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Waitin' for the blow (a collection of poems and songs)

Del Vaugh Schmidt

Iowa State University

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Waitin' for the blow
(A collection of poems and songs)

by

Del Vaughn Schmidt

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
Department: English
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In Charge of Major Work

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For the Major Department

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For the Graduate College

Iowa State University
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PREFACE

Up to the actual point of writing this preface, I have never given much deep thought as to the difference between writing song lyrics and poetry. I have actually been asked about this difference several times and, as I look back, I think it somewhat curious that I have always answered very matter-of-factly that writing songs is easier than writing poetry. As I now scrutinize my answer, I find that I still agree with it. Song writing (for me anyway) is easier, and I think this difference has to do with the contrasting functions of these art forms.

The universal language of music is enjoyed by everyone. I have met only one person who claimed that he could carry on fine without music. He said, "Music doesn't do anything for me. I wouldn't miss it if it suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth." I don't believe him. I'd even be willing to bet that if I could watch him closely for a few hours I'd catch him humming a few bars as he loses himself in some intricate task. Whatever the case, music reaches a much broader base of people than does poetry, and for this reason, I think musical lyrics have to be more accessible.

Because lyrics are coupled with melodies, they don't have to carry all of the power. I don't mean this to belittle the musical lyric. Certainly, many songs have been
written with powerful, emotional words that are filled with much depth and insight, but these words must be familiar and singable. The lyric must be tempered to fit the rhythmic constraints of the melody; and it must be, at least on the surface, understandable to a wide audience. Like poetry, musical lyrics can be rich in metaphor; but unlike poetry, the lyricist has a more limited vocabulary at his disposal. At first glance, this may seem to put the songwriter at a disadvantage, but actually his task is made easier (and I'm only speaking for myself) because his vocabulary is comprised of the familiar language of everyday speech.

Anyone reading the above argument and then glancing at my poetry would immediately rebut saying, "But the language of your songs and of your poems is the same." I maintain the languages of my songs and poems are not the same but similar. They differ because I am mindful of the more abundant vocabulary at my disposal as I write poetry. Poetry can, and often does, employ a more formal or complex diction that can be reflective of its smaller, more literary audience.

The audience, in a sense, dictates how the writer will present his ideas. The songwriter knows that his audience will forgive less than brilliant lyrics if those lyrics are coupled with a listenable melody. The poet's audience, however, expects a certain clarity of thought that can only be delivered by well-chosen words. For this reason, the poet
spends more time agonizing over the precise way to present a certain thought or emotion, knowing that somewhere there has got to be a word or phrase that expresses exactly what he wants without seeming too contrived. The songwriter knows that good music can gloss over a settled-for contrivance.

Rhythm and rhyme play no small part when it comes to the above mentioned "settled-fors." Conversational English is very rhythmic. I don't mean to suggest that this is the reason it is used in song lyrics (I think the conversationality makes it the language of choice; its rhythmic quality being a happy coincidence). When I write a song, I often begin with a sentence or phrase that I have heard or spoken myself in normal conversation. Often, the faint voice of a melody will dance in my mind as I commit these words to paper. I instinctively know that the melody will accentuate the words' rhythm, thereby giving them more power. Because I use the language of everyday conversation, cliches will inevitably work their way into the lyrics, but they can be forgiven (at times seeming even clever) when they ride on the rhythm of a catchy melody line.

Poetry, especially traditional, formal verse, can be very rhythmic, but the rhythm lies in the words themselves. There is, of course, no musical melody line to enhance the meter. As I mentioned earlier, the language of conversation is rhythmic, so my song lyrics will naturally contain some
semblance of meter. Once I have the music, I can further "bend" the words to fit the rhythm of the melody line. It follows that my poetry will contain a similar conversational meter, but beyond that I want the lines to somehow speak a bigger rhythm that is reflective of the poem's overall content or meaning. Therefore, I have to be much more critical of elements such as word choice and line breaks. The words themselves must be selected carefully to produce a rhythm that bespeaks the mood of the piece whether it be somber, reflective, or happy. In music, all of these moods can be suggested in the melody, thus relieving the words of some of this pressure.

