

CHERRY RED RECORDS
PRESENTS



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Recorded and produced by Beau at
TM Studios, Norfolk, UK
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All songs written by C J T Midgley (published by Cherry Red Songs)

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

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1 Fly The Bluebird (2.28)

...of scorched earth and gathering storms. And of legacy...

Right now the sky is turning into fire,
Right now the earth is turning into ash;
So slow, the clouds are burning in the embers,
So slow the whip will lash.
So high will fly the bluebird.

So low will come the rumble from the mountain;
So deep will lie the water in the well;
So dark will roll the sky at the horizon,
So far as I can tell.
So high will fly the bluebird.

So young, these little children we are bearing,
So young in whom to trust the world to come;
So strange, the world is theirs and yours no longer;
So strange to be so young.
So high will fly the bluebird.

So right to be the start and not the ending,
So right to be the one with life to come;
So slow in understanding one another;
So strange to be so young.
So high will fly the bluebird.

Right now the sky is turning into fire,
Right now this earth is turning into ash;
So slow, the clouds are burning in the embers,
So slow the whip will lash.
So high will fly the bluebird.

2 Death Of An Old Year (2.30)

A song about modern-day terrorism in all its futility.

It's the depth of the winter and out of the darkness
The neon tube flashes, a sliver to splinter
An eye that is streaming that snow has blown into
And melted, slowly melted clear away.

It's the last of December, a night of no reason,
For friends who look forward and friends who remember.
The fire once that flared is now but an ember
The snow falls – oh, the snow falls down upon.

And some of us wander the valley of shadows
In fervour and faith and with rifles to hand;
And as yesterday's hero lies deep in the sand
Of the old year, so I peer from the train...

It's the death of an old year as I leave the station
To face the arena, to stand on my own here
Erupting in fire. And over the wire
I'm flying – as I'm dying, like my bullets in the snow.

3 Lenin (2.52)

Red Square, Moscow, 2014. Still they come...

The dancing little Harlequin, the juggler, decrees
The orbit of the oranges as down upon his knees
The light plays with the images that everybody sees
As higher in the night they fly with ever growing ease
To Lenin in his frozen tomb.
A voice is whispering in the gloom,
“Where was the communism please, in your community?
We set them free...”

A thundering concerto from the great piano flows,
Awashing over everyone and everybody knows
The talent and the genius that now accepts the rose
As turning on the rostrum, he bows and finally goes
To Lenin in his freezing church,
To kneel and never more to search.
“Where was the communism please, in your community?
We set them free...”

Now crystal chandeliers reflect on walls of inlaid gold
As high above, above the streets of ten degrees of cold,
The ruby stars are shining and like Bethlehem of old
The pilgrims come to worship, to witness, to behold
Lenin, with his freezing brain;
I asked you then, I ask again,
“Where was the communism please, in your community?”
We set them free!

4 A Curious Man (2.36)

For pub philosophers, barrack-room lawyers and dinner-party bores everywhere – welcome to the fold!

He knew what he meant, but he never could say.
When he told everybody, they all turned away.
He left without touching the hem of the crowd;
He was maybe too stupid or even too proud.
But then he came and he whispered to me –
A serious, curious nonentity.

I listened to him, and as he began
I realised that here was a serious man.
He quoted from Nietzsche, he quoted from Jung;
He read from the thoughts of Mao Tse Tung.
But all the time, I knew him to be
A serious, curious nonentity.

He talked of his life and of people he'd known.
He told of the things his experience had shown.
He stuck to my side like a Siamese twin;
He often grew tired, but he never gave in –
Not that anybody could see –
The serious, curious nonentity.

It's a long time ago, but I'll never forget
The glow in the light of his last cigarette;
The laughter that followed the end of the joke;
It seemed to get lost in the circular smoke
Ring he blew so effortlessly –
The serious, curious nonentity.

5 Rooks & Ravens (4.07)

During a 1999 visit to Santiago de Cuba, I went along to have a look at Guantanamo Bay. It was a delightful place and the U.S. Naval Base – what I could see of it – looked peaceful. Three years later “unlawful combatants” began to arrive from Afghanistan, Iraq and all points east. The martyr factory was open for business.

