The New Cue #517 August 11: Ron Sexsmith

"I've been a much better songwriter than a human being."

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The New Cue

The World's Greatest Music Newslett

Good morning,

It's Monday, so let's start the week with another bittersweet Life & Times interview The New Cue. Today, we have veteran Canadian singer-songwriter **Ron Sexsmith** delivering his hard-won life lessons and insights below the jump. Have a listen to h latest single, **When Will The Morning Come**, which is a taster for his melancholic new album, **Hangover Terrace**, out at the end of August.



We're thinking of making a few small tweaks and massages to the content we delive on The New Cue (I'm sorry, yes, I just used the word "content"). If there's anything you'd like more or less of from us, or some new thing included, feel free to email us thenewcue1@gmail.com titled CONTENT and hopefully it won't go straight into th junk file with all our sex bot friends.

On with Ron Sexsmith. It's a free edition, as all Mondays are, but ideally we'd love y to join forces with our other paying subscribers so we can keep doing this. If you'd to throw a fiver into our hat every month, click below.

Enjoy the edition,

Ted and Niall

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The Life & Times Of...Ron Sexsmith



Singer-songwriter Ron Sexsmith, 61, was born and raised in Ontario, Canada. He started releasing his own cassettes in 1985 and has subsequently recorded seventeen albums, with h 18th, Hangover Terrace, released on August 29.

What was the first record you loved?

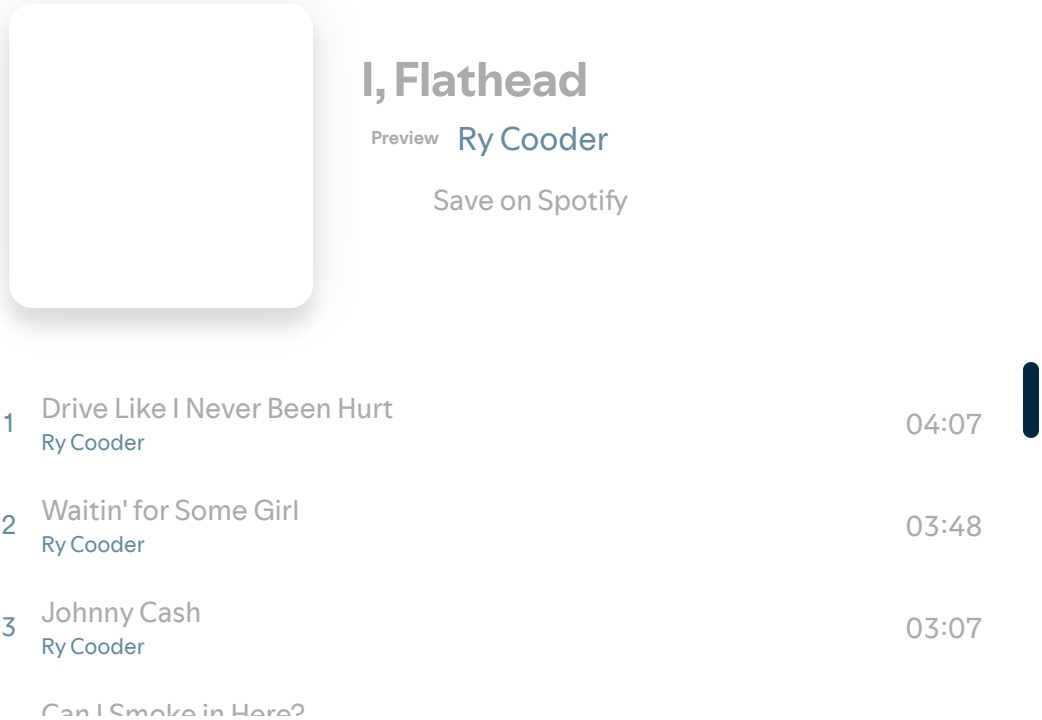
It Doesn't Matter Anymore by Buddy Holly. My dad left when I was two, but he left box of 45's that my mom allowed me to play, and this was one of them. I was aware

that Buddy had died a few years prior and how, so it gave the recording this other worldly vibe that still haunts me.



And the last?

Probably, I Flathead by Ry Cooder. Hardly anyone ever talks about this album, but I think it's such a moving and nostalgic snapshot of a time in America that was very different from how it is now. It's sweet, funny and very sad in places but mostly I ju love to hear him play that guitar.



What is your earliest memory?

Being put to sleep for a tonsillectomy by a masked person. The smell of the sleeping gas and then counting backwards and the fear of not waking up of course.

What is your daily domestic routine?

Every day, I wake up, make myself a coffee. Empty the dehumidifiers, open the blin Then I post something sorta funny on Bluesky followed by a song from my Rawnbo Youtube channel. Afterwards I walk along the river to the YMCA for some exercise futility.