In traditional poetic forms, the meter (such as the iambic foot) and the rhyme scheme are rigidly set. In my view, the poet working in a strict formal verse, such as the sonnet, has a more difficult task than the songwriter. Not only must the words in a formal poem fit a metrical pattern and rhyme scheme, they must advance the piece within those bounds as well. The formal poet cannot hastily choose words simply because they fit metrically or because they rhyme. These words must also properly convey the emotive power of the poem without drawing the wrong kinds of attention to themselves. Given, especially, the limited number of rhyming words that may be available, this could prove to be a formidable task.
The job of the free verse poet may be the most difficult of all. Though he has not the inconvenience of fitting words to a traditional form, he has no excuses either. It may be that a reader, knowing that the writer has the extra burden of strict meter and/or rhyme to contend with, will forgive an occasional clumsy word choice in a formal poem. Such a word, however, in a free verse poem will be immediately singled out and given the critical "third degree" by a discerning reader. Again, the songwriter's musical accompaniment can help relieve the sting of a poorly chosen word.

I do not want to suggest that I go about the writing of song lyrics in a sloppy manner. On the contrary, because I care deeply about the songwriting craft, I try in earnest to shy away from the trite phrase or the forced rhyme. Perhaps my affiliation with free verse poetry has helped reinforce these values. In my case, I believe rhyme is the most basic, observable difference between my songs and my poems. Indeed, many people have commented on the lyrical quality of my poetry. One colleague, after reading my poem "Waitin' for the Blow," insisted that I should put it to music. Try as I would, I could not find a melody for it, and I attribute this failing to the fact that the lines of the poem do not rhyme.

From the outset, I mentioned that the difference between song lyrics and poetry has to do with their functions. Both art forms, in one sense or another, are meant to entertain
their respective audiences. The differing kinds of entertainment these art forms provide, I believe, is what separates the two. Music, and the lyrics contained within, inspires people to dance, clap their hands, and even sing along. The musical melody is what grabs peoples' attention (most songs begin with a musical introduction before any words are sung) causing them to sway with the beat or tap their feet. The words, riding along on the melody, usually tell an easily decipherable story and are often somewhat predictable because of the rhyme scheme. In a song with an upbeat tempo, the words can fly by very quickly and, either because of the quick tempo or the loudness of the accompanying music, may not be heard or understood at all.

Poetry demands a slower pace. Reading poetry is like tasting a fine wine; its lines must be sipped slowly, one at a time, allowing the words to roll around in the heads of the readers or the listeners. The words must do all the work so they are chosen and used with the utmost care; there is no hiding them behind a powerful melody line now. The reader of poetry expects to be shown something meaningful. He expects to be shown something he has never seen before. Yes, poetry can be funny or frivolous, but it must be cleverly so; there is no rim-shot or long trombone slide to help the laugh along. Simply put, the art of poetry is a more serious business.
I can write the lyrics for a song in five or ten minutes, take a few more minutes to come up with the music, and remain perfectly happy with it from that point on. Sure, I'll change a word or a line here and there, but that is usually more for accommodating the rhythm than changing the meaning of the song. Many of my songs do contain important messages; but in order for the listener to get the gist of a musical message, the lyrics must be worded in such a way that they can be easily interpreted as they ride by, on a sometimes fast melody line. The audience simply will not have time to search back over the lyrics to find any deeply rooted metaphor. In contrast, a writer delivering his poetry will often read slowly, pausing at line breaks or emphasizing key words, thereby giving his work time to sink in to the audience. Both the poet's and the songwriter's audiences want to be entertained, and to some degree they may want to learn some new truths, but the poet's task is more difficult because he has only his words to back him; there is no hiding behind a keyboard or a guitar.

