

The Playlist in my Head

Lyin' in my bed I hear the clock tick and think of you. I always think of you in the morning. In that familiar confusion that lives in the intersection where the circles of dreams and reality overlap. Flashbacks to warm nights and soft breezes flow from the suitcase of memories I carry with me always. Like songs on an endless playlist in my head. The curse of being a DJ for all those years.

"Wake up, Get up! You got shit to do. What, are you gonna sleep all day?" The voice of my father rings out now, as the alarm clock sounds. He always was a mean old cuss first thing in the morning. All right Dad, I hear ya. I'm getting up. "Ohhh, ooowwww. (creak, crackle) Aaaaagh fuck!" Damn it. I'm getting old. I must be 'cause I'm making the same morning noises my old man use to make. They say you're only as old as you feel. Well right now, I'm 110 – give or take a few years.

Coffee. That will shave some of these years off. *Make a cup of coffee for your head. It'll get you up and out of bed.* It always does. There must have been a thousand songs written about coffee – the elixir of life. While you're waiting, do some of that yoga shit she taught you way back in the day. "Ouch!" Why does that damn dog always have to be facing downward? Every dog I have ever met always rolled on its back to get a tummy rub. Smart dogs. Ah, Warrior Pose. This one always does the trick. Yeah, that's the ticket. Got me feelin' only 90 something now. And now that my coffee's ready I'll be back in the '80s in just a sip or two.

Back in the '80s. Boy, wouldn't that be great. That was the day. *Don't stop the music, 'cause it might bring me down. Turn up the music, we want to scream and shout. Jammin' jammin' all night long, headed for the danger zone.* The days for being a Pleasure Seeker. When life was about nothing but getting high, getting laid, and gettin' my groove on. God I loved to dance. It's the only time I truly felt free. And the dance floor was my sanctuary. Hell, that's why I became a DJ in the first place; I got tired of hearing those idiots in the booth playing all the same old crappy songs. So I went and found my own jams and a place that let me *Spin* 'em. Turns out a LOT of folks liked to dance to the songs I did. And I led them all around town to every club I worked. *You can dance if you want to, you can leave your friends behind. Because your friends don't dance and if they don't dance, well they're no friends of mine.*

We danced, and raged in the *rapture* of youth. *Rebels without a clue. Wild eyed pistol-wavers who ain't afraid to die.* Most of us didn't think we would live to see 30 because everywhere we looked we saw, *floating in the summer sun, ninety nine red balloons go by.* So we partied like it was 1999, and didn't give a damn about anything. *They gave you lies, and in return you gave them Hell. As cold as ice, I hope we live to tell the tale.* We let it ALL out. Told them "*these are the things we can do without. Come on man, I'm talking to you. Come ON!*" *Parents just don't understand.* They never have. Not mine. Not theirs. And not the ones that came before them. *Every generation blames the one before. And all of their frustrations, come beating on your door. I know that I'm a prisoner to all my Father held so dear. I know that I'm a hostage to all his hope and fears.* Each generation tries to prove themselves to the previous one. To gain some

distance from the past in order to set themselves apart, and carve out a new and unique future.

Some do. But most ended up following the same paths worn down by their parents: "Are you really going out dressed like that? And what's up with that hair? Are you ever going to get a job? Get your life together? GROW UP?" I swore there was a book or a pamphlet or something that new parents got with all these phrases written in it, and instructions on when and how to say them effectively. Along with those old favorites: "MY house – my rules! When you start paying the bills, then YOU can start calling the shots around here. What, are we trying to air condition/heat the whole damn neighborhood now? (And my personal fav) Because I SAID SO, that's why!" The first time I caught myself saying that one I stopped and started looking around. "Dad? When did you get here?" Only to find it was just me and my precocious 8 yr old son questioning e v e r y t h i n g I said. He must have gotten that from his mother, there's no way it could have come from me.

Mmmm, another swig of coffee. Keep rollin' back those years baby. Now you got me feeling like I'm in my '70s. You still got a couple more decades to go until you get me feeling my true age, but you're doing a great job so far.

The '70s. That was a great decade for music. And it wasn't just about the Village People or that damn *Disco Duck*. Now don't get me wrong. I loved me some Donna Summer and I was not afraid to strap on my *Boogie Shoes* – which took the form of roller skates at the Roller Land on Friday nights. We did the *Groove Line*, the *Hustle*, and *shook our booties* all night long. But it was also the golden age of Rock. We bought a *stairway to heaven*, checked into the *Hotel California*, *dreamed on*, *let the good times roll*, visited *sweet home Alabama*, and took comfort in the fact that *you've got a friend*.

