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# Mark Knopfler: A Life in Songs

By Unknown

Let's go with that.

Mark Knopfler is one of the most successful musicians in the world. During the past 30 years, he's written and recorded over 300 songs, including some of the most famous in popular music.

# A love-struck Romeo  
# Got his serenade  
# Laying everybody low  
# With a love song that he made. #  
# That ain't working That's the way you do it  
# Money for nothing and your chicks for free. #  
# You do the walk Do the walk of life  
# Yeah, the walk of life. #  
# With the sultans  
# Yeah, with the sultans of swing. #  
# We're fools to make war on our brothers in arms. #

Mark Knopfler has sold over 120 million albums, both with Dire Straits and as a solo artist, yet on the afternoon of a sell-out concert in Lisbon, he's able to sit unrecognised outside a city centre cafe.

For him, it would seem, it is all about the songs.

He doesn't like fame, it's not about the money.

And unlike most artists, he doesn't choose to live in his past.

It's not Dire Straits anymore, but it's still...

It always was him and his songs.

# The chisels are calling  
# It's time to make sawdust  
# Steely reminders of things left to do  
# Monteleone  
# Mandolin's waiting... #

I think he's one of the greatest living songwriters going right now.

# My fingerplane's working  
# Gentle persuasion  
# I bend to the wood and I coax it to sing  
# Monteleone, your new one and only will ring

The excitement is the creating - there's nothing like it.

It's the best feeling that there is - when it's working.

# I'm better with my muscles  
# Than I am with my mouth  
# I work the fairgrounds in summer  
# Or go pick fruit down south  
# When I feel them chilly winds  
# Where the weather goes I'll follow  
# Pack up my travelling things  
# Go with the swallows

# And I might get lucky now and then  
# You win some You might get lucky now and then  
# Yeah, you win some... #

I was born in Glasgow because my dad had gone up there to work, although my mum's family are from Newcastle.

My dad was a refugee and he was Hungarian, and he came to England in 1939.

He was a firebrand young socialist and he was expelled from Hungary. He did about three stretches in prison.

He never hurt anybody, of course, he just probably handed out pamphlets or whatever he did, and he escaped to Czechoslovakia and he got out of Czechoslovakia and made it to Britain.

Pretty soon after that he got a job in Glasgow.

He wanted to work as a city architect, he wanted to try and serve society as best he could.

I suppose having a sense of what's right and wrong is just something that you grow up with in your family, if you're lucky enough to have that. I really can't say any more than that, other than that I had a good upbringing.

Both parents did a good job, I like to think. I hope so anyway!

When Mark was eight, the Knopfler family upped sticks and moved south to Newcastle.

It was here that Mark's love of music was fired up by his boogie-woogie piano playing Uncle Kingsley.

My mum's brother Kingsley had a banjo and he played boogie-woogie piano. And the boogie-woogie was very important to me, because it made a real connection with me.

The sort of big blocks just moved into place, and I realised that that was for me.

With Uncle Kingsley's boogie-woogie piano ringing in his ears, and the rapidly-emerging beat group scene, the young Mark Knopfler soon developed an obsession with guitars.

I used to haunt the music shops long before I even had a guitar. And the music shops in Newcastle, I knew every inch of them.

I would probably be the little lad in there who was too nervous to take a guitar down.

I didn't know how to play anyway.

I remember once, it was overpowering, and there was nothing I could do, and I just picked up this Spanish guitar and took it off the hook and took it down, and a voice behind me said, "If you drop that, I'll drop you."

For the 11-year-old Mark Knopfler, only one guitar would fit the bill, and that was the Fender Stratocaster as used by his hero, Hank Marvin of The Shadows.

