

The Piper Plays his Tune

Masters of My Past

For them no longer dusty books, clouds of chalk and secret looks
Marked absent again today, masters of my past
By night I tread those corridors, of contraband and hidden stores
“Plane face side, edge and mark!” lessons still go on.
But oh Victoria in the rain, I never will go there again
To maps and caps, dissected rats and masters of my past.
“Look in the book at page sixty nine.”
The penny drops, the sun will shine
We’ll get through to break, dreaming of cake
And hope the day ends soon, I hope this day ends soon.
And now they stand before the Head,
stomachs clenched , it’s them instead
Have you all won a prize or are you doing lines?
Oh Victoria in the rain, I never will go there again
To maps and caps, dissected rats and masters of my past

*Do you ever dream of being back at school? I do and I’m sorry to say it is always a nightmare... Homework not done, not having a clue where I am supposed to be, you know the kind of thing.
We lived in a council flat in the sixties and I went to a grammar school in Victoria in the centre of London.
Although there were some wonderful teachers, there were also some that terrified me.
Looking back now I realise how lucky I was to have that opportunity but they were not the best and happiest days of my life.*

Broken

I can’t seem to sleep tonight, I’m longing to see the light
I can’t seem to sleep tonight, I’m longing to see the light
It’s four o’clock in the morning,
my head is spinning round and I can’t sleep
And the words we left unspoken echo in my mind,
they run deep
Floating in freefall, I wait for your call, you’re not here with me.
I can’t seem to sleep tonight, I’m longing to see the light
The rain falls on my window, the world keeps spinning round and I can’t sleep
The lives we left behind us, photos on my phone, I can’t keep
Floating in freefall, I wait for your call, you’re not here with me.
You and I are broken and there’s no way back it seems
But I will try and make it right, if only in my dreams
We ran this race together, and we almost reached the end
Now it seems we’re lost forever, it’s hard to be just friends.

A song about a good relationship gone wrong. I had great fun with this one trying to do my impression of Motown backing singers giving it my best falsetto.

In Love

On a desert island he took his knife
and he longed for ways to save his life
And the burning sun was on his face,
when a woman smiled from a different place
*She opened my eyes, took me by surprise, cos’ love’s at stake.
Leaving my side, eyes open wide, ‘cos love’s at stake.*

The everyday tale of bondage on a desert island. I was in hysterics when I wrote this thinking there’s no way I’m ever going to put this hocus on an album. And then several people said they liked it... With its fast changing rhythms it’s probably the most proggy track on the album.

And she took his hand and led him on, to a forest temple hidden from the sun
Where a priest was burning incense bright and they hid and watched into the night

*She opened my eyes, took me by surprise, 'cos love's at stake
Leaving my side, eyes open wide, 'cos love's at stake.*

And they slept until it turned first light
And when he woke he found his hands bound tight and a crowd gathered round...

As the priest looked up into the sky, he knew it was his time to die
When a woman's hand did cut him loose, to run or stay was their time to choose

*She opened my eyes, took me by surprise, 'cos love's at stake
Leaving my side, eyes open wide, cos love's at stake*

I'm in love with the touch of her hand
I'm in love with the way she understands when I'm down, when I'm down.

Crying Shame

You know it's a crying shame but someone must take the blame
Look up into the sky, our children will wonder why

It's written in the stars that the earth and the moon,
Will one day fade away and we're heading for mars
You may roll your eyes at the prophets of doom
But it's too late to laugh once the piper plays his tune.

On and on the earth is spinning silently in space
Seize the day, there's still time to save the human race.

They said that the seas would roar, mankind would live no more
They said the fires would rage, so listen to fool or sage

It's written in the stars, that the earth and the moon
Will one day fade away and we're heading for mars
You may roll your eyes at the prophets of doom
But it's too late to laugh once the piper plays his tune

On and on the earth is spinning silently in space
Seize the day, there's still time to save the human race

You know there's no time to lose, each of us has to choose
Look up into the sky, our children will wonder why

It's written in the stars, that the earth and the moon
Will one day fade away and we're heading for mars
You may roll your eyes at the prophets of doom
But it's too late to laugh once the piper plays his tune

On and on, seize the day

Broken Glass

As I walk along the busy streets, I must find a way
To remind myself, of all the good things here today
And I watch the people rush around (rushing around),
with no time to stare
Full of broken dreams and nobody seems to care.

The lyric is "It's too late to laugh once the piper plays his tune". In other words, if we don't act now to save the planet, we are taking away our children's future. Okay, I do still drive a petrol car and take the odd flight so please don't call me out on that. But as David Attenborough has so wisely been saying, let's try not to waste anything. My tailor is Barnado's these days...

I had written the first verse of this song about walking down busy streets at the start of 2020. I knew it needed another verse and so after lockdown, it seemed the only way this song could go was to sing about the empty streets and how we all miss seeing each other. And if ever there was a time for looking out for one another, it is now.

You make me feel like I'm walking on broken glass,
barefoot on broken glass
And it hurts inside
You make me feel like I'm walking on broken glass,
barefoot on broken glass
And it hurts inside.

As I walk along the empty streets, I must find a way
To remind myself of all the good things here today
And I miss the people rushing round (rushing around), with no time to stare
Full of broken dreams, maybe now's the time to care.

