

OUT AND ABOUT THE SONGS

OUT AND ABOUT

Between the frustrations of city life and the refusal to be laid back. When I wrote this song my house was being rebuilt. During a very hot summer. In the deafening noise the only thing left to do was to play loud rock guitar. Like it says on these construction site signs: Pardon our dust. The solo was an overdub, the rest is live.

YOUR LUCK WILL FIND YOU

The best and most successful rock band in Switzerland, Züri West, released this song in 2004, sung in the country's native language. The first time I heard this song I was driving in the Engadin, a remote alpine valley. After a couple of verses I had to stop the car and listen to the song. And then I hit Repeat. An exceptional song with great lyrics, great composition, very true and at the same time light and breezy. During the next two months the song never went away. A week before the studio sessions those four chords and this little melody found their way onto my guitar. Then came the first two verses, in English. It wasn't very hard from then on. I am delighted that the author and singer of the original version, Kuno Lauener came by to sing along.

The hookline in the original version is played by a «Twin Peaks» style guitar. Here the melody is played by Markus Flückiger, one of the finest accordion players on the planet, Lord Of The Schwyzerörgeli (a diatonic accordion). Plus a large side order of guitars, bouzoukis and ukuleles.

HAPPY MAN

Millions of blues songs start with the phrase «Woke up this morning, feeling bad...». I felt that a little optimism couldn't be wrong in these dark times. A hymn to happiness and to greatness in little things. And you can dance to it. Swiss National Rock Monument Polo Hofer came by to sing along the day after his 60th birthday. It seemed as if he meant every single word he sang.

DO IT NOW

The lyrics are mostly about the unrelenting damage one half of America is doing to the country's cultural heritage. It's also a song about the sad effects religious delirium imposes on societies around the world. It's even more tragic and pathetic when people actually ask misguided men to guide them. A whiff of «Harvest» and «Oh Mercy» in the late night studio air. Sung and played live, only the lap steel was added later.

JAM

Years ago while on tour in Germany we ended up at the same hotel in Bonn twice, in only a couple of months. The room menu said «Breakfast till 10». That's how it was written. If you showed up at the buffet at 9:45 am you had to deal with the full wrath of the buffet lady. Welcome to the Palace Of Doom. The second time was when the shock really set in. This experience triggered a meditation about being insatiable in general and a mad craving for all kinds of sweet stuff in particular. The music is Whorehousejazz. Uke and lap steel add a fruity touch of Tahiti-kitsch.

WRONG NUMBERS

It is getting more and more difficult to dial a wrong number. Almost always someone picks up the phone. Everything was played and hit live. A wahwah guitar was added later for its honky special effect. I am also thinking about changing my name to Honk.

BETWEEN RHYTHM AND BLUES

You can't always have both. Or be both. Some people find their place later or never. Both rhythm guitars play the same riff. We forced ourselves to keep the tempo slow, so the song remained heavy and went out going «thump!» For a very brief moment you could catch a glimpse of a Zeppelin flying by. Pink Pedrazzi of The Moondog Show lends his helping voice in the chorus.

MRS. HIPPY

This nifty little tune started to materialize at a soundcheck in Groningen, Netherlands. I noodled around on my Silvertone guitar, Christoph Beck on the drums picked up the beat immediately and turned it around. Michel Poffet takes his upright bass to the disco and Oli Hartung plays «Shaft» guitar 500 miles farther down south. In the middle section it's Heavy-Metal-Blues-Folk-Rock. Never wrote no lyrics 'cause it never needed any in the first place.

STUMBLE THROUGH THE DESERT

More than 30 years ago John Fogerty during the Vietnam war wrote the song «Run Through The Jungle». When the «President» of the United States landed on an aircraft carrier and proclaimed that freedom had prevailed, he was looking hilarious in his tight little jumpsuit. I was thinking that never before you could get away with such ruthlessness and not even bother to cover it up, because nobody really gives a damn. Seen through the eyes of someone missing any perspective in life and just about to land in Tiqrit, everything must look very different. It was late as we recorded this almost live.

FUZZY

Sometimes help comes from where you least expect it. Fuzzy also means that furry feeling on your tongue. Or everywhere in your head. Claudia Bettinaglio sings the chorus. Only after her last take did she ask whether this actually was a portrait of Emmylou Harris there on the wall. The demo version is available on the Single «Your Luck Will Find You». Sung and played live, except for a couple of Tom Petty jinglejangle guitars.

THESE ARE THE DAYS

This song is about the genral loss of sentimentality and how you sometimes feel as if you were forced to be polite and generally expected to have a blast. I am not conservative in a political way, but sometimes «those were the days» sounds a lot better than some appraisal of the joys and chances presenting themselves to us in the Here and Now. Maybe it's because the radio signal tends to sound better than the actual programme. Pink Pedrazzi sings in the chorus. I wrote the song a couple of days after getting a Gibson ES135 guitar. Straight out of the case it looked like Rockabilly.

LEARNING TO LIVE

It always looks better in the catalog. That's why it's interesting to go and have a good look somewhere else. You pick up a little trick here and good move there. There was this thing on TV about a man planning to swim across the English Channel. He was already greased up as he balanced on the French rocks, where he fell and split his kneecap. He was very calm about it and said he would like to give it another go next year. I hear the music as cowrock on steroids. Pink Pedrazzi sings along.

LONG LISTS

Written 1991, recorded for the album «Stills» by the Nanina Ghelfi Band. The song always stayed with me and I wanted to record it on every album. This time it worked. You can easily make up lists of unreachable things and goals. How much sense that makes is a completely different question. Claudia Bettinaglio sings, Hanery Amman plays the piano.

THAT'S WHO I AM

At the end it's confession time, sung and played live. To top it off some Western-Swing-Steel in slow motion and an arrangement from the 1930s. Just who we are.

HANK SHIZZOE & THE DIRECTORS: «OUT AND ABOUT»

At good retail stores, online distributors and the iTunes Music Store August 20th 2005.

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