

CHERRY RED RECORDS
PRESENTS



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Recorded and produced by Beau at
TM Studios, Norfolk, UK

All songs written by C J T Midgley (Published by Cherry Red Songs)

The guitar throughout is my 1967 Harmony H-1270 twelve-string

Cover photo by Rocker Rosehip

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1 An Original Thought (2.21)

A fantasy tale to get us under way. Relax, it could never happen...

The court was in session, the atmosphere tense.
The judge told me, "Everything harms your defence.
Please stand while the jury is told of the charge.
You're a dangerous man who should not be at large!"
He looked straight ahead and said, "This man was caught
In the act and in charge of original thought.

"I must tell the jury that some things are barred.
Everything new, you must disregard.
The novel, unusual, the different or fresh,
These fancies are worse than the sins of the flesh.
For your information, this country has fought
To stamp out this curse of original thought."

And so it all started. My lawyer began;
"For progress we need the unreasonable man!"
It was George Bernard Shaw that he'd looked to embrace.

The judge said, "You're really not helping your case!"
For me, I was hoping he wouldn't fall short
Of proving my lack of original thought.

It was time to attempt a new line of attack;
"My Lord, it would help if you'd cast your mind back.
If the man that he murdered could stand here and speak,
He'd tell of the brand new embalming technique
My client was seeking the day he was caught.
This was nothing to do with original thought.

"There are crimes based on passion and crimes based on hate
And those that can risk undermining the State.
He never, though granted he wielded the knife,
Has had an original thought in his life.
I humbly submit to this merciful Court
That here is no guilt of original thought."

The tears of the jury were flowing and free.
The foreman said, "There is no guilt we can see.
This is the moment to stand up and say
That nothing has shown we should lock him away.
And we on the jury are pleased to report
He never has had an original thought.
He never has had an original thought.
He never has had an original thought..."

2 The Patriot (4.23)

Most modern-day politicians are familiar with the teachings of historian and philosopher, Niccolò Machiavelli. And, as in so many things, Machiavelli had firm views on patriotism: 'When the safety of one's country wholly depends on the decision to be taken, no attention should be paid either to justice or injustice, to kindness or cruelty, or to its being praiseworthy or ignominious.'

Don't get me wrong – I'm no pacifist. It's just I like to know when and how I'm being manipulated...

It's hovering high in a thunderous sky;
So bright, and again so benign.
It's telling me everything comes at a cost,
That everything comes by design.
I'm humbled, and wiping a tear on my sleeve.
So many like Machiavelli believe
It's easy for cheats, finding folks to deceive.

They tell me how liberty comes at a price;
That no price is ever too high.
When devils are driving the wind to the sails,
The patriot never asks why.
So there in a clearing on midsummer's eve
I offer to die for the things they believe.
It's easy for cheats, finding folks to deceive.

You can say it's a chauvinist, partisan view,
And something we've known all along.
The one thing we're not, in the games that we play,
Is ever conceivably wrong.
We're grateful for what we're about to receive.
If God's in his heaven, you wouldn't believe
It's easy for cheats, finding folks to deceive.

It's only through accident, fortune of birth,
We follow the lives that we lead;
'Defending our freedoms' insisted upon,
Defending imposing our creed.
Then somebody says it, "We're being naïve!"
I think I'll apply for compassionate leave...
It's easy for cheats, finding folks to deceive.

3 The Promised Land (2.33)

If focus groups are the answer, I for one am fearful of the question...

The dust is unacceptable
Though the air is very still,
And the ancient bus is coughing
As it splutters up the hill.
Down in the valley, lightning flashes
Split a frightened sky;
And buzzards wheel and wait
For all the animals to die.

The scene moves to the mountain top
Where, toiling through the night
To the sunrise haze, communiqués
From the left and from the right
Are passed along down passageways
From the many focus groups;
Info packs for the hungry hacks
And the waiting party troops.

They talk of how the failing rains
Have been getting out of hand
And of regret they haven't yet
Produced the Promised Land.
And yes, we can be reassured about
The steepness of that hill
And of the rush there is to push
Their Transportation Bill.

They worry about the lightning storm;
They ask me how it feels.
I say I think they're missing out
On loftier ideals;
That maybe they should take a glance
At the buzzards in the sky.
They shake my hand and say
I've been a really helpful guy.

So we offer up our precious votes
With all those hopes and dreams.
The focus groups have done their work,
Or that's the way it seems.
We all become their Facebook friends,
We take their Twitter feed;
And ironically, they follow us
When once they used to lead.

