

CHERRY RED RECORDS
PRESENTS



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1 Right Side Of History (2.47)

is a rallying call for all who consider only 21st Century attitudes have value and merit...

The past is a place that is so far away
From anything we might experience today,
But thankfully now we can truthfully say
We stand on the right side of history.
It's well understood that we mustn't be faced
With issues we'll probably view with distaste;
How anything – everything – can be defaced
When you're on the right side of history.

Opinions, philosophies, practices all
(Even when maybe a marginal call!)
Are destined to crumble and finally fall
To those on the right side of history.
We'd hate any hint of a racist slur,
Except on the out-and-out entrepreneur
Where we were concerned that their politics were
Not quite on the right side of history.

It's brilliant, being so free to attack
Those who we know never really fight back;
Convinced as we can be that all that they lack
Is being on the right side of history.

Democracy gives us our own wrecking ball
To hammer down hard on society's wall.
That's truly the present we prize most of all
With being on the right side of history.

“Believers! Advance and proclaim your ideals,
With wind in your sails and with wings on your heels.
You can't underestimate how good it feels
To be on the right side of history!
Heads will be shaven, dissenters disgraced.
Deviants all must be hunted and traced.
Unorthodox heresies will be replaced
By those on the right side of history.”

One unspoken fear that we never will say
Is, maybe a couple of decades away,
Folks might deride what we're doing today
In the name of the right side of history.
So maybe some character with his guitar
Will sing of what wonderful people we are.
If that ever happens, he'll surely go far
By being on the right side of history.

2 Compassionate Ways (4.33)

“I must be cruel, only to be kind...” What was good enough for Hamlet back then must surely be good enough for right-thinking people today!

“It's a funny old world,” the inebriate said, raising his tankard and shaking his head.
He stumbled and, turning his back to the bar, he picked up his battered acoustic guitar.
“I've written this new song for everyone here!” he loudly proclaimed as he banged down his beer.
“It's all about old times when we'd disagree and quarrel and argue quite vehemently;
Of halcyon days before we grew older and learned to look constantly over our shoulder;
Before we could know that we'd need to appraise the cruelty of our compassionate ways.

“It goes on to tell how we misrepresent people as fascist who offer dissent,
And others as racist who don't swallow whole the virtue that we in our wisdom extol.
So now, and without any further ado I sing this for you of the humourless crew;
For all of your foot soldiers and for your chiefs and all fundamentalist righteous beliefs.
I sing it for all those who'll sound off in praise of dubious modern revisionist ways;
And lastly for all here who, following fashion, defend all the cruelty in your compassion.”

It met with a silence, and as you'd suppose created a shockwave; above all for those
Who'd raised up their glasses to lustily yell the *“Killing The Terf”* song they'd memorised well.
And then, as the noise levels started to rise, somebody yelled out, “He's one of those guys
Who's often been told but refuses to know compassion was never more plainly on show!”
Whilst no one admitted to throwing the chair that broke his guitar, seemed that everyone there
Was so disrespected that every man jack was minded to join in the final attack.

So that's how he came to be flat on the floor, soaking in beer and in whisky and more.
The barroom was clear now; as you'll comprehend, compassion was all they'd been there to defend!
The landlord was old-school, and stoically wore the look of the guy who had seen it before.
“It's true, boy”, he said as he swept up the glass, “so often in vino, we'll find veritas!
You've picked up some bruises, but broken bones mend and happily most of us know in the end
In spite of such minor, inconsequent crimes we thankfully live in compassionate times!

“At least,” he went on “it's like everyone says; *‘Righteousness moves in compassionate ways...’*”

3 Mr Scallywag (2.42)

– always on hand to offer a spiritual or temporal crutch for our discontent...

Sometimes it's our reasonable, rational side
That so heartlessly plays on our fears;
And that's when another may start to decide
To recruit a few more volunteers.
The scallywag tells us to follow his tracks
To where parallel lines will converge;
Down the deepest and darkest of *cul de sacs*
Out of which we may never emerge.

But keep it in mind; he's both Jekyll and Hyde!
The scallywag makes an untrustworthy guide!
Keep it in mind; he's both Jekyll and Hyde!
The scallywag makes an untrustworthy guide!

