'll be just one thing to understand
A weak man hides in the songs of a strong land*

*Chorus: "In the evening and at the going down of the sun
We will remember them. We will remember them"
In the songs of a strong land*

23 January 1987

Chorus and third verse lyrics are from "The Ode".

This song is a further exploration of the subjects in "War Bride". I imagined a young man leaving his lover's bed to sneak off and enlist, having had his head filled up with patriotic "songs of a strong land" and other heroic propaganda.

My mother worried and fussed about me when I was young so that one day, in my frustration, I asked her why she was so anxious for me to do well. Her answer shocked me. She said that she worried because if there were to be another war she wanted to give me every advantage so that I might be in the best position to survive. I remember saying something about how unlikely it was that I would ever have to fight in a war but as I look back now I realise how innocent I was, and how lucky.

My parents' generation grew up with the Second World War. They lived to see Vietnam destroy the innocence of the next generation and I see how perfectly likely it must have seemed to my Mother that I may go the same way. When I came to study history myself I realised that mine is one of the few generations of any age never to have had to go to war. It does not make me feel particularly grateful, I have had other battles to fight, but it makes me wonder how I would have survived. This song is an examination of these feelings.

The last verse gives a slightly different angle to it in the reference to my own "words and melodies", and to my own weakness. The idea of getting up one morning and just walking away, is the recurring fantasy of the "great song traveller" I wish I had the courage to be. The next song, "But For Now...", also looks at this dream.

BUT FOR NOW...

*There's an old anchor at The Gap
And there's a light house on the hill
And the ships at sea shine their lights at me
I've promised not to go but I know I will*

*To stay would kill the dream
The little dream of the little child
That got buried inside this full grown man
Outwardly tame, inwardly wild*

But for now...

*Remorseless and disgraceful
Are the lights of the twentieth century
And they're almost all I can see
Through the cloud that has come down on me*

*So one day I'll cut that anchor away
And I'll tie that light to my brow
And I'll let the wild man go
But for now...*

But for now...

5 December 1986

When my brother turned twenty one my family and I had a meal together at Watsons Bay. Afterwards we walked up to The Gap on Sydney Harbour's south head. From there I saw the distant lights of the ships that plough up and down the eastern seaboard of Australia. Some of them coal ships, south bound for Wollongong, and most of the rest a part of the local fleet but, as the low cloud came rolling in, the fires of wanderlust started licking at my stay-at-home-heart. As Mole, in *Wind In The Willows*, must have felt when he first turned his mind to the "big river", I was lost in dreams of sights and sounds that completely obliterated any sense of "home".

We had talked all night of the travels that my brother had just returned from and, with this in mind, the image of "the world", that the ship's lights fired in my imagination, was overpowering. I turned from these dreams, of exotic, far away places and looked back at "the lights of the twentieth century", which is Sydney at night, and realised the crushing reality of my life. For the time being I had to put "the wild man" back in the cage and content myself with the dream in the last verse.

I walked back down, passed the anchor of the *Dunbar*, and out into the "remorseless and disgraceful" world of my daily routine. Later that night, back home amid the suburban anonymity of Leichhardt, I consoled myself with the writing of this song.

TAKE IT FROM ME

*I should work at settling down
I should make something of myself
I know that should come easy
But it never came that easily to me*

*Way up north there's a great muddy river
Carving up the country as easily as you please
But when I try to cut my own head way
The country won't take it from me*

Chorus: You can take it from me

*Trees in the forest grow so high
Like they're aiming to head butt the sky
But when I aim up at the stars
They always cut me down to size*

*Sleepy great mountain with back bone boulders
Broods and threatens me all day
If I take that message from the mountain
The river would simply wash me away*

Chorus: You can take it from me

*Way up north there's a great muddy river
I'm going to take you there*

3 July 1988

This is the story of someone out of place in their environment. He looks around to learn from the natural world and learns only that he is not as strong as the river, as threatening as the mountain, as mighty as the forest or as beautifully remote as the stars.

This song comes from the time we lived in the Blue Mountains. I was still working four days a week down at Chatswood, which is a two and a half hour train journey away. At the same time I was attending University full time. With five hours travelling a day I was able to study and write, but my heart was not content. I was haunted by the dream of jumping in the car and heading "up north". Reliving the drive that took me alongside the "great muddy river", with Penelope, Judy and Ian, in the summer of 1981.

The chorus of this song captures something of the ambiguity of my state of mind. It works in several ways; "take it from me mate, I would not lie to you", also as a plea for someone to take away my frustration at not being able to "make something of myself" and as a hope that the temptation to run from reality might be lifted so that I might be content with where, and with who, I am.

TAKING TOLL

*Their making overtures like William Tell
They ask me how I am when they know damn well
For my joker, poker face has cracked up into tears
Because of all the bottle and cork years...*

*Chorus: That take their toll on every one
That drag the old out of the young
It's the kicking and screaming
The "Good luck. Goodbye, I'm leaving"
That takes its toll on everyone*

*They whisper in the kitchen until they're hoarse
They use every little gentleness and force
They say they want the truth but what is there to tell?
The truth is they know damn well...*

*Chorus: That it takes its toll on every one
It drags the old out of the young
It's the kicking and screaming
The "Good luck. Goodbye, I'm leaving"
That takes its toll on every one*

It's the kicking and screaming

"Taking Toll" was deliberately written as a catchy pop song. Anyone who writes songs will know the seductive temptation of believing that "If I really wanted to I could write a hit song". The truth is that it is tougher than it sounds. I found out the hard way that I could not write anything other than what I was actually feeling.

