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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 on eleven of the tracks is my 1967 Harmony H-1270 twelve-string, “Big 12”.
The ‘odd one out’ features Big 12’s twin, “Scruff”.

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1 Who Pays The Ferryman? (3.49)

Ah, Brexit! I do so love the cussedness of electorates! There’s no wonder folks with totalitarian leanings prefer to keep strange notions like democracy at arm’s length!

It was hard when we travelled to the Brave New World
As the storms fell upon us and the maelstrom swirled.
Everybody quickly realigning their sights
Reminded me of Moses and those Israelites
Believing they were leaving all the plagues behind.
There’s nothing like an optimistic state of mind
That comes back to haunt you like a tallyman’s debt!
Do yourself a favour – try never to forget
Who pays the ferryman?
Who pays the ferryman?
Who pays the ferryman
When all is said and done?
Let me think a minute...

We ducked and dissembled when the venom flew forth
From the heat of the south to the blizzards up north;
And we’re ethically-sourced and yet still we are slaves

Who rise from the gutters, encircle our graves,
And all that we're asking as we gird up our loins
Is a little mazuma; a couple of coins
To see us to safety and across the abyss.
Not a person amongst us has asked themselves this:
Who pays the ferryman?
Who pays the ferryman?
Who pays the ferryman
When all is said and done?
Let me think about it...

Revolution came without a shot being fired,
Democracy always being greatly admired.
The Nobody, who claimed he was an Afghan vet,
Paraded with a placard saying "Not Dead Yet!"
Someone went to steal it as a matter of course;
Nobody resisted irresistible force.
There, standing at the foot of the companionway,
Better late than never, now he heard himself say,
"Who pays the ferryman?
Who pays the ferryman?
Who pays the ferryman
When all is said and done?
Let me think a minute..."

The ferryman sniggered as he leaned on his pole.
The night out there was blacker than Lucifer's soul.
Those who had the pennies were all waiting to cross.
Those without? "I'm sorry, but I don't give a toss!"
Some had marked it down as such a scandalous waste,
Repenting at leisure for their indecent haste.
Check it out – and quickly! – with the rest of the gang;
Otherwise, for evermore the question will hang:
Who pays the ferryman?
Who pays the ferryman?
Who pays the ferryman
When all is said and done?

Who pays the ferryman?
Who pays the ferryman?
Who pays the ferryman
When all is said and done...
When all is said and done?

2 Gerrymander Street Blockade (4.31)

Chaos theorists tell us the beating wing of a butterfly can cause a hurricane half a world away. Most of the time, such important events go unrecognised or unseen. Occasionally however, there's a budding Pulitzer Prize-winner on hand to record the moment...

I'd just got back. I'd hit the sack. That's when the call came through;
"I'd get back out there tootie-sweetie. Now, if I was you!
It's something big that's happening. Here, take down this address..."
He gave me the coordinates to suit my GPS.
"Remember how you told me once you want to live the dream?
Tonight kid, you might hear
The butterfly scream!"

"I think you'd better move along – there's nothing here to see!"
A guy in fancy jewellery was looking straight at me.
"Come on, my friend, that can't be true!" I heard myself repeat,
"There's something going on down there in Gerrymander Street."
Let's say he'd skipped his classes in the groves of academe!
Then, faint on the wind,
Came a butterfly's scream...

He kicked the dog that kept on getting underneath his feet.
A car came by; the chauffeur-driven kind of the elite.
The driver rolled his window down. "The weather's closing in!
We're back to all the good times and the old days in Berlin
When nothing could be taken to appear as it would seem!"

Again came the sound
Of a butterfly's scream.

He caught my eye. He smiled and said, "I'll tell you what I think.
It's best for you if we assume your hearing's on the blink.
In around about an hour from now the roadway will be clear
And no one will believe that anyone was ever here."
I asked myself, "Were they against, or part of this regime?
And who else is listening,
When butterflies scream?"

Someone told me later on of the blacked-out motorcade
That swept out through and past the Gerrymander Street blockade.
No one got a photograph, but it came as no surprise.
And anyway, we know that pictures tell a thousand lies.
It all comes down to balancing on both sides of the beam
And trying to listen
When butterflies scream...
And trying to listen
When butterflies scream.