Yet the dust is unexplainable
Though the air is deathly still.
The ancient bus still coughs
And struggles gamely on the hill.
Down in the valley, thunder roars
Across a frightened sky.
The buzzards wheel and wait
For all the animals to die...

4 Longhope (5.23)

I intended to write this song as far back as 1969. Don't know why I never got round to it. Maybe at the time I didn't think I could do the story justice. I did scribble a piece of prose the day after the event. In longhand, it was called 'R.I.P. Longhope'. It's still stashed away somewhere in my files; which I guess says something of the power and legacy of the Longhope Lifeboat Disaster...

This is a story of men who were heroes
But wouldn't have seen it that way.
It began with the news of a ship in distress
A few miles off South Ronaldsay.
That ship came around and then ran aground

And all the crew made it ashore,
But no one knew then what eight lifeboat men
Were paying so dearly for.

It was 7.29 on the 17th March
The Coastguard had put in the call.
The way it was seen, the SS “Irene”
Was helpless, adrift in a squall.
The storm had been rated a vicious Force Nine
With waves that were sixty foot high.
It was these on this dark night in March ’69
The lifeboat set out to defy.

The boat headed out into mountainous seas,
As she had done so often before.
We know that she battled through fifty knot winds
For a full ninety minutes or more.
The lifeboat from Longhope they called T.G.B.
Was last seen from Cantick Head light,
But then T.G.B. was claimed by the sea.
She disappeared into the night.

The following day, a search well under way,
The lifeboat from Longhope was found;
Seven of the lifeboat men still at their posts
But all of them sadly had drowned.
They say she was hit by a hundred foot wave;
Capsized in the night’s long ordeal.
When the crew of the Thurso boat ran alongside,
The Cox was still strapped to the wheel.

Daniel Kirkpatrick was Cox on the boat,
The father of John and of Dan.
The night that the lifeboat from Longhope went down
She took with her every man.
There was young Jimmy Swanson and Eric McFadyen;
The Johnstons – James, Robert and Rob.
They were all volunteers who’d gone out for years,
Lifeboat men doing their job.

So this is the story of men who were heroes
But wouldn’t have seen it that way,
That began with the news of a ship in distress
A few miles off South Ronaldsay.
The ship came around and then ran aground
And all her crew made it ashore,
But no one knew then what eight lifeboat men
Were paying so dearly for.

5 The Thinking Of God (3.40)

...celebrates the wealth of Televangelists that pop up every Sunday across the United States. With unparalleled insight, they remind us so clearly of mankind’s wicked ways; bigotry, hypocrisy, the propensity for immorality, even sometimes of righteous retribution. But that’s enough about Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, Kent Hovind, Earl Paulk, Coy Privette, Joe Barron, Vaughn Reeves et al.

I feel reassured and you could say relieved
When I realise what mankind has achieved.
The Pastor is preaching of power and grace –
It’s plain in the lightness that falls from his face,
In patrolling the paths that the martyrs have trod
He’s fortunately mastered the thinking of God.

Evolution, or unmarried mothers, or gays;
The Lord, He can move in mysterious ways.
It’s heartening, and it’s amazing to see
How often the Lord and His servant agree.
His servants are sometimes decidedly odd;
At least ’til they’ve mastered the thinking of God.

Addresses and readings and Sermons on Mounts

Safely convince us it's our God that counts.
The Imams and Rabbis and Priests and the rest,
Convey and persuade us that we're truly blessed;
Excepting of course for that poor little sod
Who hasn't quite mastered the thinking of God.

They say we're the image of Him, but I've found
In fact it's exactly the other way round;
And while self-delusion is par for the course,
Well, people like me, we can sing 'til we're hoarse.
It's easier, it's simpler just giving the nod
To someone who's mastered the thinking of God.

The prophets are great, and there's much to be gained
For those who'll untangle what can't be explained.
There's power, there's glory, but always for me
You are what you are and it's all you will be
While the Chaplain still blesses the firing squad.
It's good to have mastered the thinking of God.

6 Everything's Possible (3.39)

– *about and around our continuing voyage of discovery...*

I guess it was three or four thousand B.C.
That somebody wanted to shift some debris,
But all that he had was a mangy old goat
So one sunny day, he put on his coat
And he went to a friend who heard his appeals
Who said, "Funny you ask, I've invented these wheels!
You see, we can do anything under the sun.
Everything's possible once it's been done!"