Back then, I wanted to have a Strat  
just because of The Shadows' sound and the twang, that's what it was.  
It's just really pick and tremolo arm, that twang.  
And not everybody can just get that.  
Sometimes you get people that are more hammy on it,  
so everybody's got a different touch on it.  
And Hank had a beautiful vibrato on it.  
So that sound thankfully just came kind of naturally.  
Just that sound.  
And I still wish I could get a guitar to sound the way he gets it to sound.  
So here he is, one of the all-time favourites,  
the man himself, Hank B Marvin.  
Hank used to come down and play with us on our encores.  
If he was about, he would come down and do Local Hero and stuff.

### **MUSIC:**

It's always very nice to complete the circuit with your childhood.

# Bye-bye, love

# Bye-bye, happiness

# Hello, loneliness

# I think I'm a-going to die... #

In his early teenage years, another sound Mark found hard  
to resist was the sweet vocal harmonies of the Everly Brothers.

A good friend of mine called Vince, who I'm still friendly with,  
we used to play Everly Brothers records together and things  
that belonged to his big sister Francine.

# There goes my baby with someone else, yeah, yeah, yeah

# She sure looks happy

# I sure am blue. #

And when the Everlys recorded a song that I wrote,  
I got the chance to play it with them at this TV special  
in Vanderbilt in Nashville.

And the Evs came along,  
and it's a real thrill to be playing your song with the Evs.

# Why worry?

# There should be laughter after pain

# There should be sunshine after rain

# These things have always been the same

# So why worry now? #

By the age of 16, while patiently waiting to go electric,  
Knopfler could be found finger-picking his way  
around the folk clubs of Newcastle.

Doing things like,

# I'm going down that road and I'm feelin' bad, baby

# Going down that road and I'm feelin' bad  
# Ain't gonna be treated this way  
# These two darn shoes kill my feet, baby  
# Daughter's shoes is killing my feet  
# Ain't gonna be treated this way. #

So this kind of duality going on  
where I'd be playing in folk places at the age of 16  
and wanting to play electric music as well.  
For a kid growing up in Newcastle in the '60s,  
no music was more electrifying than that of the blues.  
One bluesman in particular, BB King,  
would create a lasting impression on the young Mark Knopfler.  
He had a record called Live at the Regal  
and that was really, really important for me.  
It was a very definite thing happening.  
This relationship between the voice, the guitar and the audience  
that I'd never heard before and made a big impression on me.

# The way I used to love you, baby  
# Baby, that's the way I hate you now. #

And then Bob Dylan, of course, changed it all for me.  
As far as realising that you could write about anything.  
# Oh, my name, it ain't nothing.  
# My age, it means less.  
# The country I come from is called the mid-west  
# I was taught and brought up there The laws to abide.  
# And the land that I lived in has God on its side. #

Obviously, your childhood influences, they all help, but what they all did,  
they all made a song person and not an instrumental type person.  
They made me much more of a song person.  
Not somebody who wanted to play in an orchestra.

# Southbound again  
# Don't know if I'm going or leaving home. #

After finishing school at 18,  
Knopfler left home and journeyed south to Essex to train as a journalist,  
only to return north a year later  
when he was offered a job in Leeds as a cub reporter on the Yorkshire  
Evening Post.

Musically, I was slowly starting to put together a couple of songs.  
But the journalism was a really great thing for a kid to do,  
because it toughened me up and it meant that you had to get yourself  
organised half way.  
Not that I ever really did.  
In fact, I don't know whether I was tough enough to be a newspaper man.  
I didn't have the printer's ink running in my veins and I think it has to.

During the six years Knopfler spent in Leeds, he continued to play music in various line ups.

He also enrolled at Leeds University to continue his studies in English. This would lead to Knopfler accepting a teaching job in Essex.

But the desire to get his songs recorded wouldn't go away.

The songs had been pushing and pushing.

But they pushed harder and harder.

And I suppose I was writing more of them.

So it was just adding to their weight to the door frame.

# Sweet surrender. #

Against the background of a now emerging punk rock scene,

Knopfler, aged 27, along with brother David on guitar,

John Illsley on bass and Pick Withers on drums,

formed the group that would become Dire Straits.