3 The Smile Of A Pox Doctor's Clerk (4.00)

Sometimes, when I see the names of those receiving national honours, I think to myself, "They must have known where the bodies are buried!" Cynical? Moi?

If knowledge is power, and power is all,
There surely was never a worthier call.
It was, I remember from innocent days,
My grandmother, bless her, directing my gaze
To an ad that was placed in "*Professions and Trades*"
For someone with tact and discretion in spades.
And so I applied – a mere shot in the dark! –
For the sensitive post of the pox doctor's clerk –
The pox doctor's clerk.

The world can be wicked; temptations be great,
Especially when handed to one on a plate!
The great and the good who were our clientele
Went into the booklet that served me so well.
They'd sally so sheepishly in through the door
And leave without quite understanding the score,
Believing my bite was no worse than my bark;
And sadly misjudging the pox doctor's clerk –
The pox doctor's clerk!

Suffice it to say, though the clergy were worst,
His Worship the Mayor was a notable first.
A lady I'd known from an earlier time
Had techniques that verged on the truly sublime.
Of course, he maintained he'd been cruelly tricked;
The mayor, being caught *in flagrante delict*,
Metaphorically kicked his balls out of the park
And into the arms of the pox doctor's clerk –
The pox doctor's clerk.

It would be remiss for me here to disclose
All names and addresses, but yes, there were those
With reasons to quaver and even to quail;
My peerage, it seemed, had been lost in the mail!
The matter resolved diplomatically when
The Cabinet Secretary called Number Ten.
The PM, the prince and that strange oligarch
Had cause to remember the pox doctor's clerk...
The pox doctor's clerk.

Despite all the endless appeals through the courts,
My autobiography marshalled my thoughts.
But truthfully, what can you really expect
With such peccadillos out there to protect?
My barrister mounted a sprightly defence

With no hint of subterfuge or of pretence:
“The eyes of a teddy bear, teeth of a shark
And always the smile of a pox doctor’s clerk –
A pox doctor’s clerk!”

4 The Mandarin (2.36)

– a whimsical reflection on doctrinal influence (with a lyrical nod in the direction of the great W. S. Gilbert).

The Mandarin spoke in a gravelly tone;
“Minister, now that we’ve a moment alone,
Here in the Department of Foreign Affairs
We all have a maxim that each of us shares.
From Permanent Sec. to most junior clerk,
We understand Ministers must make their mark.
So, even though you’re a distinguished high-flier,
Indulge me a moment – I’ll bring in the choir!”

The Mandarin left with an intricate bow;
The Minister wondering, “What’s happening now?”
It can’t have been more than a minute or so
Before he returned with the choir in tow.
There must have been forty or fifty or more
And each of them had their own personal score.
He gave them the note on his old mandolin,
Then tapped with his baton, and counted them in.

Some tell how the sound made the angels rejoice.
The choir was truly in wonderful voice.
They sang a cappella, without compromise
In ways that could only bring tears to the eyes;
Soprano, contralto through tenor and bass,
Performing with elegance, polish and grace,
The choir enchanted, the old rafters rang.
And here, in part, are the words that they sang...

“We have to say better – though some others won’t –
The despot we know than the despot we don’t!
And though we agree that we might intercede
To counter corruption and obvious greed,
Alas we can’t claim to be wholly immune
From bribery, sleaze and the inopportune.
So, best we desist from our scheduled schemes,
Toppling dictators from dishonest regimes.”

The Minister lifted his voice in reply –
A glorious tenor, one couldn’t deny.
He sang from the heart, as he started, “I know
How often we reap from the seeds that we sow.
I give you this promise; it will be the case –
I say this as one with a dishonest face –
Of all my priorities, none will be higher.”
The Mandarin bowed and gave thanks to the choir.

5 The Promise (5.18)

The Military Covenant broadly details the UK’s obligation to look after those who come to harm whilst serving in its armed forces. Sadly, it’s not always as effective as it could be...

It wasn’t the sound of the bar being trashed
By a hundred-and-one debauchees
That finally persuaded the Lance Bombardier
To get up and get off of his knees.
But they did play a part; those folks he remembered
The Sergeant would categorise
“A bunch of ill-disciplined cretinous shites
With their uppers and downers and highs!”
That’s what he remembered...