I do not mean to trivialize my song lyrics. On the contrary, I am very pleased with most of my songs, but because of music's lighter function in the world, I feel I can take more liberties with my songs. Perhaps a brief demonstration will illustrate my point. The song, "Hills," at the end of my selection, grew out of the selection's first
piece, a poem entitled "Feeding the Horses." In the poem, I try to imply, with a few select words, emotions that I spell out in great detail in the song. Here are the opening lines from the poem:

    Hard to tell
    But this was a hill,
    A smaller one of many.

This passage implies a disappointment or sarcasm that is laid out in no uncertain terms in the last verse of "Hills":

    Those rolling green hills
    Cut down even
    Like the street I live on.
    Nothing there but the old house
    With my room upstairs.
    I couldn't go back now
    Even if I most dreamed to.
    There's no escaping these concrete city affairs.

My feelings for this place, which are reiterated throughout the song, are summed up at the end of the poem by referring to the horse's "tender mouths" (the operative word, of course, being "tender").

    Poetry writing for me is the more serious of the two arts simply because it has a more serious audience. It has been very easy to discern, over the years, that my poetry audience is much more critical in scrutinizing my work than
is my music audience (and my music audience does contain fellow musicians who are as serious about their craft as are the poets that make up my poetry audience). I think my lyrics and poems are closely related because they share a certain rhythmic quality. This can especially be seen in the selection's transition piece, "Maybe it's the Music." I wrote this particular piece as a poem, but some readers have read it as a song. I suppose, to me, it is not a song because it doesn't rhyme all the way through; I'll leave it in the middle and let the reader decide.
POEMS
Feeding the Horses

Hard to tell
But this was a hill,
A smaller one of many.
The old wooden trough sat here
Like some gnarled old oak felled
By a spring-time wind storm. I'd stand
With a bucket of oats and loudly whistle
At the grazing dots atop the farthest hill
That was out there to the east. The dots would
Stop their grazing, look in my direction and start
Their gallops, disappearing behind one green hill and
Reappearing, a second later, atop more rolling green,
Bolting down the final leg when, on a still, silent
Day pounding hooves of thunder echoed their hungry
Arrival, manes and tails trailing in the breeze.
Snorting, prancing, waiting for that first bite,
Oldest first, on down the line, they nibbled from
Those old oaken planks, rubbed smooth by
Many years of tender mouths.
The Barnyard
    - for Dad

I watched my father from the kitchen window,
Looking down at him
As he moved from the granary,
From within its huge hanging doors
Parted enough to allow entry to one slender man.

Buckets filled, handles wrapped in strong hands,
He carried them in long
Straight strides to the barn
Where he answered the hungry calls
Of horses and cattle.

Out farther, he walked among fat steers
That were restlessly gathered
Around wooden troughs.
He pushed through them,
A basket of corn on his shoulder,
Always coming away unscathed.

I grew to know the inside of his granary,
His oats and corn.
The buckets were heavy at first
But the time came
When I too could shoulder a full bushel.
Time came when I looked through the window,
Down on him,
Then turned away and hurried out
Through the front door,
The car he bought for me rumbling
Through nighttime chores into town.

A hard labor of love ran the barnyard.
He once told me,
As I rode the sturdy gate he was closing,
That if he could start life again
He would help his father more.
Colorado, Summer 1979

The slope presented itself
As a slide of craggy boulders
That made for good footholds
As I struggled up.
I finally reached
A gentle, rolling peak
With stubbled green turf,
Taller grass swaying with the wind.
I bent over
With hands on knees,
Caught my breath,
Then dug my name
Into a patch of July snow.