Well, move things along for a few thousand years,
And a sailor man suddenly pricked up his ears.
For centuries, he'd been losing his way.
He said, "I'm all at sea at this time of the day!"
Then an old friend from Chinatown came to his aid.
He said, "Check out this compass. It's something I made.
You see, we can do anything under the sun.
Everything's possible once it's been done!"

Around 1440, a writer of tales
Was guaranteed over a million sales.
The book was so hot, it was bound to be banned
But each of them had to be copied by hand.
"My old pal," said Gutenberg, "maybe, unless...
Well, I just invented the first printing press!
You see, we can do anything under the sun.
Everything's possible once it's been done!"

Now, no one can blame anyone who complains
In Victorian times of malodorous drains.
We'll never know whether it was fortune or fate
Brought Alex G. Bell stepping up to the plate.
Alex said, "Son, you can easily moan
Because luckily, I just invented the 'phone!
You see, we can do anything under the sun.
Everything's possible once it's been done!"

If memory serves, it was late '28
My friend, Alex Fleming had mould on his plate;
A remarkable thing he'd pulled out of the box
And guaranteed finally to sort out the pox.
"I looked in the mould and I found Penicillin,"
He told me, "I'll try it on you if you're willing!
'Cos, we can do anything under the sun.
Everything's possible once it's been done!"

"I want to know all that has ever been known!"
I'm talking to Tim Berners-Lee on the phone

On the twelfth day of March in I think '89.
He whispered it quietly over the line
'Cos Tim never wanted to be a celeb;
"Between you and me, I've invented the Web!
You see, we can do anything under the sun.
Everything's possible once it's been done!"

It's a long twisting road. There are turnings and bends
But believe it or not I have many more friends
With a million ideas. They're keen and they're mean
And still as inventive as they've ever been.
So keep your eyes open – they will come around
With thoughts and ideas that will truly astound.
You see, we can do anything under the sun.
Everything's possible once it's been done!

7 The Trotter Sisters (4.26)

This wasn't just a comeback! This was the second coming! No question!

The stadium was bathing in a half-surreal light.
The moon was hanging high above, expectant in the night.
A murmur ran around the crowd, their eyes upon the screen,
And then the Compare ran onstage, waved his tambourine
And shouted, "Put your hands together for the wonder of the age!
And here they are; The Trotter Sisters, live and back on stage!"

The Rolling Stones had opened and the Beatles were in tears.
Paul was there and so was John, though dead for many years.
The Sisters' lasting legacy was the happiness they'd brought
To countless fans around the world and never falling short
Of serving up a diet of the strange and the obscure;
And there they were; The Trotter Sisters, live and back on tour!

The very best contortionists the world had ever seen,
Stars of television and of course the silver screen.
The audience was in their palm in seven seconds flat.
Men were crying; women shouting, "How did they do that?"
They even had Madonna with them in a backup role.
The Trotter Sisters shifted up and out of cruise control...

The Trottersphere had gone insane the moment they appeared,
Remembering and savouring what the girls had pioneered;
The creative and inventive way they'd used that barbers' pole;
The rubber hood in Hollywood the night they played the Bowl.
Better we forget about the camel and the cage,
'Cause there they were tonight; The Trotter Sisters, live and back on stage!

Some said they were better than they had been in their prime;
Others with less charity accusing them of mime,
But everybody seemed to like the dog that got its bone
Though possibly the monkey was a little overblown?
But no one was remotely or in any way concerned;
The Trotter Sisters brilliantly, triumphantly returned.

The curtain fell, and after four or five or six encores,
The Trotter Sisters finally withdrew from the applause.
They'd reassured the audience, at least those few alarmed,
Despite all of appearances no animals were harmed.
But if you're of the doubting few who say you can't be sure,
Well go and see The Trotter Sisters, live and back on tour!

8 Mary Huddleston (4.14)

– came to mind when I heard that two hundred thousand people had applied for a one-way passage to Mars. It seemed unbelievable, at least 'til I thought it through. Single-trip voyages have always been part of human advance; even in my own family. Mary Huddleston was my great aunt...

They called her Mary Huddleston.
She took a one-way trip
All the way down to the Cape
On a Union Castle ship.
Mary looked for a brand new life
Which finally she found
Some way into the hinterland
On a patch of broken ground.

The day she sailed from Liverpool,
She cried into the rain.
She knew that she would never see
Her family again.
But a new world waited out across
Two thousand ocean leagues;
A world of new horizons,
Of adventures and intrigues.

Through hot and dusty summers
And the freezing winter wind,
When every bluster made her feel
Her face was being skinned,
When fever struck and crops had failed
And famine had arrived,
Still Mary raised a family
And somehow she survived.