That's what he recalled...

He'd signed up when he was a nervous nineteen;
The service was something secure.
Like most of the guys, he had made it on through
For a second and then a third tour.
His luck had held out 'til the day that it failed –
They'd put that in his dossier.
The Snatch took a hit, and then everything spiralled
Tits-up in a very big way.
That's what he remembered...
That's what he recalled...

They'd put him together the best way they could,
And found him a way to survive.
When he and his mates were all medevac'd out,
Just one of them made it alive.
They finally found he had PTSD
And crushed some significant nerve
So, six years on, they determined that he
Was medically unfit to serve.
That's what he remembered...
That's what he recalled...

Trouble was, nothing or nobody ever
Prepared him for what was to come,
And that's how he came to be down on the beach;
A drifter, a dosser, a bum.
Somehow, the Military Covenant's promise
Had simply gone out through the door;
And all that remained was a shirt on his back
And the ribbons he steadfastly wore.
That's what he remembered...
That's what he recalled...

The Nighthawk, who desperately needed the fame,
Had pushed himself onto TV.
He'd posted the video, tastefully called
'Some nutter walks into the sea...'
The thing had gone viral for twenty-four hours,
And nobody would disagree
He was, or at least he believed he became,
The legend he wanted to be.
That's what he remembered...
That's what he recalled...

Then an inquest was called on a dearly departed
The life boatmen pulled from the waves.
The Coroner criticised reckless pursuits,
And of course how the media behaves.
The witnesses told how these accidents happen,
And that's what the court record showed
For the guy who had once been the Lance Bombardier –
Unemployed, no fixed abode.
That's what was remembered...
That's what was recalled...

6 Smilin' Billy Lye (4.10)

...a tale of jealousy and envy, green in tooth and claw...

We made our way down to a field that everybody knew,
Where grandpa once saw Buffalo Bill in 1892.
Yes, I was there and saw it all so very long ago:
Crash Donovan appearing with his Motorcycle Show.
Like everyone around that day, we knew we had to try
To see the living legend that was Smilin' Billy Lye

Billy was a dirt track man with nothing left to prove;
The champion that no one ever managed to remove.
Gamblers made their fortunes, and bookies lost their shirt

When Smilin' Billy Lye was out there kicking up the dirt.
But this was something different; the glorious goodbye;
The final challenge Crash had made to Smilin' Billy Lye.

The Wall of Death; the Pyramid; the Wheelies came and went
As everyone was keying up toward the main event;
The Tunnel! – made of bales of straw and maybe six foot tall,
And long – about two hundred feet when taken all in all.
And how we stood and cheered at the compere's stirring cry:
"He's here, folks! The one and only Smilin' Billy Lye!"

His Tiger roared above the crowd, all British Racing Green,
With Billy revving hard and standing high on the machine.
Then Crash himself, with a torch aloft, set light to all that straw.
The Tunnel burned from end to end, from outside to the core.
So that was it, the stage was set. We'll oversimplify;
The challenge of his life was facing Smilin' Billy Lye.

Then a silence fell. The engine snarled. The Tiger gathered speed
As everybody hoped he'd have the impetus he'd need.
He roared into the tunnel's mouth, the belly of the beast,
But then, a second later as the screaming engine ceased
The pandemonium began. Had something gone awry?
A minute passed without a sign of Smilin' Billy Lye.

Scarcely had the crowd accepted something there was wrong,
To everyone's surprise above the tumult of the throng
A roaring came from deep within that blazing stack of straw.
No one there that night had come prepared for what they saw.
The Tiger raced across the field – it almost seemed to fly –
With no one in the saddle, and no Smilin' Billy Lye.

They never found his body; no traces, large or small.
"He was," said Crash to everyone, "the greatest of us all."
Someone asked him why he smiled? He said, "The grief is bad.
The funny thing with me, I tend to laugh when I am sad!"
And no one really understood, or made him justify;
No one but the restless ghost of Smilin' Billy Lye.

7 Ben & Jerry's Coca-Cola Tarantella (4.10)

As Aldous Huxley once put it, "One has to dream in a pragmatic way..."