Sometimes we'll hang on to a word or a thought
And then play with it day after day.
So often, it seems, when we're cornered or caught
It's the scallywag leads us astray.
He'll try to convince us a million strings
Will create an acceptable sound.
He promises so many wonderful things
With symphonies swirling around.
Approach him, my friend, with your eyes open wide –
The scallywag makes an untrustworthy guide!
Approach him, my friend, with your eyes open wide –
The scallywag makes an untrustworthy guide!

Sometimes if we find ourselves locked in a dream –
When we're wandering in the unknown
And maybe discovering in the extreme
What it is to be truly alone –
That's when the scallywag likes to appear;
To calm and of course reassure
With cock-and-bull canards he hopes we'll reverse
In acknowledgement of his allure.
He offers contentment, and much more beside.
The scallywag makes an untrustworthy guide!
He offers contentment, and much more beside.
The scallywag makes an untrustworthy guide!

Sometimes it is easier throwing in towels
Or ducking and dodging a clinch;
Even though afterwards deep in our bowels
We notice we die by the inch.
That's what Mr Scallywag always intends;
And we get it of course, in our hearts.
He'll argue how means always justify ends
And for most of us, that's how it starts.
My thinking? For what it's worth I'm satisfied
The scallywag makes an untrustworthy guide.
My thinking? For what it's worth I'm satisfied
The scallywag makes an untrustworthy guide...

4 Varsity Man (2.56)

(PPE being Philosophy, Politics & Economics; the intellectual version of personal protection equipment!)

I woke the first morning, a spanking new me,
A two-two success in the old PPE;
Transformed in the moment from man-in-the street
To one of the self-serving bogus elite.
Victory snatched from the jaws of defeat
By one of the self-serving bogus elite.

I'm always recalling the way it began
The day I enrolled as a Varsity man;
Remembering fondly my first Marguerite,
So dear to the self-serving bogus elite
And certain to kindle a quickening beat
In the heart of the self-serving bogus elite.

I was, even though toiling mostly unpaid,
Still nonetheless master of all I surveyed;
Ready and willing to suck at the teat
Of the best of the self-serving bogus elite.
The tower of power throbbed to the beat
Of the drum of the self-serving bogus elite.

It's never been difficult, climbing the tree
On the back of an excellent two-two degree.

Besides, it's all about the people you meet
When you're part of the self-serving bogus elite.
I'd quickly discovered the place was replete
With the sons of the self-serving bogus elite.

I've never quite seen why the plebs make a fuss
Over one rule for them and another for us.
If they want to join us, they know where we meet
To be part of the self-serving bogus elite.
They'll have the respect of the august effete
In our wonderful self-serving bogus elite.

It's true, as a Minister serving the Crown,
That I've not levelled up; but I've not levelled down!
So, I can rely – when I beat my retreat –
On all in the self-serving bogus elite
Playing the game in an endless repeat
Of the song of the self-serving bogus elite.

And that's why I say, without pride or conceit
I stand with the self-serving bogus elite...

5 Feedback Loop (3.52)

is a gentle reflection on polarisation in Society.

I've a story I must tell you. It's about the bad old days
Before the revelation came and I learned to change my ways.
I was, by any sound assessment, ready for a riot,
Occasioned by perplexity and a sprinkling of disquiet.
But there you are – that's what I was; touchy and ill-disposed.
I saw the light one stormy night when the reason was exposed.

I considered myself rounded in a twisted kind of way –
I think I even tempted you to become my protégé?
I never thought too much of Jung or even of Sigmund Freud.
Neither could explain my being constantly annoyed!
And then, that night, so much came clear and in one bound I escaped
As lightning flashed and I realised how my thoughts were being shaped...

I believed what I was reading –
Only read what I believed.
I believed what I was hearing –
Only heard what I believed.
I believed what I was seeing –
Only saw what I believed
And it all made me so bitter in the end.