I heard clucking,
A familiar sound,
But not here.
I searched
And found a speckled brown hen
With three tiny chicks.
I asked,
"How did you get here?"
And brought some bread
From my backpack.
These unassuming
Creatures of the wild
Ate from my hand.
Leaving the family to their peace
I found the best vantage
On this edge of the world
Looking over an expanse
I'd never before experienced.
I sat,
Legs drawn under me,
Marveling at the endless
Surrounding ranges,
Rippling away.
I saw where I had walked,
Making out the town
By the lake,
Imagining myself
Its goodly overseer,
Directing the winds
And the sun,
Arranging the clouds just right
At sunset.
Arrival

Jeff shoulders a pickax,
Says, "You'll get used to California dope, dude,"
Leads me to the house's downhill corner.
I follow,
Spaced.
Bleary-eyed.
In slow motion, he points
To the garage fifty yards away,
"We're diggin' a cable trench
from here to there."

Jeff's first swing chinks
A rock-barren earth.
I stand,
Rocking heel to toe.
Watching ax trails,
As Jeff breaks a fierce sweat
With healthy, repeated cracks
At the worn, stubborn ground.
I think I'm down enough to ask,
"Can I help?"
Jeff gives me a dripping mean look,
Lowers himself to his knees
To tug at an anchored boulder.
My cue.
I join him to get a grip
Assuring him it's a good one,
Only to let the boulder
Slip.
Through my fingers.
Onto my newfound partner's hand.
YOU STUPID SONOFA...
    I'm not certain he wouldn't strike me
OH SHIT JESUS...
    If it weren't his swinging hand
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU DID THAT
    Wrapped tightly in his good one.
Aliens

We rode the pickup truck
Through the winding vine-scaped
Highway to Napa
As nearby Pacific waters
Cooled a big red sun.

One of Jeff's old hang-outs
Was a drive-in at the edge of town.

Warm Tallboy Budweiser evening,
Kids scattered over car hoods
Or inquiring from window to window
In search of needed recreation.
Speakers left hanging on poles
Looking helpless, rejected.

Jeff brought my attention
To a Monte Carload of young girls
Pulling alongside.
He carried on conversation
(let them know I was from Iowa)
"Sure you can have a beer, but a couple
of ya gotta join us here in the truck."
Fifteen year old giggling
Threadbare jeans and dirty feet
Turned my face to the movie screen
Where outer spaced aliens were part
Of a government cover-up.
Communicating

I could have been watching
Some drunken south of the border
Western with mustachioed laughter soundtrack.
I'd gathered with these
Friday evening Mexican aliens
And watched them stagger around
Their campfire passing huge swigs
Of mean tequilla and blasting
Empty bottles with a sawed-off shotgun.
They didn't have to know English
To shoulder-slap my turn
And hand me the bottle.
I pulled long from its contents
Swallowed hard to hold it down
And took a stumble-step backwards
Wiping tears from my eyes.
They yipped it up good, tipping
Their heads back in laughter
And sounding a gunshot salute.
Home

I swallow long gulps
From glass bottles of Tecate,
This second floor deck lifts me
Over the twilight town below.
Mike and Nancy are down there
Somewhere among those city lights
Hiding behind man and wife camouflage,
Buying allies with white-lined wit
While I succumb to their houseboy
Wishes, pacified with all the beer
I can drink and all the pot
I can smoke. "What more could you want?"
I forget that companionship means little to them.

I see them every morning
Scowling at the sight of each other,
Arguing before the coffee's even made,
Their bleeding eyes a testament
To too much coke and too little sleep.
I become the line for their
Tug of war: Nancy needs me to weed
Her garden; Mike needs me
To build his fence; the winner
Gets a sounding board.
They are below me now
Separated by a sea of others
Like them having a wild time
While I guzzle angry beers
Behind chain-linked paranoia.
I sit here and listen to hill dogs
Howl at a crescent moon.
The night's stars slowly fire synapses
To where I come from;
Where this Tecate turns to Pabst,
Where fences are for cattle,
Where rain rolls in plain day thunder.
Over coffee
You talked of color-laden dreams
Where your toils were left behind
In some cosmic out-of-body experience.
"If only it could be so," you once
laughed, "Hell, I'd never come back."