They moved her from that patch of land
To leave her dispossessed.
She found another just the same
A few miles to the west.
Whatever they could throw at her,
She took it on the chin.
She was unbowed and yes, was proud
She'd never given in.

The ending came, and as you'd guess
She never made the trip
Back to the port of Liverpool
On a Union Castle ship.
There was a phone call – just the one –
When a frail voice cracked through.
My grandma, in her eighties then,
Said, “Mary, is that you?”

I guess it's always been the same
And evermore will be;
The magic of the one-way trip
That calls humanity.
And should you ever raise your eyes
To the heavens and to Mars,
You might see Mary Huddleston
Out there amongst the stars.

9 A Peace That's Bad (2.40)

'A Peace That's Bad' doesn't seek to depict the tragedy of warfare; nor does it reflect the essentially moralistic views of activists. Perhaps contentiously, this song looks at conflict resolution from a distance. Cold fish they may be, but historians have their place...

It's a controversial thing to say
But I'm going to say it anyway.
Everybody's wanting peace,
The quest for which must never cease
But be careful what you're wishing for,
Be careful what you're wishing for;
A peace that's bad can be worse than war.

No road to peace is a single track.
It's vulnerable to attack
And though it maybe seems unkind,

Chanting mantras makes you blind
To everything that's gone before,
To everything that's gone before.
A peace that's bad can be worse than war.

Cast your mind back to Versailles.
Fifty million had to die
For that was where the seeds were sown
Before Hitler could be overthrown,
And peace is so worth fighting for –
Yes, peace is so worth fighting for
But a peace that's bad can be worse than war.

Peace that's seen to be unjust
Fuels conflict and distrust.
Grenades left lying in the road
Are always waiting to explode.
So join me, bring it to the fore –
Join me, bring it to the fore;
A peace that's bad can be worse than war.

But even now, across different lands,
I'd guess that it would take two hands
To make a register of those
Where peace of sorts has been imposed;
And this is what we answer for –
This is what we answer for.
A peace that's bad can be worse than war.

Nobody knows it more than I,
That old men speak and young men die.
And yes, there has to be a case
To parley for a breathing space
But someone has to keep the score,
Someone has to keep the score.
A peace that's bad can be worse than war.

This isn't new. It's history.
Tacitus said it before me;
And maybe someone prior to him –
Someone else out on a limb.
But it bears repeating just once more,
It bears repeating just once more:
A peace that's bad can be worse than war.

For everything that's gone before,
This is what we answer for.
A peace that's bad can be worse than war.

10 Skeletons Dance (3.19)

In the UK, Her Majesty's tabloid press are renowned for being tenacious, salacious and decidedly ungracious – particularly when they find hypocrisy in high places. So, if you've got skeletons in your cupboard, be afraid; be very afraid...

Sometimes it's quite Kafkaesque
How tabloids embrace the grotesque,
And they couldn't be keener
When some misdemeanour
Arrives on the Editor's desk.
And that's when the skeletons dance,
That's when the skeletons dance.
At the end of the day
They'll come out and play,
That's when the skeletons dance.

A Minister has to explore
A number of things he'll abhor,
But come to your senses –
Porn on expenses
Is not what expenses are for!

And that's when the skeletons dance,
That's when the skeletons dance.
At the end of the day
They'll come out and play,
That's when the skeletons dance.

In public, you seem so engrossed
In defending the downtrodden host;
But your son goes to Eton
And now you are beaten
All over from pillar to post!
And that's when the skeletons dance,
That's when the skeletons dance.
At the end of the day
They'll come out and play,
That's when the skeletons dance.

You're a Member of Parliament, yet
You're deserving of all you will get
The moment you bodge a
Quick pic of your todger
And post it all over the net!
Well, that's when the skeletons dance,
That's when the skeletons dance.
At the end of the day
They'll come out and play,
That's when the skeletons dance.

The moral here has to be that –
And repeat it and learn it off pat –
If you seek re-election
And have an erection,
You must keep it under your hat
And don't let the skeletons dance!
Don't let the skeletons dance!
At the end of the day
They'll come out and play,
So don't let the skeletons dance!

At the end of the day
They'll come out and play,
So don't let the skeletons dance!

11 Little By Little (2.58)

Back in 1948 when Orwell wrote '1984', I doubt even he would have believed how meekly we acquiesce to – even embrace – today's levels of surveillance. Still, it must all be for the best...