Oh, the prisons were full and the chains were all taken
And silence was bought in the passage of time.
And the wolves on the hills howled for the forsaken
Who, painted in glory, came bonded and shaken;
Stood shackled and shambling and nailed to the vine
Like old friends of mine.

The sky lost its light to an overcast evening,
When criminal corporals stood spitting out pips.
And the rain pounded down on a sergeant whose dreaming
Seemed only to stretch to the stutter and screaming
Of the two Smith & Wessons that hung from his hips –
From the smile on his lips.

All the mirth and the mercy in slumber were sleeping
To no-one’s amazement, or even surprise.
And deep in the darkness, the wails of the weeping
Lie drowned in the sound of the blue lightning leaping
Out from the dark of the Judge’s blue eyes
That all mercy defies.

So the circus parades in its bells and its leather.
Its clowns and its jugglers ride the trapeze.
And with smiles and with sentences tumbled together,
The honey pot glistens, the bear slips its tether
And all that is heard is the buzz of the bees
In their high galleries.

So the sentence is spoken with scarcely a quiver;
A few weighted words in the balance of trade.
And who will deny he suppresses a shiver?
Whilst ever the factory can fail to deliver,
The meat is marooned on the edge of the blade –
'Til an ace has been played.

So the lessons have ended, and the college stays shuttered,
And the churches have closed on the wayward divine;
On the solid gold statues and the dirges they muttered.
As they danced in the light of the candles that guttered,
The rooks and the ravens stayed hard to define
Like old friends of mine.

6 All The Way Down The Line (2.41)

...is NOT an anti-capitalist rant. More a velvet slap across the unacceptable face...

I’m the dream maker, I make all of the dreams;
I paint all the pictures, I stage all the scenes.
I salted the earth with a handful of beans
And planted them out on the ledge.
I was singing...

What’s mine is mine, it’ll never be thine,
All the way down the line what’s mine is mine.

What's mine is mine, it'll never be thine –
Oh, all the way down the line...

I'm the cask maker, I make all of the casks;
I give of the wine when the choirboys ask
But the iron band stays – though I'm taken to task
For hammering down on the wedge
And for singing...

What's mine is mine, it'll never be thine,
All the way down the line what's mine is mine.
What's mine is mine, it'll never be thine –
Oh, all the way down the line...

I'm the bell maker, I make all of the bells
To ring for the future and all it foretells.
From high in the steeples and over the fells,
The chimes clatter over the edge.
They're singing...

What's mine is mine, it'll never be thine,
All the way down the line what's mine is mine.
What's mine is mine, it'll never be thine –
Oh, all the way down the line...

I'm the kingmaker, I make every king
With all of the good and the evil they bring.
They all join the carol to chorus and sing
Before solemnly taking the pledge,
Still singing...

What's mine is mine, it'll never be thine,
All the way down the line what's mine is mine.
What's mine is mine, it'll never be thine –
Oh, all the way down the line...

7 When Gabriel Turns (2.55)

– about the cruelty and betrayal of dementia. It's easier to hate something when you give it a name...

A crash in the valley brought me out of my dreams,
An unclear recollection and a memory that seems
To be carved on the sky and to float on the sea
But when rhetoric ends in a silent decree
And the alphabet groans with the force of the G,
Then Gabriel turns on me.

The softest caress of my partner in crime
Explains to the furthest limits of mime
That there is no answer and there is no key;
The deserts are barren, and all history
Is lost when a pipe falls and shatters its knee
As Gabriel turns on me...

My eight-thirty cocktail is stuck to the glass,
And hoping to heaven this moment will pass,
But all is discovered; it cannot break free.
It's taken outside and nailed to a tree.
He leaves it suspended for morning to see
Then Gabriel turns on me.

This power-crazed fool with his magnetic hands
Has cast his decisions across the white sands,
But bending and breaking they fight to return,
Return from the fires where forever they burn.
Their choices are few, they never will learn
'Til they see Gabriel turn.

Oh listen you fool, pay heed to the words.
They'll flap and they'll fly like so many birds;
They'll squeak and they'll squirm as perception degrades
To explode in your eyes like a hundred grenades.
This treacherous torment of constant charades
Wherever the firelight fades...