The noises circling in my head were attempting to regroup,
Caught in an echo chamber's never-ending feedback loop.
My brain was feeling hollowed-out, at the same time, over-full –
Think of it like a thunderstorm bouncing round inside your skull!
Something – I wasn't quite sure what – needed bearding, face-to-face
Then came that moment, thankfully, everything fell into place.

I can't believe it took so long for the pennies all to drop.
I guess we have the choice to swim, or to drown in agitprop.
Whichever way, I'm pleased to say this is something you'll avoid,
And maybe without checking in with guys like Jung or Freud!
At least, for me, the point's been made and I'm getting straightened out.
And this – I'll say it one more time – is what the whole damn thing's about...

I believed what I was reading –
Only read what I believed.
I believed what I was hearing –
Only heard what I believed.
I believed what I was seeing –
Only saw what I believed
And it all made me so bitter in the end...
It made me so bitter in the end.

6 The One-Eyed Man (5.45)

So much will be remembered of Ukraine from the early months of 2022; the Churchillian inspiration of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the heroic resistance at the Mariupol Azovstal steelworks; just two exemplars that will surely go down in history. Amid the chaos of conflict, a capacity to remain calm, to plan and to inspire is wondrous to behold!

I think we now have learned that there are different ways to win.
The sun's gone down behind the trees and cold is seeping in.
It almost doesn't matter that the time for talking's done;
The dream we knew has ended and a nightmare has begun.
But with so many flying blind upon an angel's wing,
So, in the kingdom of the blind, our one-eyed man is king.

They're saying we have little time; the options to assess
Are whether to capitulate or maybe acquiesce?
We're thinking of the winter sun reflecting on the snow
That disappeared behind the trees about an hour ago
And trying to work out what is wise and what is inhumane?
A one-eyed man turns chaos to an organised campaign.

The journey will be hard at first, and dangerous and dark;
A foolish kind of enterprise upon which to embark.
The moon is offering little light to help us on the track
And everybody knows by now there is no turning back.
"Remember how a single spark ignites a fire that flares?
It will burn even brighter!" so the one-eyed man declares.

I heard someone predictably descended into Hell.
They say that he'd maliciously been poisoning the well.
But these things happen, sadly, when a people are bereft;
When vestiges of light are gone and dark is all that's left.
And yet in spite of everything, whatever else we lack,
At least we have a one-eyed man to lead us safely back.

Whilst ever there's the slightest chance, be it however small,
Conceivably against all odds their edifice might fall,
The partisans will still maintain their willingness to fight
Through rain and wind and sleet and snow and through this blackest night.
Yet no one underestimates – nobody should or can –
The anarchy that would ensue without the one-eyed man.

Though in the end, as history says, undoubtedly we'll bleed,
Whatever happens, come what may, we never will concede;
And Phoenix-like, we'll rise again – we all will be reborn,
And all of this in winter in the dark before the dawn.
He will, before the break of day, have engineered his plan;
For that, if nothing more right now, we need the one-eyed man...

7 The Celestial Engineer (3.06)

... effortlessly pre-empting all the upcoming revelations from the new James Webb Space Telescope!

"I like to keep it simple!" said the Celestial Engineer,
Condensing all of history into a single year.
"From first ferocious moments through the slow ascent of Man,
In fundamental terms, my friend, here's how it all began..."

"From timeless depths of nowhere on the stroke of New Year's Day
A blinding cipher flashed the word that time was under way;
That the engines of the future ought to now begin to turn,
And galaxies should start to spin and suns begin to burn..."

"The silence of the Happening went screaming through the void
And early months saw everything created, then destroyed.
The dust the solar wind propelled along its merry way
Founded Earth in late July – the twenty-seventh day..."

"Your Great Irrelevance cooled down and slowly turned to stone.
September came, and life arrived and claimed it as its own!
As evolution ran amok on land and far beneath,

The first recorded worm appeared December the sixteenth...

“Four days on, a flower grew – a burst of *joie de vivre!* –
Another four, and dinosaurs appeared on Christmas Eve.
The twenty-sixth saw mammals first emerge out of the smoke,
The garden still anticipating nature’s finest joke...