By the time I actually managed to get Dire Straits together, the little line-up we had,

the songs had been pushing so hard

that they actually pushed me out of a job

and at last I had what I could see was the way ahead just to get these songs recorded.

Radio London DJ Charlie Gillett was persuaded by the group to play their demo tape on his radio show.

This led to them being signed by Vertigo Records.

Finally Knopfler had found an outlet for his songs.

On 16th May 1978, Dire Straits made their TV debut playing the song that would become their calling card.

# Get a shiver in the dark

# It's raining in the park but meantime

# South of the river you stop and you hold everything

# A band is blowing Dixie double-four time.

# Feel all right when you hear the music ring... #

Sultans of Swing is like a kind of situation tune I suppose.

I was living in Deptford at the time.

And there was a little pub round the corner, a dingy little place.

# Coming in out of rain I hear the jazz go down... #

There was nobody in, except some lads playing pool in the corner

and a little Dixieland jazz band playing on a little stage at one end.

# Way on down south

# Way on down south, London Town... #

Because nobody was applauding or anything.

The guy announced, "We're the Sultans of Swing, good night."

And they couldn't have been less Sultans of Swing.

# We are the Sultans

# We are the Sultans of Swing. #

Having been a kid reporter, I think, really did help me organise material, be able to make sense out of what I was looking at.

For some reason, something reverberates with a writer and they note it, they mark it and it goes into the junk yard and it may or may not find a home somewhere.

A lot of the things that you improvise in the studio become part of the furniture of the thing.

Certainly with Sultans, the stuff at the end...

All that stuff. If you don't do that, it's not Sultans of Swing anymore and people would feel that's not why I spent all that money on the ticket. Sultans, I think, was a massive hit all over the world and the first album was a massive hit all over the place and it was a real avalanche of activity.

The idea never was to do it to make a million dollars.

It never was that in the first place.

What happens to a lot of successful acts is that the business starts to channel them along

and you're out there touring and you're getting used to playing in bigger places and it's all experience, all that stuff.

But it comes at the expense of something.

After the worldwide success of the first album, the group's second album, Communique,

and its single, Lady Writer, was viewed by many as a disappointment.

# Lady writer on the TV

# Talking about the Virgin Mary

# Reminded me of you

# Expectation left to come up to, yeah. #

You're out there playing live, but all the time you're doing that, you're not writing.

And all the time you're doing that you're not even really practising, not that much anyway.

So it didn't take me long to realise that I wasn't having enough time to develop properly as a player or as a writer or anything.

So, of course, the second album, like a lot of second albums, a lot of acts are compromised that way.

By the time of their third album, Making Movies, in 1980, Knopfler had returned to form.

Having moved from London to New York, this new environment would influence his song writing.

No more so than on the classic Romeo and Juliet.

I suppose I was thinking along more of a West Side Story kind of a life, rather than a Wild West End kind of a line.

I was playing my national with this guitar and just maybe fiddling around with it in the key...

It's like, it's almost like a semi banjo-y kind of thing.

And I started from somewhere else.

Instead of starting there, I started there

and I was trying to find a way in to the lyrics for Romeo and Juliet.

I sort of saw the Romeo figure as a kind of figure of fun.

So there...

is the key and that's where the guitar's tuned to.

I always get people saying, how did you do that?

It's really just a kind of happy accident.

# So you're a love-struck Romeo

# Got a serenade

# Laying everybody low

# With a love song that he made

# Finds a street light

# Steps out of the shade and says

# You and me babe, how about it?

# Juliet says goodness me it's Romeo You nearly gave me a heart attack

# He's underneath the window

# She's singing Hey-la, my boyfriend's back.

# You shouldn't come around here Singing up at people like that

# Anyway, what you going to do about it?

# Juliet, the dice was loaded from the start

# And I bet, then you exploded in my heart

# And I forget, I forget The movie song

# When you going to realise it was just that the time was wrong?

# Juliet. #

I enjoy playing the song now.

Some of those songs, they just seem to want to go on

and as long as they've got a life, I'll enjoy playing them.