The result is to be seen in songs like "Taking Toll" that start off simple and end up inferring too much for the pop song format to happily sustain. It may be intriguing listening but who will buy a song that sounds like a three minute pop song but has an overload of allusion to difficult subjects like alcoholism, separation, loneliness, paranoia, the search for truth, aging before your time and Rossini? The poetry and Rossini fans do not want the Rock arrangement. The song's other elements are often to be found in Country Music but the style of "Taking Toll" is alienating to these fans.

The worrying thing about this "Theory of Popular Song" is the implication it carries that those who have been able to write chart songs may feel, and believe in, the banal doggerel that their songs are often constructed of. This is another way of saying that I don't understand the market place that I have wasted years of my life trying to break into.

When I first recorded this song I took it to Canberra where Trevor and I made a "mock video" of it, and five other songs from **MUSIC FOR SUNDAYS IN WINTER**. It makes for hilarious viewing and I recommend it if you ever get the opportunity.

There are many truths but one undeniable fact is that the "kicking and screaming" have taken their toll on me.

HANG ON MY HEART

*Time flies and don't I know
I've worked my ticket but I don't want to go
It took too much out of me*

*But I won't let it hang on my heart
I'll take it out on the world, they can keep it
But I won't let it hang on my heart*

*Sweet dreams, we built a tower out of them didn't we?
But the cold light of day threw it down
And buried me*

*Last year we had a fire in the forest
We had candles in the courtyard. We had sparks in our eyes
But the promise was a lie*

*And so I won't let it hang on my heart
I'll take it out on the world, they can keep it
But I won't let it hang on my heart*

*Here's luck and here's to the heat of the moment
I hope it won't burn you again
And if you ever remember me at all*

*Don't let it hang on my heart
Take it out on the world, they can keep it
Only don't let it hang on your heart*

12 November 1987

This was recorded with full band arrangements but in the end the most intimate version captured the mood better. There are elements of anger, bitterness and even a paradoxical melancholy optimism in this tale of broken promise.

Like many of the songs written in the Blue Mountains this one reminds me of the deep valley crowded with eucalypts that we lived above. The forest fire image in the third verse comes directly from back burning that local volunteers undertook prior to the summer onset of the bush fire season. While they were setting the fires I talked to a volunteer who reminisced, with great enthusiasm, about the last big bush fire that had roared up our valley. The fire had "fire-balled" from ridge to ridge and the area that our house was built on had been completely burned.

The ash wasteland that was left of our backyard, after the precautionary back burn, was a dramatic reinforcement of this image. The furious winds that whipped across the ridges later that first summer left us no peace in which we might have forgotten the disaster that seemed, thereafter, to be lurking just around the corner. The ruined tower image in the second verse is also drawn from this.

Imagined disasters were part of the reason we eventually left the mountains. Despite this we look back on our time there with great affection. The best thing about the mountains was the sense of escape you felt every day as you came home and wound up and away across the top of the ridges and looked back down on the twinkling distant lights of "the world".

A sense of this separation from reality may be found in the repeated refrain of this song. To suggest that you "Take it out on the world, they can keep it", as a path toward finding personal happiness, is an attitude typical of people who feel outside society in some way. This was true of me when I wrote this. The feeling lasted until I "settled down" in 1990, but I never let it "hang on my heart".

DANCE CARD

*(It was pouring down in Sydney
The band played as I ran for the train)*

*Well I filled my dance card up with your name
It's a name that I hold above the rest
I have whispered your identity in my worst desperation
And it was also in there somewhere with my best*

*For you came to me when legends filled my skies
But when school was the lone reality I knew
So don't be surprised if this destroys me completely
Because, as you might have already guessed, I'm still hung up on you*

*Chorus: We worked up a sweat on the seedy little dance floor
Of a sleazy little night club, beneath a string of party lights
And it's very little wonder that today I'm a little quiet
Because I died at your feet last night*

*Yes I filled the panelled bar up with expensive refreshments
And I shouted all the lords and all the skunks
And I told you that I loved you, and all my other problems
In the half screamed conversation of the semi-drunk*

*Yes I filled up the room with the often ridiculous ramblings
Of the often ridiculous idiot you see before you now
So I've come to seek forgiveness and to ask you out again
But it seems hard to even raise the subject somehow*

*Chorus: We worked up a sweat on the seedy little dance floor
Of a sleazy little nightclub, beneath a string of party lights
And it's very little wonder that today I'm a little quiet
Because I died at your feet last night*

*(Somehow seems I'm always caught
Between the music and the rain)*

30 November 1986

Underage drinking is one of our society's rites-of-passage and, unfortunately, I number myself among the initiated. Having said this, however, the imaginary scene, described in the third and fourth verses of "Dance Card", would be a sad indictment of the nation's youth if real.

I based this song on a bad dream that came to me following my high school formal in December of 1977. In this dream I found out the hard way that English mustard, scooped up by the spoonful, wrapped in a lettuce leaf, swallowed in one gulp and washed down with two schooners of Blackberry Nip is a potentially lethal combination and should be avoided.

It was two hours later that I was able to leave the toilet bowl for the dance floor and attempt to make it up to my dance partner with a shining display of frenetic disco physicality. Not content with the brilliant impression I must already have made I afterwards decided that every one in the bar needed setting straight on the essential meaning of life and several other subjects, on which I recognised myself as the greatest living authority. These actions are so completely out of character that any thought that it recalls actual events from my own life should be abandoned now.

From this dream I speculated, when writing this song, that such a night would inevitably be followed by a morning after that would dawn painfully. I imagined that the worst aspect might be the realisation that the intended tender declaration of love, planned for years, had actually been blurted forth in a roar, so belligerent that it was possible that the woman, sitting three tables away, to be forgiven for thinking it was addressed to her.

