

Love Is Looking for Me (1976)

I recorded this because it's unique in my oeuvre. This is the only old song I couldn't completely remember, so I had to rewrite it a bit. (The older songs weren't written out as proper scores but as lyric sheets with chord names.) I used to perform this with just guitar but I think it wants all those synthesizers and effects.

Love is looking for me.
Here I am, love.
I'm lost in the woods,
there's this grizzly bear tracking me.

Love is looking for me.
Here I am, love.
I'm an outlaw holed up
with a posse out after me.

Love is looking for me.
Here I am, love.
I'm drifting at sea,
there's a seagull circling me.

Love is looking for me.
Here I am, love.
I got loose in the lab,
Doctor Frankenstein's mighty mad.

Love is looking for me.
I'm a castaway.
I fired my last flare at that seagull.
And missed.
I'm a castaway.

Parties (2001)

The precursor to "Good Listener," this lay around unfinished but not forgotten for 12 years. As I type this I'm in the studio and we're adding the sax. I have an unnatural love for the lead guitar part.

Parties

I love parties

I love my friends dragging me to their friends' parties

Strangers

Complete strangers

who remember you from someone's New Year's party

How I love going to parties

How I love leaving a party

making excuses:

monthly report due

two weeks of laundry

dental appointment

Strangers

Perfect strangers

I love trying to converse with perfect strangers

Chatting

about cheese dip

About traffic, wine, and never watching TV

Why, why, why do I keep coming?

Why, why, why do I endure them?

Drink after drink?

Jerk after jerk?

Time after time?

Only because I'm

Looking

For that someone

For that someone who will save me from more

Parties

Like that party

Where you stole my heart eternally forever

Good Listener (2006)

Inspired by one-too-many faculty parties at some university where I was a faculty spouse.

I'm a good listener—but
how did you know?
How did you
 pick me out,
 corner me,
 spit on my tie?

I'm a good listener—but
I'd rather not.
I'd rather
 eat the nuts,
 sip the wine,
 play with their cat.

I'd rather not hear you
 tell me your new
 medication
 seems to work de-
 spite a few weird
 side effects.

I'd rather not hear you
 talk about the
 paper you sub-
 mitted to three
 conferences and
 all about your
 thesis and the
 opera you've been
 writing for e-
 leven years.

I'm a good listener—but
how did you know?
How did you
 pick me out,
 corner me,
 spit on my tie?

(INSTRUMENTAL)

I'd rather not hear how
everything is
better in New
York;
everyone's in-
telligent, so-
phisticated,
and refined ex-
cept perhaps for
taxi drivers;
how rent control is
necessary
justice in this
racist, homo-
phobic, sexist
narcissistic,
genocidal,
capitalistic A-
merica.

I'm a good listener—but
I'd rather not.
I'd rather
eat the nuts,
sip the wine,
watch their TV.

I'm a good listener—but
that doesn't mean I care.
That doesn't mean
I won't forget
your story,
your name and face,
your refill.

Drop by Anytime (2001)

The first time I ever visited my future husband's house he noticed me noticing a patch of kitty puke under his harpsichord and said, "Don't worry, it's dry."

Drop by anytime.
The house may be a mess,
but I always have clean sheets.

Maybe no flannel shirts,
maybe no underwear,
maybe no matching towels,
but we don't care.

Maybe no socks without holes,
but I don't wear 'em to bed.
Maybe no cereal bowls,
but let's not plan too far ahead.

Drop by anytime.
The house may be a mess,
but I always have clean sheets.

Just walk around the spills,
don't mind the cookie crumbs,
ignore those piles of bills,
the smell is dead geraniums.

Don't mind that spider,
he'll kill that fly.
Don't mind the kitty puke,
it's almost dry.

Drop by anytime.
There might not be enough heat,
but I always have clean sheets.
(INSTRUMENTAL)

While I check the thermostat
don't have a Coke, it's flat.
Forget the chips, they're stale.
I hate that kind, they were on sale.

Forget the juice, it's old,

forget the milk, it's sour.
OK, it's too damned cold, I'm saving power,
the water's hot, let's take a shower.

Drop by anytime.
There might not be enough to eat
but I always have clean sheets.

Maybe the butter's rancid,
maybe the bread is green,
but drop by anytime,
the sheets are clean.

Maybe the coffee's gone,
but, hey, the water's brown,
so drop by anytime.
The toilet seat is always down.