I was patient during your
Not-a-word self-sorry times,
Trying to see humor
In your fitful tantrums when
You'd grip-tight that Mustang's wheel
Flooring it around squealing
Sharp corners.
You always had me guessing

With your up-one-down-the-next
Minute sad laughter reflections.
I never learned of your father,
Only hints. Always hints.
As if you thought it was fun
Making me think you were bound
To some dark, secret tragedy.
Oh but you could see the beauty.
You wanted to be an author
And wished that words would take
You from make ends meet worry.

It's been a long time,
Jeff Grigsby, where are you?
I've yet to see your book on the shelf.
Waitin' for the Blow

Mt. St. Helens
Blew her lid today
Blasting draft registration
And we're hanging out
In wine country
Wantin' to ride an aftershock
Hopin' fallout ash
Blackens the sun
Like Oz-poppies
To dirty our sleep
As we stand thumb-assed
Waitin' for the blow.
Lazy Haight Street cruise
Hand in hand boys
Skinny '60s leftovers
Placards long tossed
For street corner fixes
We wonder 'bout brakes
On steep mirror-eyed streets
As prospering pimps paint
Women outta girls
Whose flowers they lifted
From Golden Gate hair while
Waitin' for the blow.

Back in Lonelytown
I sing cheap guitar
To no one who'll listen
Spitting an evil-streak
At maimed razor blade faces
Booming god-voiced
At sleeping zombies
As a disappointed hand
Slaps California into the drink
I dream up my board
To surf the wave inland
Waitin' for the blow.
Oh I'd come song-ready
To bleeding-heart-opened arms
Star-glazed eyes
Smiling in baggy blonde
Pioneer woman shoes
Hoping peace signs
Still lived in tie-dye
Faded instead to speeding freeway
Reflector-bump white lines
In middle-aged powdered wastelands
Under antique-dealer covers
Waitin' for the blow.

The old songs
Are just fadspeak
To haircut penny loafer youth
And thirty-three year old
Computer-laughed reminiscence
Lost in Jesus-praise
Or caught blind between
Constant white rock sniffles
Riding vacuum-sealed Mercedes
In three-piece quadraphonic lead
Signin' glory-dollars-hallelujah
Waitin' for the blow.
Cross-legged Lonelytown folkman
Shags green-backed laughter
And prays for the aid
Of Bob, Neil, Joan, John...
While father's cannibal smoke
Breeds complacent dress-code schoolkids
And God's TV heaven
Trains video game brats
For F-14 fantasies
I choke on stale deaf-air
While everyone fidgets thumb-assed
Waitin' for the blow.
Real Surreal

Late night swill
swallowing
  consciousness
  into a maze
  of color
and wallpaper
carpet.
  Doorways are sideways.
light fixtures
  loom
  too close
  for my eyes.
A thousand
Bookends
  stagger into one,
and suddenly
  the water
in the porcelain
  is rocking
and the night
  is chucked
  away.
Stove Wall

Anticipating a cold winter,
Thinking a fire would be nice,
I built you last fall,
A place for the Franklin to rest
Snug in our living room.

I searched out your pieces
At a creek bed where the remains
Of a country grocery store lay
Strewn about, begging for the order
That sweat and mortar could give.

Almost three hundred bricks,
Misshapen with age and use.
Jeanie and I scrubbed each one,
Uncovering faded colors
From pink-white to red
And rusty brown.

I mixed your mortar in the garage
A bucket at a time.
Sand, masonry mix, water,
And then I formed your pad,
A four-foot diamond extending
From the southeast corner of the room.
The joints vary in width
But I dismiss my sloppiness
By insisting on your rustic appeal.
Three tiny mounds in the front
Contain the unwilling paw prints
Of our feline family members.

For your two sides
A carpenter's level
Became my greatest companion,
A row at a time
With an L-shape in the corner,
Leveling out to each end.