“Eleven p.m. on New Year’s Eve; the time that Man arrived;
And much against prediction, you appear to have survived!
But, looking at the clock,” says the Celestial Engineer,
“We’re fast approaching midnight! Have yourselves a great New Year!”

“Yes, I like to keep it simple!” says the Celestial Engineer,
Condensing time conveniently into a single year.
“From first ferocious moments through the slow ascent of Man,
In fundamental terms, my friend, that’s how it all began;
That’s how it all began,
That’s how it all began...”

8 Reassuring News (2.53)

... when you're relieved to discover you're not abnormal after all!

I visited the surgery in search of good advice.
I sat down with the doctor and resolved to be precise.
“Now take your time,” he said, “and tell me what this is about.”
“I must confess, I feel a fraud!” was how I started out.
I carried on, outlining all my innermost concerns –
I talked of my affliction’s now diminishing returns.
“The bottom line,” I said, “is that I think I always knew
I’m utterly unqualified to write the songs I do.
When I compare myself to all the masters of the art –
The Cowards and the Porters and the Gershwins for a start –
You’ll understand my anguish as deep down I am aware
That when it comes to elegance, I simply don’t compare.
I’ve never found my way around those dreaded semibreves –
I’m not, despite appearances, what everyone believes!
Put simply and convincingly, I know with every chord
I feel, to put it mildly, an unreconstructed fraud!”

He pondered my condition in the way that doctors do,
And then replied, “I have some reassuring news for you!
I moonlight here to help them prune a truly mammoth list –
I’m totally unqualified, but make a decent fist!
So you may say it’s me that’s taking people for a ride –
I just come in at weekends for a few quid on the side!
You’re only seeing me as you were next on the conveyor.
Five days out of seven, I’m a Quantity Surveyor!”
“That’s wonderful!” I blurted out, “I really couldn’t tell!
I’m so relieved, discovering that you’re a fraud as well!”
Some may think my acclamation overly excessive,
But how he’d made the whole thing work was wickedly impressive!
I left the clinic on a high and feeling so much better,
Carrying his all-important final sign-off letter;
Plus, of course a monogrammed polite but firm reminder
I owed this guy a hundred pounds. The man had played a blinder!

9 Icarus Wings (3.29)

is dedicated to all people and politicians down the ages who've insisted on flying too close to the sun...

Young Icarus in the beginning
Pioneered an unstoppable trend.
He almost got by,
But by flying so high
Met a truly disastrous end.
His daddy had earlier told him,
“You may have the heart of a lion,
But keep in mind kings
Must look after their wings!

Is this a hill you want to die on?"

Of course I've been reading the papers
And quite understand what's involved;
And between you and me,
From all I can see
It ought to be quickly resolved.
The pictures are hardly becoming
(That's something you should keep an eye on!)
So my question today –
And forgive the cliché! –
Is this the hill you want to die on?

You'll not find me casting aspersions –
It's a line I try hard not to cross –
Though seeing how you claim
To be top of your game,
You have me at rather a loss!
I know I don't need to remind you
I'm one you can always rely on.
But don't be misled –
It's like I have said;
Is this the hill you want to die on?

I'm sure those around you have argued
You have to try moving things on.
I guess as it stands
You should put up your hands;
And the sooner, the sooner it's gone!
This isn't, I know you'll acknowledge,
An issue you should testify on
'Cos flames will be fanned
And they'll get out of hand –
Is this the hill you want to die on?

This isn't a time for bravado;
Too many have tried that before.
It's the littlest things –
Like the two melted wings! –
That will cause you to crash to the floor.
So here comes the Icarus question,
The one you may well go awry on.
If you're flying higher
And nearing the fire,
Is this the hill you want to die on?

10 Skin In The Game (4.01)

... has been inspired by a slew of real-life incidents where a toxic mix of PTSD and the perception of duty has ended in tragedy.

It was deep in the dark of December and began with a great hue and cry.
A blizzard was raging, remember? A patient had bid them goodbye.
The reason it landed so badly was something they could have foreseen.
The media mentioned he'd sadly forgotten who once he had been.
"No one," they emphasised "need be alarmed!" in a quite disingenuous claim,
'Til someone suggested, "He's possibly armed and maybe has skin in the game!"