Drop by anytime
you're in the mood
for stewed tomatoes and beets
and have nothing to do.
'Cause I always have clean sheets
for you.

I Want to Teach You (2012)

I love teaching, especially math. I used to date people younger than me. Some of them were impressed by my erudition. This was a dangerous combination.

CHORUS:

I want to teach you,
I want to teach you things.
I want to teach you
what joy a little knowledge brings

I want to teach you,
I want to teach you stuff.
I want to teach you
'cause you don't know enough.

To carry on a stimulating
conversation.
Something beyond next weekend
and your last vacation.

So say goodbye (although I
may be overreaching),
goodbye to ignorance 'cause
I love teaching.

(CHORUS)

I want to teach you quantum theory
and the bottom quark.
I'd like to take you to each art
museum in New York.

I want to sit you down with my guitar
and show you chords
and Egypt's pyramids
and Norway's best fjords.

(CHORUS)

If I knew fashion we could
ridicule the latest styles.

I know computers! I could
show you how to backup files.

If I knew mollusks
we would marvel at the octopus.
I do know math—I'd love to
teach you calculus.

(INSTRUMENTAL)

If you want that mortarboard
I could act like Glenn Ford.
Don't worry, future Dead Poet,
if it's boring we'd forego it.

You could be my blackboard toady;
you bring out my Miss Jean Brodie,
Mr. Kotter, certainly,
Our Miss Brooks and Miss Crabtree.

I'd be sweet, I'd be tough:
Professor Kingsfield, Mrs. Puff.
I'd provide the skills you lack;
you could call me Conrack.

What is fuzzy I'd make clear
just like Mister Belvedere.
You could be my teacher's pet;
sing with Sister Virginette.

Like Poitier and Mr. Chips
I've much to say, important tips
on how to live, and grammar rants es-
sentially I am Miss Frances.

I'd make proper fractions simple
wearing rosary and wimple.
Complex numbers and all that
are easy in a wizard's hat.

Unlike Trunchbull, like Miss Honey,
I would show you ancient sunny
Greece, Patee, the Taj Mahal, and

we'd compose like Mr. Holland.

I can out-teach Dumbledore,
and old Mz. Frizzle, any nun, for
every book report, term paper,
every quiz'll be pure fun.

(CHORUS)

If I knew world lit
we'd deconstruct some fiction.
If I knew logic
I would prove by contradiction

that love exists, cause otherwise
my favorite songs are full of lies.
If that were so I'd rather
not philosophize.

I want to teach you
the secrets of Tut's tomb.
I want to teach you
"Cogito ergo sum."
I want to teach you
who's who and who is whom.
I want to teach you.

Trust is Good (1987)

A brilliant line I stole from my friend Jim Zagel.

Love needs trust.
It's a simple fact:
love needs trust to survive intact.

Life is short.
You oughta love a lot.
Love is good; jealousy is not.

Not every fact of life,
not even love and sex,
not everything is simple
not everything complex.

Life is jazz.
It's a melody.
Improvise, but don't stray off key.

Don't forget
even jazz has rules.
Thou shalt not play those jealousy blues.

Not every fact of life,
not even love and sex,
not everything is simple
not everything complex.

Life's a play,
the only run you've got.
Scrap their script; simplify the plot.

But, don't leave out
the happy ending, please:
love and trust conquer jealousies.

Keep it a comedy,
belt out that melody.
Make it an aria
but don't get dramatic with me.

Life's too short.
Shouldn't be so sad.
Trust is good, jealousy is bad.

Handle with Care (1981)

I was getting sick of people complaining that my songs didn't have proper hooks, so I wrote this one with three.

Why's so precious a product as me
packaged pathetically?
Why's such delicate pottery
wrapped up so flimsily?

Handle with care

Why're these priceless Chinoiseries
covered with water rings?
Why's my genuine Tiffany
dusted infrequently?

Handle with care
This end up

Better not mail me,
better carry me on,
better buy preflight insurance anyway.
Better be good kids,
better fly it outside.
Better hide the pieces, find the Crazy glue.

Why's so tempting a target as me
propped up so publicly?
Why's such delicate pottery
balanced precariously?

Handle with care
This end up
Fragile

Tickle Me (1987)

Mom used to say her goosebumps had goosebumps.

Tickle me,
don't tease me,
give me chills.

Don't stop,
don't stop,
until

my goosebumps
get goosebumps,
till they freeze.