I used a brick hammer
When smaller pieces were needed.
Many crumbled in my hand
Like pieces of yellowed newspaper
Found stuffed between the studs
Of an old fallen house.
You went up, staggered
Straight and true.
Capped with an oaken mantel,
Adorned with earthenware vessels,
You are in the corner
Minding the stove.
Positive Life!
Tucked away inside
My loved one.
Can you hear me?
Can you feel my presence?
Do my vibrations tingle through
Her warm belly-waters
As I press my ear
As near as I can
For now?
Playin'

A good friend and myself was a playin' our guitars last night and commencin' to turn out the jams of a life. Oh we sang about work, about nails and boards, poundin' the two together in order to provide some shelter for some wealthy people who just happen to live a few blocks to the north. Then Bill started pickin' on some catchy parodies about "Our boss Dan, who stands short for a man but can drive in a nail with his solid bare hand and Dan's brother David the young army man who is always there ready to defend his great land."

I tell you we finally stopped strummin' with tears just a rollin' on down our faces. The best laugh about something that really ain't funny at all, it just tripped our triggers at the time. Like I 'spose the army, it must've just tripped Dave's ol' trigger-in' finger and shot him to two years of butt-kiss-in' hard work. And there we was sittin' there with grins on our chins and guitars in our hands a solvin' the world's problems without a single care at all.
Maybe it's the Music

Jeanie thinks it's silly
That I've deified them so.
Oh not the same kind of silly
My daddy felt
Back in February of '64
When they landed Ed Sullivan's show -
"Look at that hair!
Jeez, will ya look at that hair!
And the way they go 'Oooo'!"
Yes. I saw their hair.
Pop dragged me to the barbershop
For full fourteen years
Until the day I left home,
"Bye, bye."
I wanted to be a Beatle,
Maybe I still do.
I wanted to twist and shout
Hold your hand,
Take a magical mystery tour,
Sing sweet Lucy in the sky
To screaming world
Revolution.
Come together
With a little help from my friends.
Get back to
Fixing a hole
When I'm sixty-four.
Back in the USSR
I'll cry instead
For the benefit of Mr. Kite.
Two of us
Help
Mother nature's son
The night before
The fool on the hill
Let it be.
Here there and everywhere
I'm looking through you
Glass onion
Oh yeah.
(Middle 8)

And now I wander
In nostalgic daydream
Eat my lunch
Savoy truffles and cream
Drink a cup
Shout out something obscene
Go to work
In my yellow submarine

I got their pictures
On the wall above my dresser.
The colored glossies
I happily found
After tearing the cellophane
From my White Album jacket.
The edges are now torn and tattered
From years of hanging and rehanging
But their faces never change.
Paul and George look tired;
Ringo's debonair;
John looks like Jesus.
They taught me the songs
That I strum on guitar,
That I'll sing to my children.
That harmonica part in Love Me Do?
Got it down like the Walrus did
GOO GOO GOO Job.
I sometimes question my fancy,
My loving infatuation.
Is it a faddish thing?
A longing for those helter skelter days?
Maybe it's the music...
Oh yeah.
SONGS
Have Another (for Colorado)

Takin' a train out of Denver,
I think it even left on time
Headin' on back to the east again,
Guess I'll see some friends of mine.

Lookin' on back at the mountains,
The steel tracks we left behind
Thinkin' long about my summer,
Drinkin' a beer, tryin' to feel fine.

Have another for Colorado.
Have another for your soul.
Turn this train around.
You know I don't really want to go home.

Watchin' the fields and fenceposts go by,
The sun sinkin' low behind the peaks.
How could so many days have lost me?
How did those months turn into weeks?

Have another for Colorado.
Have another for your soul.
Feelin' it all over again.
Now what made me think I had to go?
Come on over here by me baby.
Help take my blues away.
Let's get drunk and talk of life,
Reminisce about yesterday.

Have another for Colorado.
Have another for your soul.
Tell me 'bout yourself baby,
You know I really want to know.
Wake Up

Wake up
Sleepy head
Get up.
The cows are callin'
The snow is fallin'
It's time to throw the hay.
You're a child now,
Be a man for awhile
And have a good time in school today.

