

## My Song: “Taking You Home” by Don Henley was the perfect wedding song for Sue and I

As the new millennia dawned, Sue and I were knee-deep in preparation for our July 29th wedding. To be honest, *she* was knee-deep, as the preparations assigned to me were no more than ankle-deep. But still, there were vows to compose. Being a writer—and her, an editor—this was a responsibility I didn’t take lightly, for she’d know immediately whether I’d put considerable time and effort into their creation ... or not. More importantly, *I* wanted the vows to be special, a reflection of the depth of my love. Once satisfied with my vows, it was time to select a wedding song, one that would complement Sue’s choice *If I Should Fall Behind*, by Bruce Springsteen.

A bit of background on Sue and me. This would be a second marriage for both of us; her first had lasted nearly twenty-five years, while mine had lasted nine. We were both 46 years old, hardly kids anymore. A sizeable percentage of love songs concentrate on those aspects of teen or 20-something love: raging hormones, forbidden love, even the clingy, all-consuming “I need to text you 20 times a day, or I’m going to burst” kind. Whereas, we felt the need for lyrics that described a couple that was a little further down the road of life, words that mentioned encountering a couple of bumps along the way—experiences that have helped us learn who we are.

My choice for a song was easy. Solo artist Don Henley had just released a CD entitled “Inside Job,” that included the song “Taking You Home.” The lyrics suggested a man speaking to his wife-to-be (when in reality, Don is addressing his first-born daughter.)

*I had a good life  
Before you came  
I had my friends and my freedom  
I had my name  
Still there was sorrow and emptiness  
'Til you made me glad  
Oh, in this love I found strength I never knew I had*

The lyrics also spoke to me regarding the six years of freedom I had between my marriages. Unfettered freedom had its good moments, but the desire—and inability—to find my soulmate lent a melancholy to my life for which there was but one salve.

*There were days, lonely days  
When the world, wouldn't throw me a crumb, no no*

Finally, Henley’s song furnished consolation and confirmation that I’d done the right thing by calling an end to my first marriage, even though one’s optimism and hope for the future can take a pummeling when out in the singles’ world.

*But I kept on believing  
That this day would come*

Two weeks before we got married, we saw Henley in concert. Our shouts of “Play ‘Taking You Home’” were answered—a highlight not only of the concert, but heartfelt words that have resonated with us these past 12 years as well.

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My Song: “Come Down in Time” by Elton John was the perfect song to get me through the long night

For a suburban male teen in the late ‘60s-early ‘70s, it was a crowded temple—the pantheon occupied by “Rock Guitar Gods.” I saw many of them in concert: Allman, Beck, Clapton, Page, Winwood. However, the stringed instrument that I returned to again and again to savor its unique sound was the harp in Elton John’s “Come Down in Time,” from the 1970 album *Tumbleweed Connection*.

Long ago, I worked as a night watchman at a lumber mill. It started as a lark, a summer job in 1974 between semesters at college. But when fall came, I stayed on. I had to work only 10-15 minutes of each hour, which left plenty of time for homework. The 32-hour work week actually meshed with student life, such as working from 1 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

I didn’t have a portable music player at the time, so I borrowed a friend’s cassette player and several tapes that included *Tumbleweed Connection* and Cat Stevens’s *Tea for the Tillerman*. I was among those who considered the music-and-lyrics partnership of Elton John and Bernie Taupin magical. Over time, I did buy some additional music. However, *Connection* was so amazing—and the night hours so long—that I abused the cassette until its sprockets screeched, ferric oxides pleading for mercy. In the realm of rock music, there was nothing else like “Time’s” combination of oboe, harp, and evocative lyrics

*In the quiet silent seconds I turned off the light switch  
And I came down to meet you in the half light the moon left  
While a cluster of night jars sang some songs out of tune  
A mantle of bright light shone down from a room*

One would think that familiarity—the lack of musical choice—would breed contempt for a song I listened to over and over. Not in this case. The song’s cryptic, unfathomable lyrics no doubt contributed to its allure. What, exactly was a night jar? Cold cream? A lava lamp? That salve your grandmother touted? And why were the jars singing? No matter. If you’d listened to that song as many times as I did, you’d conjure a strong mental image of what night jars looked like. Nothing fancy, just some beige-colored containers on a shelf in a room, illuminated by moonlight slanting through a curtainless window.

The song also spoke to the angst of my tumultuous relationship and unrequited love: when the love one feels isn't returned

*There are women and women and some hold you tight  
While some leave you counting the stars in the night*

The meaning of the enigmatic "night jars" lyric was revealed to me in 1987, when I started birding. Nightjars are a family of birds that includes Whip-poor-will, so named because their resonant, mournful songs could "jar the night." Now, of course, it makes perfect sense. Nightjars: a cluster of them singing.