Don't stop,
don't stop,
oh please

CHORUS:

Tickle me,
nibble on my left ear.
Tickle but be sincere.

Make my skin
electric.
Make it crawl.

Drive it
right up
the wall.

Make me cringe,
make me squirm,
don't just tease.

Don't toy
with me,
oh please

(CHORUS)

Don't play games with me.
Well, at least play fair with me.
Well then cheat, but please hide it from me.
Well then, I can kid myself
but I can't tickle myself, no,

I need you.
Torment me,
tease my hair.

Tickle
my ribs
and these

secret nooks
and crannies.
Everywhere

except
behind
the knees. Please

(CHORUS)

Got No Secrets (1989)

One of the lines, "What you see with me is what you get," is something my husband Bob says about me.

Got no secrets
Got no secrets
Got no secrets / Believe me

I'm not out to fool you
I'm not out to hide things from you
I want to convince you I don't lie
I'm a good guy

Got no secrets
I'm no mystery
Got no secrets
I'm no mystery / Believe me

I'm not like that, you can bet
What you see with me is what you get
Look through these eyes into my mind
There you'll find

Not one secret
Not one mystery
Got no secrets
I'm no mystery / Believe me

I dislike dishonesty
deception, mendacity
I disapprove of disingenuousness
I won't lie to save us

Got no secrets
I'm no mystery
There's no grand conspiracy
Believe me

You've got the kind of mind that sees schemes hatching
You've got the kind of mind that invents plots
You think the people of the Earth are out to get you
They are not

You wonder why I said I love you
It's no secret—I do
and why I'd love you isn't any mystery
 'cause you can be

almost perfect in every way
gentle thoughtful good-looking giving
the one bad thing
I can say—is

You've got the kind of mind that sees schemes hatching
You've got the kind of mind that invents plots
You think the people of the Earth are out to get you
 We are not

Got no secrets
I'm no mystery
There's no grand conspiracy
Believe me

Honey (1992)

One day my previous partner Lou casually called me "honey." I laughed in his face. He was annoyed.

I know I shouldn't have laughed
that time you called me "honey."
Believe me, I wasn't laughing at you.

I know I laughed in your face;
don't know what was so funny.
I know it hurt you but that wasn't me.

Psychologically,
that was my wounded child.
I would have smiled,
and held you near,
and called you "dear."

This guy on TV explained
it's not my fault. It isn't.
But I can change I know what not to do.

I know I shouldn't have cringed
when I saw your reaction.
That wasn't me, that was my wounded child.

Psychologically,
we know that little brat
cannot survive apart.
Dear, sweetheart,
please call me "honey" again.

I know I shouldn't have laughed
that time you licked my elbow,
but, honey, you know I'm ticklish there.

The Details Don't Matter (1994)

This was an exercise in doing the opposite of the standard creative writing rule of showing (not telling) via vivid details.

Time passes, things happen,
the details don't matter.
Don't ask me.

It was love, of course.
What else?
It was love.
When and where and who and how don't matter.

Time passes, things happen,
the details don't matter.
Fill in the blanks yourself.

Watch a video, go to a play,
play a CD, watch TV,
read a book, any book.
See the movie, any movie.
Find a Broadway show.
If you don't know, wait a while.

Time passes, things happen,
the details don't matter.
Don't ask me.

It was love, of course.
True love.
Real love.
It was doomed, of course, what else.
The details don't matter.

Time passes, things happen,
the details don't matter.
Fill in the blanks yourself.

Make 'em up.
Don't forget a triangle.
Don't forget fights over little things.
Don't forget the love of your life.
The ex-love of your life.

If you don't have an ex-love of your life,
wait a while.

Time passes, things happen,
the details don't matter.

Don't ask me.

Fill in the blanks yourself.

Love Is (2000)

I think this was an effort to write something popular: it's about love and actually says something interesting. Ironically it doesn't have a decent hook. What to name it? "Love"? "Love is Crazy"? I love the lyrics but it occurs to me that someone who doesn't know me might find them risibly incompetent.

Love is / love was / love will be crazy.
Yet somehow we think
love is / love was / love will be perfect this time.

We two are so solid
like a granite boulder lasers can't cut.
We two are like peanuts
sharing one shell, one bed, one garage but

Love is / love was / love will be crazy.
Yet somehow we think
love is / love was / love will be perfect this time.
Maybe last time?

We know no doubt
deep down there is no chance of us ever splitting.