To face up to the "adored object" and begin the process of abject apology is the only course. The door opens and she looks at him as though she were about to declare him a putrid slug, of the worst order. She does not do so because her refined sense of delicacy affords her the realisation that such a comparison would be unfair to putrid slugs. In these circumstances, the possibility of a future date would be hard to raise, I imagine.

This song has other aspects. It captures, at the beginning of the first verse, the flight path we lived under in Leichhardt. The first and last verses of this song, in parenthesis, are the last vestiges of a song I wrote with my friend Rhett Armistead in 1977. Rhett and I worked together as storemen at the Eastern Emporium, when I first drifted down from Armidale to the "city that they carved out of the humidity".

Rhett remains a shadowy figure from my past. He looked like Trotsky with a beer gut in a blue singlet, hairy legs and huge black boots when I knew him. He has since returned to the wilds of Queensland and I wonder what ever became of him. He was something of a Svengali figure in my youth and The Tales Of Rhett will one day be a book of their own.

GHOST HOUSE

*I came all the way down here just to find you
I found you gone*

*There were just some things you left behind you
And I was one*

*Now there's a lot of people in the wild world
In the sun. In the rain*

*But all the world's women and all the world's men
Won't be bringing you back again*

*Chorus: So when I look for you
 I'll look for shadows
 And when I call your name
 I'll just be talking to the air
 And when I need you most
 In this house full of ghosts
 You won't be there*

*Now there's a lot of talk about the kind of love
That we can take and we can give*

*And there's a lot of talk about the song and dance
That we live*

*But I came all the way down here just to find you
And I found you gone*

*It seems there are some things you leave behind you
And I am one*

*Chorus: So when I look for you
 I'll look for shadows
 And when I call your name
 I'll just be talking to the air
 And when I need you most
 In this house full of ghosts
 You won't be there*

17 November 1986

I cannot believe this song was written so long ago. It seems like it was just yesterday. Perhaps this is a reflection of the sharpness of the lyric. This song cuts right through me.

There is little to be said about it except that the starkness of "The Ghost House" was something I had aspired to in my songs for years and, having achieved it, I had no idea where to go next. So it left it unplayed except for this version which was recorded the day I wrote it.

No matter what happens I suspect I'll always be looking for shadows and talking to the air. I've have made a life of it so far. One good thing is that you are never alone in a "house full of ghosts".

TALKING DRUMS

*(Oh I don't need a harp or a halo not me
Just give me a breeze and a good rolling sea
And I'll play me old squeeze box as we sail along
With a wind in the rigging to sing me the song*

*Dress me up in my oil skins and jumper
No more on the docks I'll be seen
Just tell my old ship mates I'm taking a trip mate
And I'll see you one day in Fiddlers Green)*

*I saw the sun behind your clouded face
As you packed the moon up in your case
You strapped the stars into your pocket book
But they still shine in your every look*

*I heard the falling water in your tumbling tears
I heard the talking drums in your tender years
And they recount the hurt I overheard
In your every word*

*Chorus: So beat them up, the talking drums
 Let's live for a thousand years
 In the space of a dozen beers
 So beat them up, the talking drums*

*I roughed it out for your feather touch
And I longed for you for too long and too much
Because I had this love to prove
In your every move*

*So maybe I only hoped you'd call
Maybe I only dreamed it all?
But for whatever was and whatever comes
I hear it all in the talking drums*

*Chorus: So beat them up, the talking drums
 Let's live for a thousand years
 In the space of a dozen beers
 So beat them up, the talking drums*

Christmas 1986

First two verses from Fiddlers Green: Anon

I was attracted to the idea of combining the old sailors song "Fiddlers Green", with its elements of poignant farewell, death and the after life with what is, essentially, a love song. The combination of the two gives the song a "far away".

The "talking drums" image suggests the Phantom's jungle, with its fantastic and mysterious dangers and its dark beauty. The sun, the moon, the stars and the rain are locked away "in your every look" or is it only a dream, as the last verse suggests?

The catchy keyboard tune usually gets me up and jumping around. It has a jig like quality which ties it to the "squeeze box" image in "Fiddlers Green". The chorus usually makes me want to crack open a six pack or two and chase, once again, the sensation of invincibility that alcohol allows. The large scale production on this song is also suggestive of this temporary heroism.

This song is about communication. All the passion of the lover, as he sees unearthly beauty in her "every look" and "every move", may be an expression of the hope that she might just give him a call.

All we really need to do is talk, "so beat them up, the talking drums".

MUSIC FOR SUNDAYS IN WINTER

*In the deepest north
And in the darkest south
I set the word birds free
Every time I opened my mouth*

*Now in the distant east
And in the dying west
There are flocks of lonely screams
Looking for nest*

*Chorus: Some people hold together
 But you know I'll more likely splinter
 And I'll spend the rest of my life
 Writing music for sundays in winter*

*From the broken mountain
To the breaking sea
All the tears in the world
Just poured out of me*

*Now in this cold light day
In this world of emotion
There are miles of lonely rivers
Looking for an ocean*

*Chorus: Some people hold together
 But you know I'll more likely splinter
 And I'll spend the rest of my life
 Writing music for sundays in winter*

20 March 1987

Thunder and Rain: The Great Unknown

As soon as this was written it was my new anthem. It came to me in the bowels of Lemongrove shopping centre, at Chatswood. I worked in a concrete bunker, the storeroom for the *House and Garden* shop, from 1985 to 1989. I wrote hundreds of poems and lyrics down there. Sometimes when I had finished my work and was waiting for the next truck to unload, and at other times when I should have been working. For allowing me this it was a great job but in every other way it was horrible.