I know you have your recollections of when you first heard that he'd gone;
How soon, despite all the objections, the media circus moved on.
They all have to meet other deadlines – there probably wasn't a gun! –
And so he'd dropped out of the headlines as simply a man on the run.
But when he found he was surrounded, for one final time he became
A soldier again being hounded – and one who had skin in the game!

It's a cold wind that blows down the hallway swirling the dust as it goes
It could have been Tuesday or Monday or any old day, I suppose.
They'll tell you now no one intended to try to provoke the Marine;
That really it all should have ended unexceptional and dull and routine.
But one of them taunted, "Remember..." and catcalled the combatant's name,
"It's not like they said in December. You never had skin in the game!"

They reckon that's why he'd concluded this wasn't a time to hold back.
The hunters who'd come and intruded now found themselves under attack.
He'd loosed off a couple of salvos – it seemed that he did have a gun! –
But down in the dust and the shadows, the end had already begun.
They'd come, as we might have predicted – regrettably, but all the same –
To take out the luckless afflicted, the one who had skin in the game.

There were of course mild repercussions exactly as one would expect –
The medics concluded discussions, the paperwork all had been checked.
According to most of their studies, he'd only been doing his best
Defending himself and his buddies; at least, so the therapists guessed.
“There is a perverse kind of beauty!” their final report would proclaim.
“A soldier, whenever on duty, will always have skin in the game.”

11 Exceptional! (4.17)

– in glorious celebration of subjective assessment.

Around about election time in the merry month of May,
I found myself entangled in a contender's Passion Play.
An erudite young gentleman of a kind we seldom see
Proceeded without hindrance to begin haranguing me.
“I have,” he said, “been rightly blessed and it fortunately appears
That the tree of knowledge shivers in the gale of my ideas!”

I must confess to being impressed! Apprehensions were assuaged.
In the face of such assurance, who could fail to be engaged?
“I have,” he further volunteered, “a superlative CV.
I haven't failed at anything. I'm exceptional, you see!”
Of course I took him at his word – I was sure, despite his years,
That the tree of knowledge shivered in the gale of his ideas.

He had, it seemingly transpired in common with the rest
Been always judged exceptional whenever being assessed.
Success he knew was guaranteed, driven by, he so believed,
His bursts of creativity and not what he'd achieved.
“I guess,” he mused, “you could say we're insurgent pioneers
Where the tree of knowledge shivers in the gale of our ideas!”

I'll have you know he got my vote, and as we quickly learned
Constituents in droves can pretty easily be turned.
I think what made a difference was his play to the amazed,
“I never voiced a single thought that wasn't roundly praised!”
That, and his undisputed claim that brought us close to tears,
How the tree of knowledge shivered in the gale of his ideas.

We all now know how high he climbed being constantly assessed
“Exceptional”, though unburdened by a competency test.
It hadn't proved in any way the slightest handicap,
His résumé pronouncing him “...a quite exceptional chap!”
So harken, ye of little faith who saw this end in tears –
Let trees of knowledge shiver in the gale of your ideas!

12 Rotation Song (2.04)

is a piece of total nonsense, written following a conversation overheard in a restaurant. A young lady – who seemingly had had issues with everyone she'd ever met – was regaling a fellow diner with put-downs she'd both dished out and received. They always began, “So I turned round and said...” or “Would you believe, she turned round and said...”. It was plain to me she lived her life in a state of perpetual rotation! The tune, incidentally, is from a ditty called “Dolly Gay” my father, Bill Midgley, penned for me when I was about three years old! Cheers, Pa!

I found myself conversing with a most contentious friend.
His farcical assertions drove me close to my wits' end.
Believing, as I always have, his thinking's for the birds,
I turned round in high dudgeon and addressed him with these words;
“You've disappeared! Where have you gone? I find that rather rude!
You have, I have to tell you, an appalling attitude!”
“I'm here,” my friend retorted; then accusingly he said,
“I'm staring at the back of your distinctly balding head!”