I've got to find something in it for myself when I do it

just to try and make sure that there's something real

in it happening for me all the time.

# And the dream was just the same

# You dreamed your dream for you And o now your dream's real

# How can you look at me as if I'm just another one of your deals?

# When you can fall for chains of silver

# You can fall for chains of gold

# You can fall for pretty strangers

# And the promises they hold

# You promised me everything

# You promised me thick and thin

# Now you just say

# Romeo, you know I used to have a scene with him

# Juliet, when we made love you used to cry



# You said I love you like the stars above  
# Oh I'll love you till the day I die  
# And there's a place for us  
# You know the movie song  
# When you gonna realise it was just that the time was wrong?  
# Juliet. #  
I don't think you do necessarily know which song is better than another.  
They're just different.  
They're like people and you have to do the best thing by them  
and you do the best thing by them  
almost like a little person and then they grow up and you do  
the best thing and they're the boss and then they walk away from you.  
When they're recorded, off they go and they have their life.  
This song's Tunnel Of Love.  
For the song Tunnel of Love, also on the Making Movies album,  
Knopfler was drawing inspiration from memories of his childhood growing up  
in the north-east.  
The biggest fair in Europe comes to Newcastle every year and that was a  
magnet for me.  
I was just always lost in the middle of it.  
Also when I was little we used to go to Cullercoats and Whitley Bay.  
On the train from South Gosforth station, there was an electric train that  
went there  
and we used to go there and the Spanish City is something that I remember.  
I'd been just on a roller coaster ride for the past few years.  
# Crazy on the waltzers  
# But it's the life that I choose... #  
I realised that's what I was going to do.  
I realised that was my life and that was the way it was all going to be, I  
was just,  
I was in the middle of it, in the eye of the storm really  
but I was just riding it just fine, I was doing it,  
I was hanging in there and I was determined that I was going to go on.  
# She took off a silver locket  
# Said remember me by this  
# Put a hand in my pocket  
# I got a keepsake and a kiss  
# And in the roar of dust and diesel  
# I stood I watched her walk away  
Could have caught up with her easy enough... #  
My travels had taken me to New York at this point, but I knew where I was  
from,  
it's a process that started a Cullercoats, it's a process that  
started in Whitley Bay, it's a process that started in Newcastle,

maybe even earlier.

And that all of this stuff comes back to who you are as a little person, you know?

And it all still influences what I do.

# I'm searching through these carousels

# And the carnival arcades

# Searching everywhere, from steeplechase to palisades

# In any shooting gallery where the promises are made

# To walk away, walk away

# Walk away, walk away

# Cullercoats and Whitley Bay

# How to walk away. #

During 1982, Knopfler's musical journey took him into uncharted waters when he was commissioned

to write his first film score for director Bill Forsyth's Local Hero.

Is that the yank in that thing, Edward?

Aye, Peter, that's him away.

I meant to say cheerio.

Doing film work is something that I thought would be interesting and just make a change from writing these ditties.

It's very lucky, I think, for me to have had those early years in Scotland, musically,

it's been a big factor, because it never seems too hard for me to be able to create something in that Celtic area that's melodic or that seems to work.

I just seem to be at home with that kind of music and I've always felt that I've had a connection to it.

#### **MUSIC:**

In 1985, Dire Straits would release an album which would go on to become one of biggest selling records of all time.

- Do you know which album sold most copies in 1985?

- Dire Straits?

# That ain't working That's the way you do it

# Money for nothing and your chicks for free

# Money for nothing... #

All right, so what was the biggest selling compact disc?

Dire Straits.

# You do the walk

# Yeah, you do the walk of life

# You do the walk of life. #

OK, Rover, so what's the album called?

Brothers in Arms, Dire Straits.

CHEERING AND APPLAUSE

Thanks very much. It's very early on, I didn't even have time too make sure my trousers were zipped up.

It's just a little bit strange, it's 1987 now and that record was made in 1985,

but it's very nice recognition and...