We let our imaginations ponder a world where *there's no Heaven. It's easy if you try. No Hell below us. Above us only sky. And all the people, living life as one*. We looked into our souls and broadened our horizons. And found enlightenment in two words – *I know* – sung 26 times in a row, each one conveying a different emotion. From anger, to resentment, irritation, remorse, self-loathing, resolution, relent, and lastly – acceptance. As Bill began to realize that this time, she's gonna stay gone. And with her, goes the Sun.

Thank you Lord for coffee. It's gotta be one of Your TOP 10 Hits. Ok, time to taste the rainbow – my ever growing collection of pills I take every morning to keep this bag of bones above ground. Let's see, there's the green one to keep my thyroid in check. The blue one to stave off indigestion. Yellow, my multivitamin. White, allergies. Orange, back pain. Red...what the Hell was that one for? Oh yeah, memory. I wasn't much of a pill popper back in the day, but I sure am now. Get to work Skittles, and bring me back to feeling 60 something again.

The '60s, boy they popped some pills back then. I didn't of course because I wasn't even born until a few years into that decade. But I remember watching my older brothers, and everyone else, taking little pills and smoking those funny cigarettes and getting really silly. Things aren't much different

today. *There's something happening here. What it is ain't exactly clear. There's a man with a gun over there. Tellin' me, I got to beware.* I remember toddling into the kitchen one afternoon while my mom was watching the news and making dinner. "Mom, why are all those names on the TV?" "Those are the names of the boys that died in the war today, honey." "There sure are a lot of them." "Too many, dear. Way too many." "What are they fighting about?" "I'm not sure, baby. I'm not sure anyone knows why anymore."

I remember everyone – men, women, blacks, whites, browns, adults, kids – all crying out to be heard. *People movin' out, people movin' in. Why, why, why, 'cause the color of their skin. Run, run, run, but you sure can't hide. An eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth. "Vote for Me and I'll SET YOU FREE." People all over the world are crying "End the War!" The politicians keep saying more taxes will solve everything. And the band played on.* No one seemed to have the answer.

I sure don't. *I still haven't found what I'm looking for.* Maybe I won't, until I get to that place *where the streets have no name.* I wonder just *how far is Heaven.* And will it still be there when it's my turn to shake off this mortal coil. *Surrounded by your glory, what will my heart feel? Will I dance for you Jesus, or in awe of you be still?* I sure hope they dance in Heaven. I can't imagine why they wouldn't.

I've seen a lot in my life. I saw them *put a man on the moon*, and two space shuttles disintegrate. The rise of the USSR, and *the wind of change* bring down the Berlin Wall. Musicians all over the globe came together to raise money to feed starving children with Band Aid (*Do They Know it's Christmas*), USA for Africa (*We Are The World*), and the worldwide concert they spawned - Live Aid. Annual events like Farm Aid and Comic Relief, and one time actions like Hands Across America showed that Activism could be a positive thing. Without having to occupy or burn down your cities. I saw our country celebrate its Bicentennial and the Statue of Liberty get a facelift. Only to watch her cry decades later as the Twin Towers fell before her eyes. I witnessed a 20 year war on terrorism start with a scream, and end with a whimper.

I've seen the needle and the damage done when the love of my life took her *broken wings* and flew to a place I couldn't, and wouldn't, follow. *If I only could, I'd make a deal with God, and I'd get him to swap our places.* How many times did I say that prayer? Years later I gazed in wonder as my oldest son took his first breath, and four years after that as his younger brother did the same. I dropped to me knees in tears as I prayed thanks that they were both healthy and happy. I proposed to their mother on the Big Screen at the same stadium I saw Nolan Ryan pitch a no-hitter. And I cheered as my Rangers came as close as they ever have to winning a world series, only to fall apart. Just like our marriage did after 15 years. *If you should ask, then maybe they'd tell you what I would say. True colours fly in blue and black – blue silken sky and burning flags. Colours crash, collide in blood-shot eyes.*

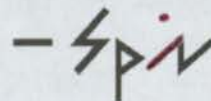
And in the end – not a damn thing has changed. Terrorism is still just as alive and well in the Middle East, as it was in the '60s & 70's. We still wonder if

the *Russians love their children too* as they continue to rage war against the West. Only this time we don't have China on our side to keep the Bear in check. Gas prices are still riding the rollercoaster – just like they did in the '70s, '80s, and every damn decade since. And the drugs, they're completely out of control. *A million magic crystals, painted pure and white. A multi-million dollars, almost overnight. Twice as sweet as sugar, twice as bitter as salt. And if you get hooked, baby – it's nobody else's fault.* Yet through it all, grace still has a home here. The "peace, love, and happiness" of the Flower Power movement is *alive and kickin'* in the Pay It Forward and ARK (Acts of Random Kindness) campaigns.