"They said to me the day I left, 'You're destined to go far
As student of the year here at our conservatoire.'
Confident that composition was to be my strength,
They thought I had a quirky streak and spoke of it at length.
My 'Rhapsody on Fantasies of Cage and Pachelbel'
Reminded them that Mozart had his challenges as well!
And so it was that I embarked on life's uncertain trail
With a manuscript and a quill in hand. Let quality prevail!

"Mostly, I relied on my pianoforte skills
To entertain the philistines, and to pay the boring bills.
My agent, as it came to light, was something of a spiv
With serious convictions how the other half should live.
The ashtray on his desk had cost him more than my pianna!
His weasel eyes had shifted to his trusted daily planner.
'Unlike you, I couldn't give a coda or a quaver,
And now,' he said, 'I'm wanting you to do the firm a favour!'

"I can't believe it's asking much of those I represent
To hope my clients now and then might help to pay the rent!
You want to be Stravinskys, but you're piggies in the middle;
And even mighty Igor started out on second fiddle!
My ship came into port the day an entertaining fella
Commissioned 'Ben & Jerry's Coca-Cola Tarantella';
And suddenly, from nowhere as the scales began to fall,
I gazed into that shining light and understood it all.

"When others warned that my career was heading for the rocks,

I realised I'd opened up the whole Pandora's Box.
Yes, there were those who claimed I'd scraped the bottom of the barrel
Composing my *'Quartet for Strings and Intimate Apparel'*.
Many tried to catch the wave but missed it, more's the pity;
But me, I like the penthouse with its view across the city.
We're there in every mall and lift from London to Darjeeling,
So can we give it one more try; this time without the feeling..."

8 The Fire (3.12)

What's not to love about the MQ-9 Reaper drone? Well, as Murphy's long maintained, "Anything that can go wrong, will!" Much better to rely on Newton's Third Law; "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction!"

A frozen winter morning; there's frost out on the field.
Security is paramount. Orders are unsealed.
"It's always them; the bosses. They all deserve a kick,
Changing round the roster for the buggers going sick!
Christmas Day, and stuck here in a bunker underground?
Everyone at home is back there, gathering around
The Fire..."

The operator shifted; "There's something on the screen!"
His hand moved to his mouth and he popped a Benzedrine.
"Maybe soon I'll get some sleep!" – he'd been awake for days –
"Meantime, there's a job to do." The flickering displays
Skittered tales of armaments and altitude and time.
Standing Orders made it clear: "Do nothing that will prime
The Fire!"

"As of now, the information isn't quite complete;
Eighty-five percent, and we're at twenty thousand feet.
I'd say it's now or never; but then, it's not my call.
Facial recognition's been no bloody use at all!
'Scuse my French, I didn't mean to sound so impolite.
You give me the go-ahead, I'm ready to ignite
The Fire."

"Eighty-five percent? Is that the best that you can do?"
"Minister, we need to know if you can get it through?
Maybe twenty minutes, and the window's going to close.
How'll it seem if he escapes from underneath your nose?"
"The Russians, they invented this version of Roulette!
It's 'go', but tell your desk man, 'be careful not to set
The Fire!'"

Missiles pack a punch, and this one didn't mess around –
The fireball arriving above the speed of sound.
In the end, they called it an "unfortunate event";
Chances of it happening? Around fifteen percent.
Somewhere, sometime later, someone else conceived a plan.
The cycle started over – and that's how it began:
The Fire...

"Nothing is to be confirmed or even be implied..."
Nothing is believed until officially denied!
Everything is black and white, and loyalties are raw.
Those who've walked along this path and seen it all before
Will tell you in an instant that things can fall apart,
Sitting on the tinder box and trying not to start
The Fire...

9 The Nightmare (3.47)

On November 8th 2016, a bewitched, bothered and bewildered America elected Donald J. Trump as the 45th President of the United States. Let's put it this way; it was an interesting result...

"Is this the Apocalypse?" Now he enquires!
The Matron is busy connecting the wires.

She smiles in the way that so often they do
When they know that a treatment is long overdue.
She's never been famous for hiding her thoughts –
Like everyone out there, she reads the reports.
“They say we're expecting a meteorite,
And they're panicking out in the City tonight –
It's a nightmare! A nightmare!