The winds caress the mountain top
And every day it rains
And slowly, imperceptibly,
Each day a thousand grains
Are taken from that solid rock –
Clandestine souvenirs –
And slow, so no one notices,
The mountain disappears.
It's gone before the world awakes
And little by little is all it takes.

The frog can be forgiven if
A little ill at ease,
For certainly his trust has been
Eroded by degrees.
It may be disagreeable –
Indeed, we may recoil –
How easily that little frog
Is brought up to the boil.
He never realised the stakes,
And little by little is all it takes.

They say that Adolph Hitler once

Was heard to volunteer,
“No man ever notices
His freedoms disappear,
Not if they are taken
In a thousand tiny shards.
We counter his anxieties;
The rest, he disregards,
But then he can’t apply the brakes.
And little by little is all it takes!”

I’m joyful, fifty times a day
To star on their TV
And reassured my mobile phone
Is keeping track of me;
And by the great benevolence
Of those whom we anoint.
Still, Hitler and the frog have
Made a very valid point.
So stay alert, for heaven’s sakes,
For little by little is all it takes...

So stay alert, for heaven’s sakes,
For little by little is all it takes.

12 Something Of A Loner (4.43)

Psychologist Steve Reed penned a valuable paper on the subject of urban isolation. Talking of the pain of loneliness, he said, ‘...it is the constant companion of many a solitary soul.’ Some can adjust and accommodate; a few – the fortunate ones – get help. Then there are the rest, the ones who so easily fall between the cracks...

“It’s funny you’re asking. He lived down the stairs.
The day he moved in was like musical chairs!
His accent was strong; he was a Pole or a Czech
And I know that he had a tattoo on his neck.
Well, as far as we heard, he had reasonable health.
But you know how it is, he kept himself to himself.
But I can only tell you what I’ve said to the press.
He always was something of a loner, I guess.”

“Why all the interest? He lived two doors down.
If I’m honest, he always looked a little run down.
His hair was all straggly and it got in the way.
We never did more’n pass the time of the day.
And I think he had some little mark or tattoo?
But I really can’t swear, and it might be untrue.
And anyway, how come you got this address?
He always was something of a loner, I guess.”

“Oh, it must be ten years. He was here when we came.
He lived in the flats. No, I don’t know his name.
He always wore medals. We thought he was weird,
And the kids, well, whenever they saw him they jeered.
I think it was maybe that stupid tattoo.
I must say, all this has come out of the blue.
It’s really turned into one hell of a mess.
He always was something of a loner, I guess.

“I mean, I’ve a tattoo but his, it was strange.
It was way, way outside of the usual range.
I mean, mine it says ‘Mam’ and hers says ‘Charlene’,
But his – to be honest, we weren’t really keen.
It was like a red star and it grew by degrees
With a bubble attached saying ‘Talk To Me Please!’
I’m sorry it’s all happened, nevertheless.
He always was something of a loner, I guess.

“Seems he’d been in the water for several weeks.
There wasn’t much left, but they have their techniques.
They used DNA and they looked at his teeth.
Oh, we all got together and paid for a wreath.
You know, sometimes at night, he’d just stand in the street

And he'd look up and down and he'd shuffle his feet.
But I can only tell you what I've said to the press.
He always was something of a loner, I guess."

13 Hope (2.42)

...inspired by the German proverb, 'Die Hoffnung stirbt zuletzt' ('Hope is the last to die').

This is a tale of mice and men,
A contract, and a fountain pen,
And a guy up in his conning tower
Who's always speaking truth to power.
It matters little who says what
From the upper deck of a super yacht;
But keep in mind that old school tie,
And that hope will be the last to die.

So the property tycoon acquired
The graveyard of the uninspired.
But probably his greatest trick
Was playing the body politic
'Til everyone was in cahoots.
But these are legalised pursuits;
The building blocks that underlie
Why hope will be the last to die.

It's one of life's most basic rules:
"It's difficult to free the fools
From all the chains that they revere!"
And so our so-called profiteer
Flies in the face of all that's fair –
I guess he never read Voltaire!
And maybe that's a reason why
Hope will be the last to die.

Beyond his dreams of avarice,
It maybe helps to reminisce;
On the coldness of his blackened stone,
On the flatness in his monotone;
This place where two worlds coincide,
Conspiring like a Devil's bride.
Demand will always beat supply
But hope will be the last to die.

But nothing has been prearranged;
Everything can be exchanged.
"We have the power to start again!"
I think that that was Thomas Paine.
But don't correct me if I'm wrong,
Just close your eyes and sing along.
For while there's still a dawning sky,
So hope will be the last to die.