Then there is no I; only pure irony
When Gabriel turns on me.

8 So Far Away (2.46)

From Balaclava to Lashkar Gah, only the technology has really changed.

Come along, see the warriors in blue
As they march along so proud, attracting such a crowd
With their bayonets fixed and their rifles at the slope.
The daughters and the sons fly the planes and fire the guns
For you and me.

Come along, see the khaki on parade.
See the General salutes, see the highly polished boots
March along to the beat of the drum
Through the mud and through the rain. Will you ever see again
The friends you knew?

For the time will come when a child returns,
The broken youth and the battle burns.
There are words of sympathetic pride
And memorials to those who died...

Now here they come, here they come down the street,
Not so many as before, their backs are tired, their feet are sore;
But the music continues to play,
Excepting for the few for whom the bugle blew
So far away...

For the time will come when a child returns,
The broken youth and the battle burns.
There are words of sympathetic pride
And memorials to those who died...

Now here they come, here they come down the street,
Not so many as before, their backs are tired, their feet are sore;
But the music continues to play,
Excepting for the few for whom the bugle blew
So far away...
So far away...
So far away...
So far away...

9 Soldiers Of Fortune (3.37)

– a reflection on those cultural phenomena of the late 20th Century – the Oligarchs of the New Russia ...

Like soldiers of fortune, they come from the East,
Their status encased in a Mercedes Beast.
And, little by little, they pick at the feast
As into the valley they dream,
Where the poor find it harder to scream.

Prospectors all, out in search of a strike
Being carried along on an energy spike,
You could say to a man they know what it's like
To swirl in a poverty mist
And why the poor find it hard to resist.

They prospect for gold in the bile-bitter stones.
They rattle the windows and gnaw at the bones,
And, oh, how they flourish their cellular 'phones
In the mire where miseries seethe,
Where the poor find it harder to breathe.

I never have known whether blood is being spilt,
Whether all of their jewellery's golden or gilt,
But I want no part of the empires built
On a patch with a permanent seep
And where the poor find it harder to sleep.

A call to the weak that so easy beguiles;
A twitch to enrich their malevolent smiles;
A careless display of their flamboyant styles;
Samaritans all pass you by
Where the poor find it easier to die.

Like soldiers of fortune, they come from the East,
Their status encased in a Mercedes Beast.
And, little by little, they pick at the feast
As into the valley they dream,
Where the poor find it harder to scream.

10 Singapore (3.19)

It's said all empires contain the seeds of their own destruction. When peoples are denigrated and humiliated by imperial masters, it can only be a matter of time before the empire falls. This song tells of an insignificant incident in the decline of the British Empire...

“Pass the lady's capel!” said I
To the rickshaw boy
As midnight kissed a sighing Singapore.
“Take us to the highway
Of spluttering champagne
And candles dancing over every door.”
And he smiled, and he said “Yessir”.

“Once more down the coast road;
Take us to the bay;
Let us see the fireboats nestle to the quay.
And you listen to me,
You rickshaw boy,
You see you keep your yellow eyes turned to the sea.”

And he smiled, and he said “Yessir”.

“Take the lady’s cape,” said I.
“Let her body breathe
And let the wind have all that it reveals.
Let the whispered silver
From the China moon
Alight upon the gently rocking wheels.”
And he smiled, and he said “Yessir”.

“Pass the lady’s cape,” said I,
“You, rickshaw boy,
She’s seen the sky and now she needs her comb.
Back up on the highway,
Take me back to Raffles
Then take her cape and take your sister home.”
And he smiled, and he smiled,
And he smiled, and he said “Yessir”.

11 That Silver Door (2.26)

One of the stories twenty-four-hour news can never tell...

I tell of winter blizzards and of wars and opium smokers,
Whisper words of condescension as I smile and say “Goodnight”.
In the flaring bright of several thousand lumens-worth of candle power,
I smile into the camera’s eye from underneath the light.
But far across the studio floor, behind the camera lies the door
That leads me from this fantasy and takes me who knows where?
For I have never contemplated opening that silver door
And asking, *sotto voce*, “Is there anybody there?”