Some of the people I worked with were friends but none of them knew about my song writing and so I was isolated in a world of underpaid shop assistants all of us united only by our pathetic dreams of one day breaking out. I should not grumble. The job paid my way through University and allowed me time to write.

Some times it was complete chaos in the bunker with the stock piled into towering columns. Almost no sound or light could penetrate in there. It was like a cave, or a jail, depending on your frame of mind. I remember I felt like a prisoner the day I wrote this song. I imagined the "word birds" soaring lonely above the four corners of the world so that, I might liberate my enslaved spirit. In the third verse I looked back at the places I had lived, from the "broken mountain", which is a reference to Broken Hill, to Sydney town.

The reason it became a new anthem for my life is that, ever since I wrote it, I have done little else but live out the prophecy in the chorus.

GRATEFUL

*Chaos rains and the creek floods
And the tyres go spinning in the red mud
And it's just impossible to get any where
So I stick on a tape and I stay right there*

*Later on when the stars are about
I walk to the phone and say "Hey, come and get me out"
Then I wait and stare up at the universe
Knowing deep down that it could be worse*

*Chorus: So I'm grateful for what has been and done
 And I'm grateful for still being a little bit young
 And I'm grateful that there are people like you
 But tell me who I should be grateful to?*

*Down on the corner of Church and Ross
There's a bar that they call the cross
And the bottle martyrs hang there in despair
Dying for the guilty and the unaware*

*Now I was hurt so badly once that I almost died
And I lay on my bed and I cried and cried
I still may not be able to forgive and forget
But at least I'm not dead or desperate, yet*

*Chorus: So I'm grateful for what has been and done
 And I'm grateful for still being a little bit young
 And I'm grateful that there are people like you
 To tell me who I should be grateful to*

30 November 1986

Backing Vocals: Howard Dawson, Ian and Peter

Ever had one of those days? The car's bogged in the red mud and the chaos reigns but, in the end, there are always things to be grateful for. There's the tape player, the phone that works, the "someone" to come and get you out and the whole wide universe that dazzles when you find yourself alone with the time to stare up at it.

This song started out with the emphasis on the spiritual question implicit in the first chorus but, because Howard and Ian thought it was a better lyric as it appears in the second chorus, we ended up with something different. It probably tells you something about me that I would be posing the first question.

In 1987, when Ian was driving taxis, he rang me one night to tell me that he had got a fare from "the bar on the corner of Church and Ross Streets, Parramatta". He was ringing to find out if I had known about this bar when I wrote the song. Although I knew of Church and Ross Streets, I actually chose the street names to reinforce the religious imagery in the third verse, with the "bottle martyrs" hanging in despair for the "guilty and the unaware".

The "hurt" in the fourth verse came to me from the passions of my youth. After a month of "going out" with the young Penelope I was mysteriously "dropped". We had spent what seemed a happy day making chocolate cakes for a school fete and so the news was surprisingly devastating, despite her offer that I would be welcome to "drop in for some chocolate cake sometime".

I cried in my room for two days and nights. On the third day I rolled away the stone and went back for the cake. I had made myself the blood curdling promise, in the depths of those black days, that I would win her back no matter what I had to do or how long it took.

It took me years but my persistence eventually paid off. When I swore to devote my life to this quest I was thirteen years old.

So, despite the question in the first chorus, I have a very good idea of who I have to be grateful to.

The universe still dazzles me.

HERE'S A GOOD SHOT

*I went out to the show as a young boy
And I shot the steel duck for the soft toy
My tacky life, my tacky friends
They came to their senses or to a bad end*

*I stuck it out for as long as I could
It didn't do me any harm. It didn't do me any good
I talked about hitching around Australia
But I was only dancing with failure*

*I only made it as far as the city
You know the one that they've carved out of the humidity
And I yearn and I learn*

*Chorus: Here's a good shot of my father in the beer tent
 Here's a good shot of my mother in the kitchen
 Here's a good shot of the windswept and deserted sea
 And here's a good shot of me*

*I went out to work as a young man
I kicked away my youth like a Coke can
I shaped up to fight The Great Schemer
But I only punched the air like a dreamer*

*So I've drifted from company to company
Looking for the place that was right for me
If we grow up tough here in Australia
It's only because we're all dancing with failure*

*And now I think of my mother's situation
Bringing up the kids in that stinking isolation
And I yearn, and I learn*

*Chorus: Here's a good shot of my father in the beer tent
 Here's a good shot of my mother in the kitchen
 Here's a good shot of the windswept and deserted sea
 And here's a good shot of me*

23 February 1988

Keyboard: Judy Mitchell
Arranged: The Jubilee Street Band

When I was nine years old we moved up to Armidale from Blacktown. My first friend in the strange new town was another misfit from Class C, Chris Kelly. He and I got up to some reasonably disgraceful juvenile behaviour at various venues throughout school and town but the great annual highlight of our "tacky lives" was the Armidale Show. Chris' father ran a trucking company and he would go to the show each night and we hitched a ride up in the cab of one of his cattle trucks.

I loved all the rides and sideshows. I remember getting in under the flap of the "Tent of Venus" and watching an ugly "Venus" do a strip tease. The first female breasts I had ever seen in anger, as it were, but at that age the dodgems and the rifle shooting were more fascinating. I shot many of those little steel ducks, on the continuous belt, once I had mastered the deliberately bent sights. When you got too good the bloke who gave out the soft toys would move you on.