Then typically, *he turned round* in a trice and said – I quote! –
“You see, you’ve disappeared as well – that’s something we should note;
Because we have our differences, apparently with ease,
Between us we’ve rotated a full one-eighty degrees;
But then, you’ve always flaunted the opinions of a clown!”
I turned round and retorted “...says a jackass of renown!”
It didn’t help to witness how my words, though doubtless dull,
In vain were being levelled at his now-rotated skull!

Of course, he took exception in a manner you will guess –
He turned round and, with flashing eyes, began this short address;
“Undoubtedly our differences are destined to remain
But overall, I’m glad that I can see you once again!”
So you’ll have gathered why we both eventually agreed
A moment of stability was something we would need,
Committing resolutely to avoiding a reprise
Of repeatedly rotating through three-sixty degrees!

13 Impure Thought (3.45)

... from which the algorithms of all social media companies appear determined to defend us!

It hit me like a thunderclap!
My favourite social media app
Apparently was searching hard
For heresies to disregard.
An urgent email, asking why,
Produced this rather strange reply
I tell you chilled me to the core;
“*Cos our opinions count for more!*”

I asked a fellow I’d defined
A so-called friend, “Pray be so kind
As to endeavour to explain
A notion I can’t entertain;
To wit, this slow increasing drip
That feels akin to censorship.”
“They are,” he smiled, “the Devil’s spore,
But their opinions count for more!”

Then he confirmed, alarmingly,
The things they’d said he mustn’t see.
“It’s also their considered view
The same constraints apply to you!”
When I protested vehemently
He simply said, “They’ll disagree,
And so we need to underscore
How their opinions count for more!”

“It is,” my friend said, “in effect
Our reasoning that they protect.
They’re here to offer up support,
Relieving us of impure thought.”
It seems he wanted gratitude
For tendering this platitude!
I was expected to adore
That “their opinions count for more!”

Well, sometime later I brought home
A slightly controversial tome.
To my amazement, he decreed,
“This isn’t something we should read.
It may affect the way we feel,
And that would hardly be ideal
Because, as we have said before,
It’s their opinions count for more!”

That self-same night some pamphleteer –
Whose politics remain unclear –
Came knocking loudly at my door.

I think he may have called before.
My friend opined, "This guy's a freak
To whom we really must not speak!
To listen would be to ignore
That their opinions count for more!"

Keen to hang on to what was mine
I booted up and went online.
I Googled "*mind-control abuse*"
Which was of course of little use!
As later my psychiatrist learned,
A million searches were returned
And faraway the highest score
Was "*Their opinions count for more!*"

14 The Dystopian National Anthem (4.00)

I am of course mindful not everyone on Planet Earth will have been able to experience "Kingdom Of The Blind" – my latest contribution to world culture! – in its entirety. I would however ask those who are able, to stand respectfully during the playing of The Dystopian National Anthem, which will conclude today's performance. Thank you.

REFRAIN –

Dystopia, our Motherland,
Your bloodied flag raised high.
We live to serve Dystopia
(Unless we're called to die!).
May enemies be routed,
May your foes be roundly cursed.
May skulking vile assassins know
You will always do your worst!

To our Motherland, Dystopia,
We give loyalty and love,
In sacred blood, in brotherhood
And a fearful iron glove.
Your children in their ecstasy
Shall be forever free
When cell-doors clang and traitors hang
From sea to blood-red sea...

SING REFRAIN:

To our Motherland, Dystopia,
By the grace of God on high
The strong will stay, the weak will pay,
The treacherous will die!
We are fearsome and unswerving
In our faithfulness to you.
We will march again over fields of grain
To salute the Black & Blue...

SING REFRAIN:

We pledge this solemn vow:
Every detainee, every amputee
Has a shoulder to the plough!
Every latent foe will perish
Upon the Supreme Leader's spear;
Or, by His desire, in the vengeful fire
When God unleashes fear... on...

SING REFRAIN:

To our Motherland, Dystopia,
We will worship your ideals;
Fraternally slave to an early grave
With our shoulders behind your wheels.
Oh, glorious Dystopia,
All the victories you bring –
A belief for all and a clarion call
For your people all to sing...

SING REFRAIN WITH ENTHUSIASM!