Wake up
Cherry eyes
Come down.
Get your head out of the clouds,
Try to make your daddy proud.
You're throwin' it away.
You're actin' like a child.
Why must you be so wild?
Are you even in school today?
Wake up
Dream eyes
It's me.
Long distance is callin',
The tunes are fallin',
It's time to throw the lines.
You'll always be a child,
I guess I knew that all the while
And I hope that you make it someday.
Unemployment Blues

Unemployment ain't too damn bad.
Gives me some time I never had
To lay around and smell the coffee.
Two cups down and I'm rarin' to go...
Nowhere

(chorus)
Oh I watch the cats run around the room,
Haven't shaved I got the face of doom,
The want ads spell out times of gloom,
Don't really need to be here cleanin' this room.

TV's on before I get out of bed,
Wife she tells me it's goin' to my head
But what is wrong with havin' a dream?
Questioning the answers on Jeopardy.

(repeat chorus)

Unemployment can be a drag.
That time in life when you reach a snag.
Should I work on bein' somethin' new?
I've got it in me to go...
Somewhere, anywhere, I don't care,
Just get me outta here!

(repeat chorus)
Players

I've seen it on film too many times,
As many times as I've felt this way.
Put out
On some movie making venture.
Left out
As the credit starts to roll.
Done out
As you ride away into the sunset.

So much for your artistic expression.
Just make it your personal confession.
Never guess it was your profession.

We like what's in your head,
Develop it you said,
Then you took it and you ran.

I've seen it in life so many times.
Why should players act this way?
Put out
On life's sad adventure.
Left out
As helplessness takes its toll.
Done out
By those who ride into the sunset.
Train We're On

Lone icy moon breaking hard through dark clouds,
Gonna get mean tonight.
Walk in late through the back
In the shadows out of sight.
Feel my way up echoed stairs
Smooth like I done it before.
Three quiet flights
Two knocks for the door.

(chorus)

Stares say, "Where ya been kid, we've been waitin' for you?"
    Just tryin' my hand at something new.
    Don't laugh at something you've inspected
She isn't quite what you expected
Oh no.
Gone hidden past the streets,
Eyes still lookin' through,
Better not hang around.
Take my time til I can loose them
Without a sound.
I know my way back to you
And then we're gone.
To another life we'll ride
This train we're on.

(repeat chorus)
I know my way back to you
And then we're gone.
To another life we'll ride
This train we're on.
Institution

Stirred blue
By hanging around here
Without you
Even though you're near.
Nothing to do
And these walls have ears,
It's not new
I've kept the same old fears.

Don't know who
Is behind that two-way mirror.

Deep down inside I know it isn't true
But I've got to believe that I'm your favorite one.
When this bolted door doesn't let me through
I'm like a criminal forever on the run.
I'd like to follow out right behind you
But these sick white walls tell me
I'm not done.
Institution
I think you're killing me.
Sheer illusion
 Didn't help me see.
Mass confusion
When I thought I could be free.
Restitution?
That isn't what I need.

Cold, cruel, dark
You are the world.
Farmer's Lament

Suddenly things are so much better,
That's what they way.
Ain't that a kick I hadn't noticed.
My little girl dressed up like some rock star
Just wants to play.
Ain't this country great she says.

I tried hard to hide my disappointment,
Turned my head
But couldn't keep the tears from coming down.
My little girl looked at me that moment,
Saw me dead
Dad maybe we should move into town.

(chorus)
How do you explain to a kid
About the importance of some
Earth dug past?
How do you tell your kid
That the time has come
That nothing lasts?
You know how it killed your mother
When it finally gave
And the banker came and took it all away.
And the promise that I made her
Kneeling by her grave,
I really meant to keep it on that day.

So honey grow up hard to this mess
You've come home to,
Times can't always be so sweet.
You're old enough to make it I guess,
You've got to
Be the one of us to face defeat.