Thanks for all your votes and... It's much appreciated. Thanks very much.

I'm sure one of the reasons why Brothers in Arms

was such a big record is that it coincided with the CD.

In fact So Far Away, I think, was the first CD single that was ever made.

I've no doubt that had a lot to do with it.

And also the fact that a couple of the songs on the record

did well in the States and that will always sell you records.

So that was a big factor, too.

# Here I am again in this mean old town

# And you're so far away from me

# And where are you when the sun goes down?

# You're so far away from me

# You're so far away from me

# So far I just can't see

# You're so far away from me

# You're so far away from me. #

I don't think when you're writing a song, or making a record,

that you're not really conscious that it's going to be a big record.

Making Brothers in Arms, I was just making another album, I wasn't really conscious about the size of it.

I think it's really not connected with your journey as a writer or a songwriter.

One of the stand-out songs from the album which still resonates to this day and remains a staple in Knopfler's live shows is the title track itself, Brothers In Arms.

Brothers in Arms was just a phrase I heard and my dad happened to remark how ironic it was that the Russians were siding with the Argentineans in the Falklands.

There you are you, he said, the Russians are being brothers in arms with a fascist dictatorship and the phrase stuck in my head and when you're a songwriter that's something you take notice of.

To a certain extent, you've got a kind of antenna for that kind of thing.

In fact, the first line of the song, these mist-covered mountains, the mist-covered mountains

is the title of an old Scottish air and so I said these mist-covered mountains are a home now for me.

But that's taken from an old song title and that's what a songwriter will do.

It's just these...

There's just this stuff.

There's this stuff...

in the scrap yard!

# These mist-covered mountains

# Home now for me

# But my home is the lowlands

# And always will be

# Some day you'll return to

# Your valleys and your farms

# And you'll no longer burn

# To be brothers in arms... #

What I was actually thinking about in terms of the song itself was the idea of the mortally wounded man surrounded by his friends, and that's just one of those battle scenes, isn't it?

There's a poem, The Burial Of Sir John Moore At Corunna, and things that I'd read as a kid.

# And the sun's gone to hell

# Got the moon riding high

# Let me bid you farewell

# Every man has to die

# But it's written in the starlight

# And every line on your palm

# We are fools to make war

# on our brothers in arms... #

It became a sort of anthem for troops in the Gulf.

I was actually doing an interview one day on the radio

and this tank man actually called up to say that at the end of the battle, they linked all the tanks up in the dawn and they played it.

It's a comfort to me that the song, that the music, not just that song, but other music is used by people for all sorts of things, to celebrate things and to mark occasions, you know, to get married.

A woman told me the other day that...

She said, "We used all your stuff for our wedding."

Well, that's really nice, isn't it?

That's great. So it's not all to do with necessarily funerals.

Money For Nothing, Knopfler's wry take on the MTV generation, gave Dire Straits their first No 1 single in America.

Thanks in no small part to Knopfler's distinctive guitar sound.

When people say, how do you get those sounds? Usually I say, I don't know, I fiddle about with the amp until I get something that works.

That's essentially what this was.

I had actually forgotten how I did it.

And that's really essentially what I'm doing - I'm blocking out quite a lot of notes.

And as the song is going...

That's just two strings.

# Look at them yo-yos That's the way you do it

# You play the guitar on the MTV

# That ain't working That's the way you do it

# Money for nothing and your chicks for free... #

Money for nothing, that's a situation kind of a song.

This was an electrical appliance store

and all the TVs at the back of the store were all tuned to MTV.

MTV was a pretty new thing then and then some big meathead guy in a checked shirt

had been doing some deliveries and he was delivering his opinion about everybody who was on the MTV.

And I had to actually spy on him, because his lines were so classic.

# The little faggot with the earring and the make-up

# Yeah, buddy, that's his own hair

# That little faggot got his own jet airplane

# That little faggot, he's a millionaire

# We gotta install microwave ovens

I actually went to the counter and I asked for a pen and paper

and there was a kitchen display in the window of the store,

it was in New York, and I sat down in the window of the store and started writing down the lines.