One night Mrs Kelly was also there and at closing time she rounded us up to take us home. We were encrusted in fairy floss, sick from the Dagwood Dogs and basically exhausted. We wandered around for half an hour looking for Mr Kelly. We found him eventually. We could see him in the beer tent. In those days such places were strictly off limits to women and minors. We had to wait for two hours before he staggered out. I recall Mrs Kelly's helpless anger and frustration to this day.

I have mixed these episodes together with other incidents from my life and that of my own family. The chorus is a series of "snapshots" from a family photograph album. Given the subject matter it is more than appropriate that this song was recorded by my sister, brother and me.

It is a "good shot of... " us.

SPONTANEOUS BY DESIGN

*On the woodwork in the bedroom
Is a hung up cardboard sign
That tells me "Beauty Is Fragile"
And you know that I smashed up mine*

*I sit high up on this mountain
My lips locked around a beer
And I imagine all the fortunes
That I'd give just to have you near*

*Chorus: But the beggar wastes his breath
And the pauper spends his time
While the world revolves regardless
Spontaneous by design*

*I'm wearing black now for a living
And it's killing me to know
That there's at least another one dozen others out there
Throwing their lives up at your window*

*So I wait here on my mountain
My life a mere mockery
But I swear I'd get myself together
If you'd only come to me*

*Chorus: But the beggar wastes his breath
And the pauper spends his time
While the world revolves regardless
Spontaneous by design*

12 July 1989

Working with boxes of stock in storerooms I have seen many "Handle With Care" warnings but the "Beauty Is Fragile" message caught my imagination and so I cut it from the box and took it home. For years it was propped up against our wedding portrait, on the bedroom dresser, until Penelope had enough and threw it out. I enjoyed the association of the message and the picture of the two good looking strangers we had once been.

For many years I have promised myself that, if I can get enough shirts in my size, I will always wear black. The image in the third verse also has a funereal connotation. The second verse and the last are set on the balcony at Hazelbrook, in the Blue Mountains, where, with my lips locked around a beer, I easily imagined myself doing a "Mohammed and the Mountain" routine in reverse. The perspective, as in "Hang On My Heart", is from someone cut off by a disinterested world that spins on regardless.

The chorus has religious implications, reminiscent of "Grateful", but basically this is a plea for my lover to forgive and come to me. The title lyric is one of the best and it came to me both accidentally and quite deliberately.

I have taken a leaf out of the universe's "grand design". I plan to always be impetuous from now on.

IMPOSSIBLY TRUE

*Impossibly true
You kissed me like a cyclone
And I awoke with you raging all alone
The sea white with foam*

*And I lay there on the shore, like many had before me
And I knew that you adored me
Like violence loves the fight
Like darkness loves the night. With a love impossibly true*

*You read me like a book
Read my sadness through the ages, dog eared all my pages
Then put me back on the shelf
Disdained my worldly wealth*

*But I hold nothing against you. I've got nothing left to show you
I'm grateful to have known you
Like the desert knows the rain. Like the ecstasy knows the pain
With a love impossibly true*

10 July 1990

I thought I would never write again. I joined the Department of Immigration on 12 February 1990. It was an amazing job from the very first day. I was issued handcuffs, hand held radio and, instead of getting home in time to cook dinner for my wife as expected, I worked until 2.00 in the morning chasing, and arresting, illegal entrants. I was in at the deep end and, apart from detective novels, I was completely unaware of the mysteries of the investigator's clandestine work. To survive I knew instinctively that I had to hide my poetic past and immerse myself in the rules and rituals of this strangely hostile nether world.

I look back at my transition from songwriter to investigator with some embarrassment. I remember, during the first few months, being caught at the office photocopier making copies of a slim volume of my poetry, called **SONGPOEMS**. To cover my blushes I offered my boss a copy, which he accepted. I'm sure that the knowing looks that came my way, in the weeks that followed, from him and the others in my section, were from the novelty of the new boy being "a poet" and the feeling conveyed, that now they had something to use against me one day. I did learn, however, how to make friends of these people and how to play this strange game.

As I came to enjoy increasing levels of responsibility I began to wonder if I might be too successful. By becoming a public servant was I losing my private voice? I thought that if ever I wrote again it would surely be about legislation, file notes, forms, fence jumping, runners, balcony climbs, door kicks and all the other "wolf pack" hunting activities that had come to dominate my life. These were the things of my public life and even though the money was good, I knew I was paying a personal cost by denying my writing. This dilemma had been forecast in "Song About Forever". Was I throwing my secrets to the wind by taking a public life for this private hell?

It is amazing to me that the first song I wrote, after these great changes in my life, was as gentle and delicate as "Impossibly True". It established a pattern that has been unbroken since. I write less often, some years only two or three songs, but when I do the ideas come out in a more direct way.

I do not blame the job for the changes wrought in me. Those who knew me before say I have become a harder person but perhaps I needed to be. I cannot say how the process of simply getting older would have affected my writing in any case. The panic associated with the dry months, when I could not write, has gone. I am sure now that, even though six months or more may pass without a song, one will come.

I have written more prose than poetry lately and my creative life may take me further down the prim prose path. Yet I still mourn the days when I would write four songs before lunch and five more before nightfall. The "word birds" are less desperate for their freedom with the passing years.

Silence loves the song, with a love impossibly true.