(INSTRUMENTAL)

Love is / love was / love will be perfect this time.
Maybe next time?

We know no doubt
deep down there is no chance of us splitting up but
Every former lover,
every former couple knew the same thing.
Love is / love was / love will be perfect this time.

The Last Experiment (2013)

The increasingly ridiculous piano flourishes are my tribute to my fellow "Lee," Liberace.

I'm planning to
investigate
this friendship's
current stalemate:

I've gotta see
what happens next
If I don't email
call or text.

CHORUS:

This is the last
experiment.
My last attempt
to make a dent
in someone's armor.
Someone's a charmer.

I will record
my days alone
as I don't chat or
post or phone.

I will observe
me try to cope
with quickly
disappearing hope.

(CHORUS)

And as I measure
decibels
of silent empty
non-farewells,

I'll plot my mounting
dark despair
as I pretend
that I don't care.

(INSTRUMENTAL CHORUS)

I'll count the calls
to friends and mom
concluding
life is no rom com.

I'll write results
eventually
and publish them
online for free.

(CHORUS)

A Big Mistake (2013)

I've no idea what inspired this. Some of it I'm sure I just made up.

This was a big mistake
A terrible mistake
A tragic misunderstanding
What a disaster
unprecedented
major catastrophe

I wish I'd seen it coming
I might have known what to do
I wish you'd told me sooner
We could have tried something else

This was a big mistake
A ten point six earthquake
Some anniversary party

Titanic Hindenburg
Iraq Afghanistan
"Oh, the humanity!"

I wish I'd seen it coming
I might have known what to do
I wish you'd told me sooner
We could have tried something else

It's not like debating papal infallibility
with your Baptist uncle
It couldn't be worse than choosing a cruise
or learning to lose at gin or ping-pong
It isn't as bad as the time we discussed
immigration reform with your rightwing father
It couldn't be worse than facing the facts,
admitting that once I might have been wrong

I wish I'd never asked
I wish you hadn't heard
I wish I didn't deserve this
I wish I didn't deserve this

Evaporating (1978)

I never could play the guitar part to my satisfaction, so the computer is doubling me. I hope we got the best of human soul and computer perfection.

The first half of my life
I spent condensing lazily.
The first half of the second half
I boiled crazily.

The first half of the final quarter
I got down to the simmer.
And now there're no more bubbles
and my burner's getting dimmer.

It's irritating, it's infuriating
no dust—I'm just evaporating.
It's aggravating, it's exasperating.
Why me? I'm evaporating.

Leave me alone—I wanna vegetate.

I want tubes leading to
each major orifice.
I won't even have to think
to eat and breathe and piss.

I'll need some negative reinforcement
to help me keep my eyes closed:
a ten-volt jolt from
three strategically placed electrodes.

No more meditating, no more calculating,
no more—I'm up for vegetating.
No more concentrating, no more cogitating,
not me—I'll be vegetating.

No, no more—I'm gonna vegetate.
I can't take no more—I'm gonna vegetate.
I can't cope no more.

Hibernate (Winter, 1976)

One of my joys is arranging my old songs. It was bliss adding the xylophone part to this one. And I apologize for the crowbar modulation (I'm allowed to do this once in my career).

I'll be heading north to Saskatchewan
to the land of the grizzly and the midnight sun
to my little log cabin buried deep in the snow
where I will ponder the meaning of life below

I'll ponder fate
get my head straight
I'll hibernate

I'll tack NO TRESPASSING signs up all around
and then I'll bury my telephone under the ground
so I can ponder the mysteries of the stars
so I can serenade myself on my acoustic guitar

I'll celebrate, unwind
and liberate my mind
I'll hibernate

The cabin comes stocked with my winter supplies
like my canned pork and beans and my frozen french fries
like my typewriter ribbons and my reel-to-reel
to capture every inspiration that I'm gonna feel

I'll meditate
it feels great
to hibernate

Every morning I'll disprove another theory I know
every afternoon I'll listen to my stereo
every night I'll cuddle up cozy, comfy, and snug
between my reindeer antlers on my bearskin rug

I'll penetrate
a deeper state
I'll hibernate

I won't settle for returning to the warmth of your womb
I won't waste my life waiting for the cool of my tomb
I want more than double locks on my four little rooms

I can't escape the mighty metropolis a minute too soon

I can't wait to find
a perfect mate; it's time
to hibernate