So that guy essentially gave me a song.

# I want my, I want my

# I want my MTV. #

During the Brothers in Arms tour, which lasted 12 months,

Dire Straits played 247 shows in 100 cities,

including a 13-night record-breaking stint at London's Wembley Arena.

Dire Straits were arguably the biggest band in the world.

There was a kind of critical mass happening, where a lot of people wanted to see the band play live.

And they were into the records and they were into seeing, experiencing the whole thing live.

All right this is where Wembley does the walk.

I know they don't let you stand up,

but if you all do it, there's nothing they can do about it.

In fact I think they like it really.

On the surface, it would appear Knopfler was having the time of his life, but he was learning that success on this scale came at a price.

Oh, yeah, you're really not used to it. It's a massive strain.

I think it's probably just good luck that I wasn't younger.

I really sympathise with kids who go off the rails with it all.

I probably just survived it.

But there's a lot of damage.  
And things happen things that you're not ready for always.  
It's a new experience entirely.  
And for a songwriter, a songwriter's more of an observer  
and you suddenly feel people looking at you and there's a reversal going  
on.  
And of course they're not really.  
It's just something that you feel, because of the attention the music is  
getting that week  
or the band's getting that week.  
It takes a while to get the whole thing in perspective.  
Following the tour, Knopfler put Dire Straits on hold  
and got back to basics by forming the Notting Hillbillies.  
The line up included Steve Phillips and Brendan Croker,  
two mates from his days as a struggling musician in Leeds.  
I just rested up for a while and after a bit, as usually is the case,  
looking to get some gainful employment after goofing around.  
# It's been something seeing you again  
# In this time we've had to spend  
# Been so good to be around  
# I thank you for that special trip  
# Keep me going on until the next time I'm in town... #  
And so we just ended up having a lot of fun doing it.  
I suppose that was like relaxing.  
# I see you smile and I remember what went down... #  
I think it probably was a way of reminding me how much I enjoyed picking  
songs  
and if that's all that had ever happened to me in life, I'd still be doing  
that now.  
I'd be playing guitar with somebody and picking old time songs.  
If I'd never written a song, that's what I'd be doing now.  
And the person that I admire an awful lot,  
very famous guitarist of Dire Straits,  
writes all their tunes and sings all the songs.  
I love him as a musician and as a person, Mark Knopfler.  
Another side project during his sabbatical from his day job with Dire  
Straits  
was when he teamed up with the legendary guitar picker Chet Atkins on the  
album Neck And Neck.  
I think the only reason that Chet actually called me up and asked me  
to play on the record, was because he took pity on me,  
because I was a finger picker like him.  
I think this is one of the first things we did, See You In My Dreams.  
Chet being so kind, I'm sure he'd keep it fairly simple for my benefit.

Really, it's all come from...

..that.

Picking. Finger picking.

And that's how Chet essentially pulled himself, he picked his way out of real poverty.

You know, genuine poverty.

When he used to walk to school, he didn't have a coat in the winter.

And he...

he literally picked his way to fame. And fortune.

In 1991, Dire Straits got back together to record what would be their final studio album,

On Every Street, and Knopfler found himself back on the road on another sell-out world tour.

The gigs that we were doing On Every Street were massive gigs and we had two stages that were leapfrogging around and we'd brought in extra people to do all that.

One of the things I'd always enjoyed about touring and still enjoy about touring is it's like having a circus. That's part of the fun.

I think if it gets so big, you lose that.

Although there was no official announcement that the group were breaking up,

the On Every Street tour was the last time Knopfler would play with Dire Straits.

I think it just gently rolled out.

I kind of put to it bed.

I wanted to get back to being a guy who could write a song,

do all the things I've said with it

and then go and tour it for people, but do it at a kind of manageable level.

Following the demise of Dire Straits,

Knopfler has continued to tour and record as a successful solo artist.