HOLY TO ME

*We lie here and talk about your choice
And you choose to endure silently
But I want to hear your voice
Because it's holy to me*

*In the darkness there is a light
That you hide behind the mask
But I will tear it from your face
Because it's holy to me*

*Sunday morning, up at the altar
Another human sacrifice
The gory bells ring in bloody worship
It's another holy day*

*And if I'm wrong to put you up
Like an idol on a pedestal
Then history, all dotted with deity
We will have to re-write*

*We sit here and talk about God
And I lay down the law
No I don't need the Trinity
Because you're holy to me*

Praise the Lord

25 and 29 December 1994

Intrigued by the human need for religion, as I have been over the years, I have never actually directly speculated, in song, on the "worship of false idols" that may be implicit in humans' love for one another. "Holy To Me" resolves this. There is a need in humans when faced by "The Great Unknown" to worship it blindly, explain it away and to, thereby, control it. Much of our history is driven by these fundamentals. I share these spiritual needs but I have identified my "God" a little differently to main stream religionists. Human and natural beauty are all around me and they are worthy enough of worship. Everything else remains "The Great Unknown" and this I will also worship probably right up until the hour that "The Great Known" comes along to take its place.

These images are linked to Christmas and the usual publicity that the Trinity crew generate at this time of year. Of course, the birth of Jesus has nothing to do with the Saturnalia festival that was traditionally celebrated in Europe at this time of year. It is because of this tradition that when Christian proselytizers began to move among the people of so called "pagan" Europe they assigned Christ's birth to this time of year. It was a neat publicity gimmick, orchestrated from Rome as a strategy for conversion, that has taken on so thoroughly that few now realise the dishonesty involved.

I rarely have chosen to endure silently and so I have stated in this song my current position on holiness throughout history. I have ruined many parties because of my habit of laying down the law on this subject. I have become a sacrilege specialist.

Having said all this, it should be noted that "Holy To Me" is really a love song. We recorded it in March 1995 and as such it is a comparatively fresh member of the song team.

"Praise the Lord"

GIRL OF MY DREAMS

*You cut the day wide open
With a steel blue sky
You toy with my emotions
Because it's easier to lie*

*You were always doing things like that
Always dragging out the lonelies
Throwing on a saddle
Or just frightening the ponies*

*Chorus: I wake screaming from my sleep
So tell me what it means when I say to you
You are the girl of my dreams?
You are the girl of my dreams*

*The trees across the valley
Are blown from side to side
And when you blew into my life
Well I just went along for the ride*

*So I don't hold you guilty
But neither are you blameless
And among the local lonelies, my girl
You're almost famous*

*Chorus: I wake screaming from my sleep
So tell me what it means when I say to you
You are the girl of my dreams?
You are the girl of my dreams*

9 February 1989

Like "Romantic Women" this is a song that deliberately sets out to make you initially think it is a happy pop song while the real action goes on beneath the surface. "You are the girl of my dreams" is, perhaps, one of the corniest cliches ever to be used in a lyric, but what if the dreams are actually nightmares?

The physical setting is, once again, up at Hazelbrook as the wind swept "trees across the valley" suggest. I was expecting Ian to come up for the weekend. The plan was to eat and drink too much as usual, and also to record some songs. I wanted something new to play him. I went into the downstairs studio we had set up, with the big glass window that looked out at the "steel blue sky" and the ocean of swaying trees across the valley. I simply wrote down what I was looking at and before long I had the basic idea. The chorus had been around for a while in one of the notebooks I carried with me everywhere I went in case a word or phrase suggested itself for later inclusion in a song.

Writing the music itself for me is always the second step in the creative song process. In fact, once the words are moving in a certain direction, the rhythm and flow of the tune is almost already determined. I usually pick up the guitar and start singing on the first chord I strike. The rest just follows.

I don't mean to suggest that it's easy but I don't believe I have ever picked up a guitar at home without writing a song. There may have been exceptions during the learning years before I could play well enough to keep the chord changes ringing. This may explain why I have not really progressed as a player beyond the rhythm guitarist I was in the bands of my youth. I don't play guitar solely for the pleasure of the craft. I need the vehicle the guitar provides me so that I may take my songs out and drive them home.

I WOULD NOT CALL IT LOVE

*Lonely hours in the flying dark
Out above that ocean of steel
And there she is looking for commitment
But the arbitration needs a new deal*

*Winter looms like an old friend
And the dawn is broken up over every little thing
And there she is looking for commitment
She's sharpening up the nose ring*

*Chorus: I'd call it Lust with a capital L
I'd call it passion born of the fires of hell
I'd call it the stuff dreams are made of
But I would not call it love*

*The hardcore brownstone old town
Sits up and grins like an industrial whore
And there she is looking for commitment
She says "What we need here is another war"*

*With eyes for the slaughter she walks the breakwater
Wearing her tarmac black
And there she is looking for commitment
But I'll be knocking the offer back*

*Chorus: I'd call it Lust with a capital L
I'd call it passion born of the fires of hell
I'd call it the stuff dreams are made of
But I would not call it love*

13 June 1993

This is my American song. I started writing it in my head on the plane as we flew across the Pacific a couple a years ago. The third and fourth verses are "pure" New York City juxtaposed with the French Lieutenant's Woman.

The basic relationship, in the chorus particularly, is taken from something a friend once said about love. He said "Love is just friendship with sex thrown in". It always seemed more complicated to me.

It is a definitional exercise in any case. There are at least as many "loves" as there are humans and, given the multiple capacity of each individual in this regard, the only certainty is that there is no certainty in love.

When we recorded this song, along with "Holy To Me", in March 1995 the basic tracks went down with a folk/ballad arrangement. By the time I had finished the overdubs it was something of a grunge rocker with a nicely dirty guitar sound and a little bit of the lust, passion and dream quality that the chorus lyric demands.