“From all that they say, it's a dangerous beast;
Flying in low, coming out of the east.
It seems it defies all applicable laws
And who knows the damage it's likely to cause?
But now, for the moment you'll need to relax –
Imagine avoiding your inheritance tax;
Suspend animation when the treatment resumes;
Dream, as the darkness relentlessly looms...
It's the nightmare... the nightmare...

“It's easy to feel that you're out on your own
When you're sleepwalking into a parallel zone
And biting down hard on that suicide pill.
You don't seem to know that you're seriously ill!
We're all here and with you to carry the weight.
We're telling you everything is going to be great;
And that's all that anyone ever can say.
Get used to it, son; it's not going away!
It is the nightmare... oh, the nightmare...”

“So what happens now?” The patient persists.
She fixes his fetters and shackles his wrists
And wipes off the sweat of his brow on her sleeve.
“What's happening now, boy? We've got to believe!
Believe at all costs that we're getting it right
'Cos it's dark in the City, and they're needing the light!”
She leans over, offers one innocent kiss.
“Maybe someday we'll be laughing at this!
It's a nightmare... just a nightmare...”

“It's too close to call!” all the bulletins shriek,
Holding their heads in their hands, so to speak.
Many indeed want this intruder to land –
It's strange, but try never to misunderstand
For some it's worth trying defying the odds
To fly in the face of those devious Gods –
And so let the slow-motion drama unfold;
The sunlight be lost to the shivering cold
Of the nightmare... the nightmare...

And so let the slow-motion drama unfold;
The sunlight be lost to the shivering cold
Of the nightmare... the nightmare... the nightmare... the nightmare.

10 It's Only Just Begun (3.57)

A rocking little tune. Mind you, they do say the Devil always has the best!

He was a friend and confidant, though granted he was flawed.
It seems like only yesterday; I guess that I was bored.
I still think of him fondly, and that foolish violin.
I had to tell him, “Nero, put it underneath your chin!”
He played, and as the fire raged in 64AD
I took him to one side and there, beneath an olive tree,
I told him through the smoky haze that camouflaged the sun,
“My work here isn't over yet – it's only just begun!”

“Speed is of the essence here, no need to wait for me,”
I said to Genghis Khan once in the thirteenth century.
“No point in being merciful – it's only wasting time.
Regard it as – how shall we say? – a small but perfect crime.”
I must admit, what happened next was truly a disgrace –
No question with the mighty Khan of ever losing face!

And yet I told him candidly, "...despite all that you've done,
My work here isn't over yet – it's only just begun!"

It's hard to put it into words. It made me feel alive,
That winter night in Dresden back in 1945.
And what it was that really did appeal, at least to me;
This time there was absolutely no necessity.
Over twenty thousand dead, and nothing had been gained,
Yet once more I was getting bored. The firestorm entertained,
But as I later told the world, "That's just my trial run!
My work here isn't over yet – it's only just begun!"

I'd got back from the Falkland Islands several months before;
Went backpacking round India in the fall of '84.
Some things can be challenging; like unexpected leaks.
Bhopal seemed a likely place to try some new techniques.
It only took a helpful friend to make things come to pass;
Union Carbide coming up with all that poison gas!
I even left my calling card that said, "You think I'm done?
My work here isn't over yet – it's only just begun!"

And so the story of my life unveils its twists and turns.
I interest myself in many different concerns
From murder, war and larceny to those evading tax,
And where I can I try to keep disruption to the max.
I'm grateful to the many who have helped along the way
In running up the debt that no one ever will repay.
As I said on September 12th in two thousand and one,
"My work here isn't over yet – it's only just begun!"

11 Kill The Idea (3.02)

With unlimited resources, almost anything is possible. Almost anything...

The tumbrils had taken the charnel house bones
Over mountains of carefully pulverised stones.
We'd pounded the valley, then as we'd been trained
We went out in search of whatever remained.
The orders were simple; to sound the 'All Clear'
When we knew beyond doubt we had killed The Idea.

At the end of what had been a glorious day,
With everything hidden in dust and decay,
We sent back the message they wanted to hear;
"The Idea has vanished, now break out the beer!"
The valley was ringing with liberty bells,
Remodelled by all our artillery shells.