This new-found musical freedom has allowed him to collaborate with other musicians, such as country legend Emmylou Harris.

# This is us down at the Mardi Gras

# This is us in your daddy's car

# You and the missing link

# Had a little too much I think

# Too long in the sun

# Having too much fun

# You and me and our memories This is us.

# This is us... #

These songs that I'm writing, sometimes they'll fall into types and I'd noticed that there were a few songs that were making the male/female shape

and so I thought about doing a duet.

I thought that, um,

"Mark and Emmy" might be all right, you know.

I don't know, I don't exactly know why.

I think it was just because I'd been writing certain kinds of songs.

# Famous last words

# Laying round in tatters

# Sounding absurd

# Whatever I try

# But I love you

# And that's all that really matters

# If this is goodbye

# This is goodbye. #

If This Is Goodbye was inspired by an article Knopfler read in The Guardian by author Ian McEwan.

In which McEwan wrote about the voice messages left for loved ones by those trapped in the Twin Towers on September 11th.

I think actually Emmy just liked the song.

I don't think she even knew what it was about

in terms of the... She just thought it was a goodbye song.

She hadn't, wasn't seeing it in terms of...

of that event.

When somebody mentioned it to her,

then it really changed and she became very emotionally attached to the song.

# My famous last words

# Could never tell the story

# Spinning unheard

# In the dark of the sky

# But I love you

# And this is our glory

# If this is goodbye

# If this is goodbye

# If this is goodbye

# If this is goodbye. #

It's always interesting to me how a creative act, how it engenders other creative acts.

When you drop a stone into a well,

the ripples go out and things come back.

With Sailing to Philadelphia,

I was reading a book about Mason and Dixon and the Mason-Dixon Line,

and with Dixon himself, you know,

being from the north, and his travels taking him all over the place,

I felt a bit of a kinship with him.



Obviously, I didn't do anything of remotely the same sort of importance.

# I'm Jeremiah Dixon

# I am a Geordie boy

# A glass of wine with you sir

# And the ladies I'll enjoy

# All Durham men, Northumberland

# Measured up by my own hand

# It was my fate from birth

# To make my mark upon the Earth... #

I'm one of lucky ones who enjoys the whole cycle,

and if you want to think of it in terms of a cycle

of being a songwriter so I can write a song, so I enjoy all that.

OK, once more.

'And then I enjoy very much getting into the studio and recording. Not everybody likes that.'

#### **THEY HARMONISE:**

'I really enjoy rehearsing to go out on tour. I really enjoy it.

'Getting the band together, rehearsing is one of most fun things for me, and then the playing live.'

# Save my soul from evil, Lord, and heal this soldier's heart

# I'll trust in thee to keep me

# Lord I'm done

# With Bonaparte. #

Unlike many of his contemporaries, who have broken up supergroups only to reform at a later date, Knopfler has no intention of reforming Dire Straits.

That would be getting back into the massive event thing, and you'd be doing it for money.

I suppose. And you'd probably feel much more duty-bound

to trot out all of those records, all of those songs, and you'd have to...

I mean, I don't play Money For Nothing, at least I don't think I've done it for a while.

I might do it - I might feel like doing it, I might not, but I would hate to have to think that I'd HAVE to do it.

It's not really for me to say, but perhaps his writing has changed and his feeling has changed along with it.

And he's in a position where he can do what he wants.

I mean, why should he go back if that's not how he's feeling?

For his most recent musical projects, Knopfler has been drawing heavily on his roots in folk music.

Having the folk musicians

in there is just, it gives me a little bit of an extra luxury palette to do things with.

I suppose for us, it's not like the token folkie.

You're not coming in and just doing a small bit.

What I find is that

Mark's an amazing artist and he has a real interest in traditional music, whether it's Irish traditional, or Scottish traditional or bluegrass or Appalachian.

I think there's an amazing amount of thought goes into it from Mark's point of view.