BOXING DAY

*The black cockatoos swoop down
Like a feather avalanche*

*I'm going to fly away
Like a cannon ball*

*The river snaking highway roars
Like an angry ocean*

*I'm bound to sail away
Though I'm burned to the water line*

*Chorus: In your life there is love
 To keep the sadness away
 But in mine love is broken
 Like a toy on Boxing Day*

*Well I rocked the shag
And I shagged the night away*

*But I mourn the youthful dag
In the virginal grey*

*I have walked the mile of crooks
Dragged the naked cross*

*And of all the babbling brooks
I flowed into a sea of loss*

*Chorus: In your life there is love
 To keep the sadness away
 But in mine love is broken
 Like a toy on Boxing Day*

Sometimes at the Blue Mountains the black cockatoos would swoop down the tree lined valley and fly so close to the verandah that I could feel the wind from the beating of their beautiful black wings. I wanted to fly but knew that to get up and jump right out into the air with them would not be so terribly graceful. I had to remind myself that my fate was to remain, for the time being at least, trapped in a land locked body. The emphasis in my reality is, at best, on the avalanche and the cannonball more than the feathers.

From the verandah I could hear the traffic roar of the Great Western Highway and knew that it was a more realistic escape route. The sound of the highway made me think of the sound of the ocean in a sea shell and this association lead me to the image to the burned boat. All these dreams of freedom, mixed up with the sense of regret for the loss of innocence and of love, are combined and simplified in the chorus. The child opens the present on Christmas morning and loves the toy so whole heartedly and passionately that, by Boxing Day, it has been loved to death.

There are some powerful images in this song for me. It is good example of the increased intensity of my song writing in recent years. The chorus idea came from a documentary I saw about a struggling single mother, lost in the darkest depths of a western Sydney summer, who had saved for Christmas all year from her pension. The image of the Christmas joy on her children's faces was in such striking contrast to the devastation of Boxing Day that it made a lasting impression on me.

Christmas is usually the most stressful time of year in any case because of family pressures and because of all the hype about how much fun it is supposed to be. I realised that the combination of Christmas and poverty, despite the lessons available to us from Charles Dicken's famous treatment of the subject, is nothing but a babbling brook flowing into a sea of loss. We start out fresh, innocent and all things are possible, but it's all down hill from there. Loss of innocence is a traumatic process. The "shagging" image in the third verse is in contrast to the other images in this song for this reason.

All the elements of "Boxing Day" were drawn together and first recorded in Canberra. Trevor played a beautiful arpeggio piano arrangement. Unfortunately technical limitations required me to record this sparse version in April 1995 for **THE GREAT UNKNOWN**.

We have placed this song here, in advance of "Poor World", so that you may pass from Christmas and Boxing Day into New Year's Eve. I hope you enjoy the festive season.

POOR WORLD

*(It rained for three weeks solid
You collared me and said it would blow over
You know I was touched by your charity
But it'll be a blessing when it blows over)*

Poor world...

*Poor world, leaks from my plastic pen
Poor world, home of the poor, poor men
Poor world, shelter your perfect
Poor world, bury your dead*

Poor world...

*Poor world, understand
I've driven through your open country
Like a nail through an open hand*

*Poor world, there they are behind you
They rumble by my window
All your sons and daughters come and go*

Poor world...

*Poor world, pity your infants
Poor world, bury your dead
Poor world, I won't be feeling sorry for your poor world*

1988 or 1989

Auld Land Syne melody: Traditional/Burns

The uncertain date of this song indicates something about the way it was created. This was the product of a jam with Ian one day that led from a guitar rip on Auld Lang Syne (in the spirit of Hendrix on Star Spangled Banner perhaps?) into some note book lyrics I happened to have open in front of me that I just kept making up as we went. The first take was pretty good but we stopped, had lunch and a few beers. This version was put down later that day.

We both of us completely forgot about this song until a year and a half later when we were putting **SPONTANEOUS BY DESIGN** together and stumbled across it. I remember our amazement as we listened to "Poor World", with its combination of personal sorrow and the sense of pity for the whole world, all wrapped up inside the emotions associated with Auld Lang Syne. It was too good to leave off and so I added a bass line, which was a little tricky because I had to figure out the progression from scratch as the chords had never been written down.

As we were about to mix it we found another forgotten gem, the song idea called, "Blows Over", that I had thrown roughly onto the tape, with the electric guitar not even plugged in, so that I would not forget the melody idea. "Blows Over" we worked into the introduction, despite the imperfections, with some guitar overdubbing, and there it was. A completely spontaneous by design song that I have always been startled by because of its coincidental and somehow self written origins.

The performances are loose but enjoyable on this. The drum roll toward the end is one of the best. It is all the better for the uncertainty about where we were going which can be sensed especially in the change after the first verse. I enjoy the guitar work because I did not know how Auld Lang Syne actually went and so I just got lucky as I stumbled through it.

Overall it has the suggestion of a "New Year's Eve party at the end the world" with the crucifixion imagery thrown in to nail the "Poor World" idea down.

THE LIGHT BRIGADE

*We went out like the light brigade
Confined our aggression to the tarmac
And charged through this china shop city
Like a couple of wounded animals*

*Now I don't miss your isolated company
As much as I thought I would have
And my heroic indifference only took me
Five years longer than it should have*

*One day I just dragged out the old overcoat
That you lived in when it was your desire
To expose me to your over protection
And yes, it made a beautiful fire*

*It flickered around in the evening
Like bubbles in a glass of lemonade
And it gave me a moment's reflection
Until it went out like the light brigade*

Until it went out like the light brigade

10 March 1989

A simple story. The first verse is a brief reflection on a former relationship. The second records that the grieving took five years too long to get over, while the third and fourth verses describe the symbolic end of that sadness with the burning of an old overcoat. The whole process by this time little more than "a moments reflection".