It was just as we thought of returning to base,
That something descended from somewhere in space.
We couldn't believe it, so quickly we checked
For possible traces of after effect.
It was duly noted, but then was consigned
As a Notion that nobody ever could mind.

Then we headed for home as the light slipped away,
But something important had happened that day.
The Notion persisted, then started to drift
Into different shapes that were harder to shift.
Oh, it's true that we all felt a moment of fear
Of the Sentiment seeming so chillingly clear.

So we came into camp feeling tired and drained,
Back from the valley where ordnance rained;
Back from the dust and the smoke and the grief,
Back with a new and compelling belief.
We raised up our glasses – the toasts were sincere;
"To The Mission";
"To Freedom";
"To Kill The Idea!"

12 The Illegal (7.03)

...is necessarily dark. Sadly, nothing in this song other than the name of the rescue ship is a product of my fevered imagination. Every event is real. As we speak, one in every hundred-and-thirteen people on Earth is a refugee; and counting...

The day it began, no one escaped –
Lives systematically being reshaped;
A homeland of riches and so many dreams,
Like many before, came apart at the seams
Through cant and corruption and everyday lies.
Something was surely about to arise.
Nothing was organised, there was no plan;
The day became dark, and the killing began.

Neighbours and friends that he thought that he knew
Stood in a drunken, disorderly queue.
His wife and his daughters were raped and then killed
And blood ran in rivers wherever it spilled.
They stripped him, then started all over again –
Scarified him with a rusty old chain –
And finally left him for dying or dead.
The madness ran deep; the insanity spread.

He took to the woods while he still had a chance,
Weakened and traumatised, still in a trance;
Riding by night on the roof of a train,
He finally made it to sparser terrain
Where he met fellow-travellers who told of escapes
From the mass executions and the genocide rapes.
They drifted through frontiers like so many ghosts,
Always avoiding the frontier posts.

The refugees searched in the local bazaars
For clothing to hopefully cover their scars.
Experience had taught them, and quickly they'd learned;
'Don't be discovered, don't be returned...'
And that's where they came across owners of boats
Who'd organise things for a few thousand notes;
Or even the promise of a payment in kind,
Highly conveniently left undefined...

From an uncharted cove and with no guarantees,
The vessel set out to a freshening breeze.
A couple of hundred were crowding her decks;
Whatever they were, they were risking their necks.
Death and destruction, or freedom from fear?
It's even worth paying a black marketeer
When sheer desperation is all you can find
In the dark and the deep of a crucified mind.

Day upon day spent appeasing their Lord
As dead and as dying were thrown overboard.
Others boats left at the same time as they;
Several had foundered the very first day,
But somehow the vessel still kept them afloat
Then, just as they'd almost lost faith on the boat,
A military plane passing high to the west
Sent out a message to detain and arrest.

A rusty old freighter, the "*Panama Pride*",
One by one, hauled them up over the side.
Diverting for twenty-four hours at most,
She landed them up on a faraway coast
Where men in dark glasses were looking askance
At the desolate outcasts who'd taken their chance.
They herded them out into some kind of camp,
And counted them in by a kerosene lamp.

Then came the discussions of what to do next –

High-level diplomacy; email and text
Flew over continents. Arguments raged,
With more politicians becoming engaged;
“We’re not in the business of profit and loss!”
“Sort out the doctors and leave out the dross!”
“It’s wrong to infer that we’re lacking in care,
But we’re over here and they’re over there!”

But it was those rumours from outside the wire
That ran through the huts in the camp like a fire;
Stories about an elaborate charade
And how many migrants were being betrayed.
Tortured by guilt for his daughters and wife,
The Illegal got lucky this once in his life.
The instinct he’d so much depended upon
Told him again; it was time to move on.

An hour before dawn, when the dark was intense,
He scrambled beneath the perimeter fence;
It seemed by the earliest glimmer of light
The Illegal was literally fading from sight.
By the time that the sun brought its heat to the day,
Like a Cheshire Cat smile, he’d melted away.
In the camp, it was hours before he was missed;
Whoever he was, he’d ceased to exist...