Even putting a band together. The eight of us on stage just now, that's a really difficult thing to do.

You've got people from the Dire Straits days, and people from Nashville bluegrass scene

and Nashville rock scene, and then you've got a couple of folkie guys from Manchester and Glasgow.

# Southern bound from Glasgow town

# She's shining in the sun

# My Scotstoun lassie

# On the border run

# We're whistling down

# Tearing up the climbs

# I'm just a thief

# Stealing time in the Border Reiver

# 300,000 on the clock

# Plenty more to go

# Crash box and lever

# She needs the heel and toe

# She's not too cold in winter

# But she cooks me in the heat

# I'm a six-foot driver

# But you can't adjust the seat

# In the Border Reiver. #

He draws from such a broad palette

and he covers such a broad palette,

that he can absorb all these different influences

and they don't feel out of place, because it fits right into the music.

Knopfler's love of being on the road is undiminished.

His recent Get Lucky tour saw him performing to sell-out audiences across Europe and North America.

During the early stages of the tour, Knopfler sustained a back injury.

This meant he was unable to perform standing up.

Rather than cancel the tour,

Knopfler elected to play the remaining concerts sitting on a stool.

I don't think it's affected the show in any way.

It's certainly not affected his performance or playing,

he just happens to be sitting down as opposed to standing up doing it. So I think as long as it's not had an impact on the show itself, on we go.

It's OK, I've been playing on this sort of revolving stool, like a dummy. But it's fine if people seem to mind if I don't dance!

He's been in a lot of pain, very intense pain.

But I have yet to see it really get his spirit down.

He loves being out here.

He loves doing this. And I think everybody knows we come out and we do these things for four or five months and then everybody goes their separate way, and we always hope we'll reconvene and do another record and another tour after that.

But the fact that we don't do it all the time makes it all the more precious, and I know it's that way with him.

When he's out here, this is what he's all about, that's what his entire focus is on.

It's like being the captain of a little action ship. It's actually a great feeling.

You know, you respect the guys in the crew an awful lot and you respect the other guys in the band

and this is just something that comes with getting older, I suppose, and getting a little bit wiser.

Eventually leading to an A minor.

I suppose so.

We all learn so much from each other, and we realise there is always so much to learn, there's no point stopping and thinking, "That's it".

It just doesn't work like that.

We're all as eager to learn as we ever were.

The beginning of Border Reiver needs to be a little quicker than we're doing it.

He is prolific, he just keeps on writing, and as long as he does that, he'll keep wanting to record, and long may it continue.

What I try to do with a song is craft it.

I try and craft a song with...

with pride, and I try and make something that's going to last.

So many of his melodies sound like, ancient, like something you can't put your finger on what it was, but the first time you hear 'em, you feel a kinship with 'em.

At least that's how it hits me.

Sometimes you're not even sure what it is you're writing - it only becomes clear afterwards

what it is you were doing, and don't you love that?

People make their own pictures.

They have their own ideas of what a song is,  
and the explanation is... not really necessary.

It's just going to spoil things.

# When I leave this world behind

# To another I will go

# But if there are no pipes

# In heaven

# I'll be going

# Down below

# If friends in time be severed

# Some day we will meet again

# And I'll return

# To leave you never

# Be a piper to the end. #

I'll go home in an hour or two, whatever it is now,

I'll take a look at the songs, probably, at some point.

I'll just take a look at them and see how they're getting on.

Chop a bit out, stick a bit in.

I love it.

When your dreams are come true, as it were,

they never come true quite the way that you think that they will.

Reality is never

what a dream is.

But it's better than nothing,

and I would still rather be trying to make my dreams come true.

I think that's still something to go for.

# Now I'm a-rambling through this meadow

# Happy as a man can be

# Think I'll just lay me down

under this old tree

# On and on we go

# Through this whole world a-shuffling

# If you've got a truffle dog

# You can go a-truffling

# And you might get lucky now and then

# You win some

# You might get lucky now and then

# Yeah, you win some. #