A complex story. The first verse is a recollection of Ian and me as we thrashed around the edges of the music industry. Too easily wounded by rejection for this "convict nation". The second verse puts a brave face on the grieving that took place after the band broke up. The last two verses describe the burning of a symbolic protective overcoat that is the last act in coming to terms with the fact that I am no longer young and that the dream is over.

In either story the image of the charge of the Light Brigade, doomed to inevitable and foolhardy failure, is central. It doubles up as an image of the beautiful, lemonade fire in the last two verses which is in keeping with the double meanings that lace through this song.

This is the last of the home recorded songs and, because it suggests that I am now heroically indifferent to the broken dreams of my youth, it is the last life context on **THE GREAT UNKNOWN**.

I WANT YOU TO BE WITH ME

*Pink galahs like fireworks
Explode from off the highway
And light up the urban grey sky*

*Working days will get you
Just a couple of dollars richer
Don't it make you wonder why?*

*Chorus: I want you to be with me
In the lonely sky
And out on the grey sea
I want you to be with me*

*The eucalyptus blues
Are watching over you
The sinking sun sinks on by*

*And for just the price of leaving
And for as easily as believing
The highway will let you fly*

*Chorus: But I want you to be with me
In the lonely sky
And out on the grey sea
I want you to be with me*

24 September 1993

Lead Vocal and Acoustic Guitar: Peter Mitchell
Drums: Ian Mitchell
Electric Guitars: Ian Woolsey
Bass: Colin Sharp
Backing Vocals: Ian Woolsey and Colin Sharp
Engineered: Russell - Damian Gerard Studios
Arranged and Produced: THE RUDIMENTS

(Photographs and captions)

KING OF THE LAND

*Let me tell you about my dream
In it I walk beside a spring stream*

*I was born like many others
Neck deep in love that smothers
Mother, school, sex, education
Cars, love, masturbation*

*I re-lived my father's mistakes
Hit the throttle, the bottle and the brakes
Now I cling to other apron strings
This job, this city and a million other things*

*Some days I could just throw it all in
Drive back home, start again
But I stay here for the girl married
The money owed, the children carried*

*Let me tell you about my dream
In it I walk beside a spring stream*

*With my red cap in my back pocket
I step up and piss on the flag
My old car revved up and rumbling
I light up this ribbon road rag*

*Wood grain Telecaster cranked up and wailing
I count in the band
Black eyes, shirt, hair waving
I step out like a king of the land*

*Let me tell you about my dream
In it I walk beside a Springsteen*

17 June 1994

Lead Vocal and Acoustic Guitar: Peter Mitchell
Drums: Ian Mitchell
Electric Guitars: Ian Woolsey
Bass: Colin Sharp
Backing Vocals: Ian Woolsey and Colin Sharp
Engineered: Russell - Damian Gerard Studios
Arranged and Produced: THE RUDIMENTS

(photographs and captions)

RUDIMENTS OF LONELINESS

*Chorus: I learned from you the rudiments of loneliness
I learned from you those fundamental laws
And I wrote them down, just like Martin Luther
And I marched across the city and nailed them to your door*

*But if I'd saved up all my money
Like I saved up all my tears
I could pay a snake oil doctor
To cut away some years*

*And I'd cut away all the lonely ones
That I barely lived through
And I'd keep them in a pickle jar
To remind me of you, because...*

*Chorus: I learned from you the rudiments of loneliness
I learned from you those fundamental laws
And I wrote them down, just like Martin Luther
And I marched across the city and nailed them to your door*

*Now I trade all my working hours
For a glass of liquid mystery
All my future's sour
And all the rest that's just history*

*My friends all ask me
Who could have done this to me
But they will never know
It was insidiously kissed to me. That's how...*

*Chorus: I learned from you the rudiments of loneliness
I learned from you those fundamental laws
And I wrote them down, just like Martin Luther
And I marched across the city and nailed them to your door*

1991

Song and Vocal: Peter Mitchell
Drums: Ian Mitchell
Guitars: Ian Woolsey
Bass: Colin Sharp
Engineered: Russell - Damian Gerard Studios
Arranged and Produced: THE RUDIMENTS

(photographs and captions)

RIGHT OF REPLY

(Photograph - hooded pharmacist)

"He's not the Messiah. He's just a naughty boy."
From Monty Python's "Life Of Brian".

CAPTAINS OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

*Those were the days
Yes, it's cheap to say
When, in fact, it was the worst two years of measured oblivion
In the last four decades*

*Twenty four months of racking the body rain
Twenty four months of sing song saturation
Twenty four months of artful noise and ability
But perhaps only twenty four hours of actual inspiration*

*And for some even a day was too long
Because, for them, success is only measured in dollars,
Bums on seats and
Beers down collars*

*For years afterwards I could drive down Oxford Street,
Through the tailor made square,
And see the frenchman's tavern
With a little piece of our poster still stuck up there*

*And it's grist for wisdom
Blood and bone for hindsight
So that I now don't even try
I've stopped pretending that the "timing just wasn't right"*

*The truth is that a personal lyric is the last thing
The punters want to hear
So pump out the mechanical love songs
Because it's just too embarrassing that other gear*

*So if you find this too close to my bones
You'll understand why I never "made it"
And if this rattles your chain then I know how you feel
Because it's unlikely that you're going to "make it" either*

[Biographical note: In 1984 and 1985 the author was a member of a great unknown band. He continues to live in Obscuria]