How do we explain this madness to our own children? *How can I explain, when there are few words I can choose? And how can I explain when words get broken? Everything changes.* And yet, the more things change, the more they stay the same. *No changes are permanent, but change is. And if you're tired of that same old story, then turn some pages.* If prison has taught me nothing else, it has surely taught me to *roll with the changes. Keep on rollin', brother. Roll on.*

Hold on now. You're *much too young to feel this damn old.* I'm still crazy after all these years. And I still got a lot left in the tank. *Don't push me 'cause I'm close to the edge. I'm tryin' hard not to lose my head.* People try to write me off because I'm older. Because I look at the world differently than most. Because I'm a convict. *I won't cry for the wasted years. The salt in my tears is worth more than that.* I'm not asking for special treatment. And I'm damn sure no one special. *People are strange, when you're a stranger. But people are people. I'm not looking for absolution. Forgiveness for the things I do. But before you come to any conclusions, try walking in my shoes.* Just walk a mile or two in my shoes, before you turn up your nose, and look right through me.

"Turn out for REC." Finally! Enough of this strollin' down memory lane bullshit. It's time to lace 'em up and show these youngsters what a REAL shutdown guard looks like. And if my 3's are droppin', look out. You might just *see me fuck around and get a triple double. I may not be as good as I once was. But I'm as good once – or maybe twice, the way I'm feeling this morning – then I ever was.* "Ring the bell son, school's back in session. And Old School's fittin' to teach ya a thing or two." Oh yeah. *Today's gonna be a good day.*



2022

BTW – There are 57 references to songs in *italics* above. One for every year I've been on this *Ball of Confusion*. If you can name them, and the artist or group that sang them, then you're either a true music lover, an old fart like me, or BOTH. Enjoy.

The Playlist In My Head - Song List

- 1 Time After Time - Cyndi Lauper
- 2 Death Bed – Powfu
- 3 Pleasure Seekers - The System
- 4 Safety Dance - Men Without Hats
- 5 Rapture - Debbie Harry
- 6 Into the Great Wide Open - Tom Petty
- 7 All She Wants to do is Dance - Don Henley
- 8 99 Red Balloons – Nena
- 9 1999 – Prince
- 10 Shout - Tears For Fears
- 11 Parents Just Don't Understand - Fresh Prince & Jazzy Jeff
- 12 The Living Years - Mike + The Mechanics
- 13 Disco Duck - Rick Dees
- 14 Boogie Shoes - KC & the Sunshine Band
- 15 Groove Line – Heatwave
- 16 The Hustle - Van McCoy
- 17 Shake Your Bootie - KC & the Sunshine Band
- 18 Stairway to Heaven - Led Zepplin
- 19 Hotel California – Eagles
- 20 Dream On – Aerosmith
- 21 Let the Good Times Roll - The Cars
- 22 Sweet Home Alabama - Lynyrd Skynyrd
- 23 You've Got a Friend - James Taylor
- 24 Imagine - John Lennon
- 25 Ain't No Sunshine When She's Gone - Bill Withers
- 26 Sign of the Times - Buffalo Springfield
- 27 Ball of Confusion - The Temptations
- 28 Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For - U2
- 29 Where the Streets Have No Name - U2
- 30 How Far Is Heaven - Los Lobos
- 31 I Can Only Imagine - Mercy Me
- 32 Man on the Moon – REM
- 33 Wind of Change – Scorpions
- 34 Do They Know It's Christmas - Band Aid
- 35 We Are The World - USA for Africa
- 36 The Needle and the Damage Done - Neal Young
- 37 Broken Wings - Mister Mister
- 38 Runnin' Up That Hill - Kate Bush
- 39 Bad - U2
- 40 Russians – Sting
- 41 White Lines - Grand Master Flash
- 42 Alive And Kickin' - Simple Minds

- 43 Chains of Love – Erasure
- 44 Everything Changes - Lisa Standfield
- 45 Tom Sawyer – RUSH
- 46 Keep on Rollin' - REO Speedwagon
- 47 Roll On (18 Wheeler) – Alabama
- 48 Much Too Young (to feel this damn old) - Garth Brooks
- 49 Still Crazy After All These Years - Paul Simon
- 50 The Message (Close to the Edge) - Grand Master Flash
- 51 The Salt in my Tears - Martin Briley
- 52 People Are Strange - The Doors
- 53 People Are People - Depeche Mode
- 54 Walking In My Shoes - Depeche Mode
- 55 I'm As Good Once As I Ever Was - Toby Keith
- 56 Can't Touch This - MC Hammer
- 57 Today Was a Good Day - Ice Cube