Tonight however, news is hard to come by and the crew is
Somehow restless, much more restless than I’ve ever seen before.
The camera’s eye is beckoning across the void of brightness;
As the picture fades, the camera is panning to the door.
But I hold my expression tight, this face created every night,
And try to read between the lines they’ve managed to prepare,
Whilst in the dark that silver door is glowing brighter than before
And more, I hear myself ask, “Is there anybody there?”

Now no one looks at me, for there is no one there to see.
As I look out past the studio lights I know I am alone.
The crew have gone their ways, the cameras swing and idly gaze,
Their out-of-focus eyes upon the dying microphone.
But I have nothing I should fear, I know the public know I’m here
Inside this fortress fantasy; a cage of celluloid.
I run across the studio floor, fling open wide that silver door,
And through a bright and blinding silence fall into the void.

12 The Hum Of The Cable (2.10)

Thomas Jefferson puts it most succinctly: “All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent.”

Pastor Martin Niemöller articulates it beautifully in his “First They Came For The Jews” poem:

*"First they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out, because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out, because I was not a Communist.
Then they came for the Trade Unionists
And I did not speak out, because I was not a Trade Unionist.
Then they came for me
And there was no one left to speak out for me."*

I also say it, but it takes me four verses! Like the song itself, the hum of a 50000 volt cable is a warning of danger up there above our heads. We ignore it at our peril...

When they come in the night with their lamps burning bright
To bear all the Gypsies away,
The cries burrow deep to the depths of my sleep
Of the roots being wrenched from the clay.
However much I care, it's cold out there –
In the darkness I turn away.

When they cross all the fields with the sun on their shields,
The Baptists are easy to find.
At the point of a gun they force them to run
And they leave not a one left behind.
But the sun is bright, and at its height –
In its lightness I am blind.

When they scour the lanes and find the remains
Of the writers who peddle ideas,
With little to seize, the presses can squeeze
The word and the word disappears.
But I cannot decipher what
Is but a blot, my dears.

Out late on the street I hear on its beat
The growl of a Doberman dog.
The red of its eyes destroys my disguise
As slowly it searches the smog.
But with a howl, it finds its prey,
The blind, the sleepy turn away,
They cast adrift this useless cog
As the hum of the cable comes down through the fog.

13 Saving Grace (2.32)

If you look hard enough, you see even the mirror offers redemption.

The furrowed brow is dark and low,
The eyes close-set amongst the face
In company so often seen
To be cynical, to be out of place.
It takes an act of charity
To go searching for your saving grace,
For your serving grace

So careful, and you worship
Little icons that you then replace;
Your energies are cracked and dry
Yet somehow always force the pace.
It may be hard, it may be long
But somewhere there's a saving grace...
There's a saving grace.

Your sanctity is seen with awe,
And yet is somehow lightly laced
With something really quite absurd.
How common sense defaces taste!
You turn and as you slowly fall
The diamond that has turned to paste
Becomes your saving grace.

So the tidal flow will come and go
And images you will replace.
Don't curse the darkness, light the lamp
Out there in the open space.
For temples tall and all will fall
And whilst of them there'll be no trace,
You have your saving grace.

14 Wings (2.53)

"Fly The Bluebird" begins and ends on the wing. At least we close in a more contented frame of mind than we began...

If I have wings, where will I fly?
Will I paint the land or even change the sky?
Will I wheel in my dream in a long-fought duel
With you? It seems so cruel...

If I have wings, will I ascend
For the shelter of a cloud to be my friend?
Will I float high and free without earth to bind
With you? It's so unkind...

...to take me higher, higher, higher to the sun
'Til I'm tired, tired, too tired to go on...

And so these wings will carry me
On a sleeping slow descent toward the sea,
There to land on the sand and be sleeping still
With you, and time to fill...

Take me higher, higher, higher to the sun
'Til I'm tired, tired, too tired to go on...

And so these wings will carry me
On a sleeping slow descent toward the sea,
There to land on the sand and be sleeping still
With you, and time to fill...

There to land on the sand and be sleeping still
With you, and time to fill...