(repeat chorus)
Space Blues

Hazy little world, east coast glare.
Hurricane's a swirling way down there.
But I'm up here out of the wind
Waiting for some experiment to begin.
And a letter from home would be grand,
Just to see the movements from your hand.

Your world is spinning, so is mine.
They've got me following the same old line.
Playing cards to pass away the time.
See your penny and I'll raise a dime.
I'm so alone when you're down there.
I need to see you, I need some air.

Now I'm afraid the fuel is gone.
I guess I hoped it wouldn't be long.
Break downs like these have come and gone.
But it can be so hard to put a finger on.
And a prayer from home would ease my doubts.
God only knows what it's all about.

Hazy little world, east coast glare.
Hurricane's a swirling way down there.
You Would Have Made the Day

We saw history in the making today.
We saw old friends come together.
It was a warm one in Philly and London way,
Only one way to make it better.

You would have made the day,
We would have loved to hear you play...

They talked about your boy over in Wembley
And the rumors ran wild in JFK.
And I guess we all got a little crazy
Hoping for some kind of resurrection day.

You would have made the day,
We would have loved to hear you play...

Your dream came true for awhile anyway,
The world tuned in to love.
We reached for heaven on a long stairway
To find the cost from above.

You would have made the day,
We would have loved to hear you play...
I wept in sorrow and I wept in joy
When Mother Mary came to Paul.
And for a second the answer blew in the wind
And there was peace and love for all.

You would have made the day,
We would have loved to hear you say...
Imagine.
Four Nights in a Row

You lay there quiet and warm
And I should not have known
That you cried yourself to sleep
But I know.

(chorus)
Four nights in a row
I left you alone
Four nights in a row
All alone.

I really miss your company,
Please believe it's so.
Your smile makes me sing,
You just gotta know.

(repeat chorus)

I know that I'm in trouble
Because I'm so in your demand
And I can see the hurt
As you try to understand.

(repeat chorus)
Somehow you hang on to me
Because deep inside you know
That I really love you
So you'll love me even though.

Four nights in a row
I left you alone
Four nights in a row
Alone in our home,

I'm coming home.
Helpless Bound

I come home and watch a whirling fan
Spin shadows on the ceiling.
A no one's home vacant stare,
A heated summer feeling,

(Chorus)
And I feel helpless
Like I felt in crowded downtown,
Yes I feel helpless
Life limping on world round,
Oh I'm so helpless
A tiny voiced nothing sound,
It seems I'm helpless bound.

I come home and watch TV faces
Spinning yarns of victory
And I turn my head and cry
At unheeded misery.

(Repeat chorus)

I come home and watch my loved one
Seeing life's been good to her
But I shudder at the vision
Of a desperate future.

(Repeat chorus)
Carpenter's Blues

Lunch time
Cold day
Don't wanna go back to that workin' way
I'd rather just sit back with my guitar and play.
Why should I freeze my fingers for a living,
When music is all that I want to be giving?

Simple minds still need to be free.
Simple love means so much to me.
Why try to define it with your soap opera blues?
Feeling is the reason that you pay those dues.

Lunch time
Cold day
I'm stayin' right here to sing to you today.
Hills

Those rolling green hills
Where I ran as a boy.
Where with a whistle
The horses would gallop
With their manes trailing in the breeze.
Where a creek ran through
Swelled by the rain.
A rain creek, hidden by rows of trees.

Those hills where I played,
Where I lay down in the grass
Watching clouds breeze over my head
And wanting to fly.
Don't know what I thought then,
What I expected to find.
Wanted to leave
But I couldn't quite say why.
Thought then as I am thinking now, turned 'round.
How things change with cold reality
And age.
Coming back to me in dreams,
Pastoral feelings,
Color and smell,
Now trying to be
Some pretty words on a page.

Those rolling green hills
Cut down even
Like the street I live on.
Nothing there but the old house
With my room upstairs.
I couldn't go back now
Even if I most dreamed to
There's no escaping these concrete city affairs.