You make me feel like I'm walking on broken glass, barefoot on broken glass
And it hurts inside
You make me feel like I'm walking on broken glass, barefoot on broken glass
And it hurts inside.

Julia

Julia wakes up in yesterday's make-up
She crawls to the bus at the end of the street
She's never lonely a bottle of maybe
Will take her to bed every night
But oh when she reads the letter I've written will she care
To never again see my face at her door?

Queen of the high school they said she was no fool
Now drunk in the staff room at quarter past nine
Cocktails at South Ken, did you even know then
I harboured a daydream that you could be mine?

But oh, can you cope with being a woman of our time
Or is stay at home, pray at home way out line?

Having a baby's a definite maybe that Jeremy stripe-shirt will make you his wife
Parties at Putney, supper with chutney
A man who may love you the rest of his life

But oh, I'm a thousand miles away from you now
But if I should see you again, would it work somehow?

Julia, wake-up, Julia, wake-up

Too Late for Dreamers

On the corner of a busy street, I thought I heard my name
Like that summer back in '63 when nothing would be the same
With Buddy Holly on the radio and baseball in the yard
Back in the summer of '63 life didn't seem too hard

We were moving around, light on the ground
We always knew when to let go
Driving so far in an American car
Never too late for the show.

With Buddy Holly on the radio and baseball in the yard

I did once know a girl called Julia, but I didn't harbour a daydream that she could be mine (honest...). This was actually the first proper song I ever wrote (not counting a few teenage attempts). It was just before Checking Out of London so around 2004. I was learning to sing at the time. I recorded a demo and my wife said "I like that - who's singing?" It gave me an idea...

This song was inspired by my mother's story of how she and my dad once saw the Kennedys on a trip to London and how glamorous they both looked as they passed by in their open-topped car. There was such hope for the future back then. So I transposed the scene to America in 1963 to try and capture the optimism that some must have felt. Though of course I'm not suggesting life was easy for everyone back then - far from it.

Back in the summer of '63 life didn't seem too hard

We were moving around, light on the ground

We always knew when to let go

Driving so far in an American car

Never too late for the show.

But it's too late for dreamers, we've landed on the moon

And the boys in the back room still play the same old tune

Yes it's too late for dreamers, we've landed on the moon

And the boys in the back room still play the same old tune

Clown

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the saddest clown of all?

One day up and one day down, where did we go wrong?

Every day your answerphone, even when I know you're home

Can't you see it's you and me, where did we go wrong?

You send me letters I don't understand

Like you're living in a far-off land

Maybe therapy will sort us out

But you know, I have my doubts.

Loved by You

There's a cloud in the sky

Since that day when you said goodbye

And I'm stumbling round

Time hangs heavy

Seeing more of my friends

They say whiskey and wine will mend

But the day breaks too soon

Time hangs heavy

I wanna be loved by you again

To hold you, I told you how I feel

All the sad times would melt into the night

If I had you here by my side

I wanna be loved by you again

To hold you, I told you how I feel

All the sad times would melt into the night

When I have you here by my side again.

There You Go Again

There you go again, turning my life around

I love the way that you always will take my side

There you go again, turning my life around

I love the way that you're making me feel inside

I was ready to look for love from the moment I saw you

In a back street bar in London town

You were telling those killer jokes

Okay, another song about broken relationships. If only we could all get on with each other and not keep a record of wrongs.

I wasn't sure about including this song. It sure ain't prog. It's more a kind of Motown- inspired love song from the sixties. I really wanted the Four Tops on this. I saw them once years ago in South London at a half empty matinee performance. They gave the show one hundred and ten percent and were sweating like nobody's business by the end. It was sheer joy to see such talent and such professionalism.

And the guys were all round you
When the doors were opened and lights went down
Time after time, seeing's believing.

There you go again, turning my life around
I love the way that you always will take my side
There you go again, turning my life around
I love the way that you're making me feel inside

You were ready to spend the night,
though there wasn't much sleeping
In a borrowed shirt you said goodbye
Then later you went home to him
And I feared I might lose you
I wanted to believe our love was real.

Time after time, seeing's believing
There you go again, turning my life around
I love the way that you always will take my side
There you go again, turning my life around
I love the way that you're making me feel inside

I remember your hippy hat , how I nearly went crazy
We bought a run-down van and formed a band
And we wanted to hit the road but it's never so easy
But we're hanging onto something real

Time after time, seeing's believing
There you go again, turning my life around
I love the way that you always will take my side
There you go again, turning my life around
I love the way that you're making me feel inside

Credits:

Performed, produced and mixed by John Hackett

All music and lyrics by John Hackett

Photography Katrin Hackett and Howard Sinclair

CD Design and layout Howard Sinclair

I was a bit wary about including this song about my wife. You know how those perfect pictures in glossy magazines can sometimes end in divorce soon after...

After all the angst of broken relationships and lockdown misery, I wanted to end the album on a positive note.

Yes, we do have a run-down van, I did form a band and yes, it's never so easy. But we are hanging on in the belief that there is a purpose to this life and, in the words of St Paul, "love is patient, love is kind" and we all need a lot more of it. Didn't the Beatles say something similar?