

# Introduction

The words come. Or they don't, but they will. You hope. And then they arrive, blessedly. A Gabriel-like visitation, whispering in the Virgin's head that something will be born that will rock the cradle of the world. Which would be nice, except the words turn out to be clunky, laboured, struggled for and wrestled with and ultimately become impossible to sing. Or just plain drivel. Then you must close your eyes, sit back into the tune and melody and chords and drift away into what this THING is and what it is suggesting to you. What's it for? Why did you start playing *this*? What's it *about*? What are you signalling? What are you trying to *tell* yourself? And standing at the mic you panic. The backing track is finished. You've tried to put off doing the overdubs for as long as possible. But the soloists need to have some clue as to what *they* can play. What the mood/feel/thought behind the half-finished thing is. The tape rolls. The track begins. The beat is counted in. The intro expires and you... Well, you open your gob and hope for the best. Unbelievably sometimes it works. In its panic, the subconscious hurls a Morse code of imagery and language and phraseology that is vomited into the foreconscious, which has no time to query or rationalise what it is saying, never mind actually meaning, before it grabs the mash-up of vowels and grunts and sounds and noises and it commands your mouth to say it. You listen back and it *feels* right, it *sounds* right, it *is* right, but it is only much later – perhaps years after – before you will understand what it *means*. Why you needed to say it. If only for yourself.

Course other times it just spills out of you. Start to finish – done. Or it hangs around unresolved, half done in a notebook or your head. Waiting frustratedly to be born. Or stillborn. Or it looks good on paper but it just doesn't work with the music. But one day, one day...

Or there's a character or an avatar of a character and you give them a life. Just for 3-and-a-half minutes. Just long enough for them to live, breathe and tell their précised story at your will. They make their point and they exit the stage. But they will be back the next night, at the next town, on the next stage, where they will parade their wild horse one more time.

Lyrics are not poems. For proof, try the 'out-loud test'. Reading a song lyric aloud, howsoever profound it may be to your personal life,

## Back To Boomtown

Calling...

In my head its calling

Then all the exile years will fall away

Its insistent

And Lord there's no resisting

You can twist and turn

But you can never turn away

I can pick your face out in a crowd

See your shape in every passing cloud

But Lord when you'd call my name

I used to feel ashamed

So tonight for just one night

I'm going to take that plane

That's bringing me

Back to Boomtown

...In my head

See it's bleeding

Boomtown's lying bleeding

It felt the sun for a second shine down upon its face

And then the rains came

Lord the heavy rain came

Now the sun won't shine on Billy's face again

Did you wake up from the stolen dream

To find yourself inside some nightmare scene

The streets like trees stripped bare

The empty houses stare

While the thieves and the liars of the night

Sneak away to steal

Somewhere else

I'm going

Back to Boomtown

In my head

## Love Like A Rocket

Obviously, I love The Kinks. Who doesn't? If you're interested in the great pop song writers, then you put Ray Davies on that Olympic stage. 'Waterloo Sunset' is simply too brilliant. I don't know if you like poems, but there have been some great ones about London. London, the most exciting city in the world and my favourite.

In school we had to learn 'Upon Westminster Bridge'. I always imagined Wordsworth wandering home in the early dawn, maybe a bit pissed after a night out with the lads and as ever there were no tubes or buses at 4.30am. Yea, I know that they didn't *actually* exist then (FFS), I was just picturing it cos it's so good, that poem. Anyway, he's a bit knackered and sobering up (before he gets home and gets a bollocking from Dorothy, his devoted sister, "Where the hell have you been William ... eh? That's it ... it's off to the Lake District for us ... I'm not having you ..." etc.) and the sun is coming up over the river and it takes his breath away. The beauty and the drink and the walk pull him up sharp and he takes a minute to put his elbows on the bridge and just ... look. The sky is purple, then pink and blue are just skimming the dome of St. Paul's. A river of gold rushes by beneath him and under the bridge the early morning air is sharp and fresh before the stinking sewer smell of the waking city plummets untreated into the golden river and the invigorating sharp dawn air. "Earth has not any thing to show more fair..." he thinks in wonder, staring awestruck at what nature and Man has wrought. The best is the end though: 'Dear God! The very houses seem asleep; And all that mighty heart is lying still!' Isn't that FANTASTIC?! London. That 'Mighty Heart' – and it really is.

My point is that between Wordsworth and Shelley's compelling and scabrous description of the same city and Ray Davies' 'Waterloo Sunset' (which is the 20th century Wordsworthian vision), I couldn't wait to get to the mighty heart of the action. Fuck Dun Laoghaire. 'Tired N Weary/Drab N Dreary/That's it Dun Laoghaire'). There's the boat. Here's my ticket. Outta there!!

Davies' song is so full of compelling imagery I could taste the city. I saw it in the same way I saw Wordsworth's images. But I always wondered what happened to the two protagonists in Ray's song. We know that Terry met Julie every Friday night at the tube station but what happened to them? I conjured them up again and wrote down what I imagined became the rest of their lives.

It turned out that they loved each other still, but the disappointments