Who or what is the love of your life?

Colleen Hixenbaugh. She's my wife, my best friend and now a part of my manageme team! She has the biggest heart and has never turned her back on me even while so folks, who I thought were my friends… have. She's the brains of the operation and t heart and soul too.

What's your worst habit?

I think I can get impatient sometimes, especially when I have exciting news that I' anxious to relay but I'm not allowed to. Sometimes my feelings get hurt too easily. *A* the other thing is, I'm terrible at remembering people especially if I see them out o context. Remembering their names can be tricky too.

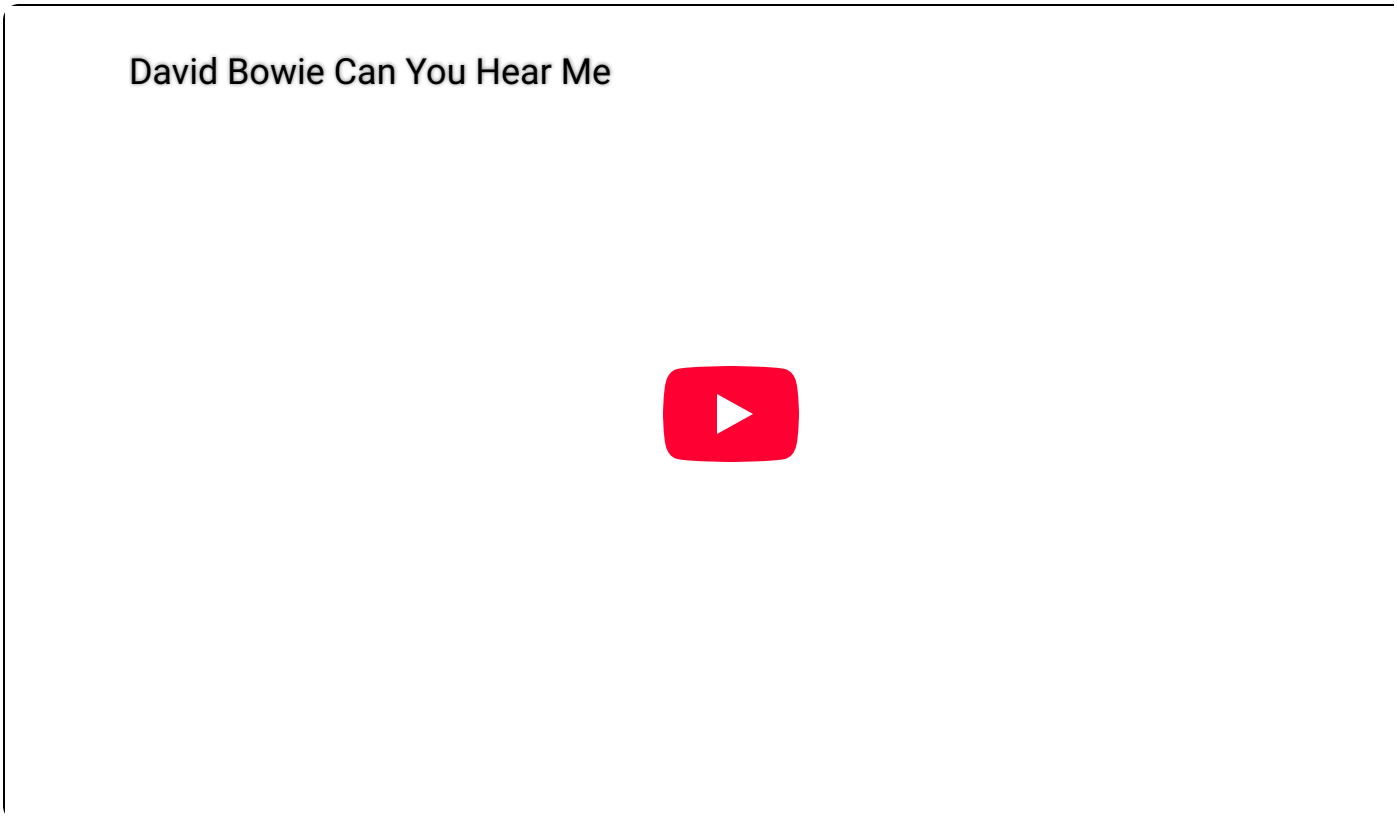
When were you most creatively satisfied?

This will sound like a promotional answer but it's true. The most creatively satisfie I've ever been was upon finishing my new album Hangover Terrace. I just think it

really came together in a nice way. If this was my last album, I think it would be a g one to end on.

Has anyone you've met ever made you feel starstruck?

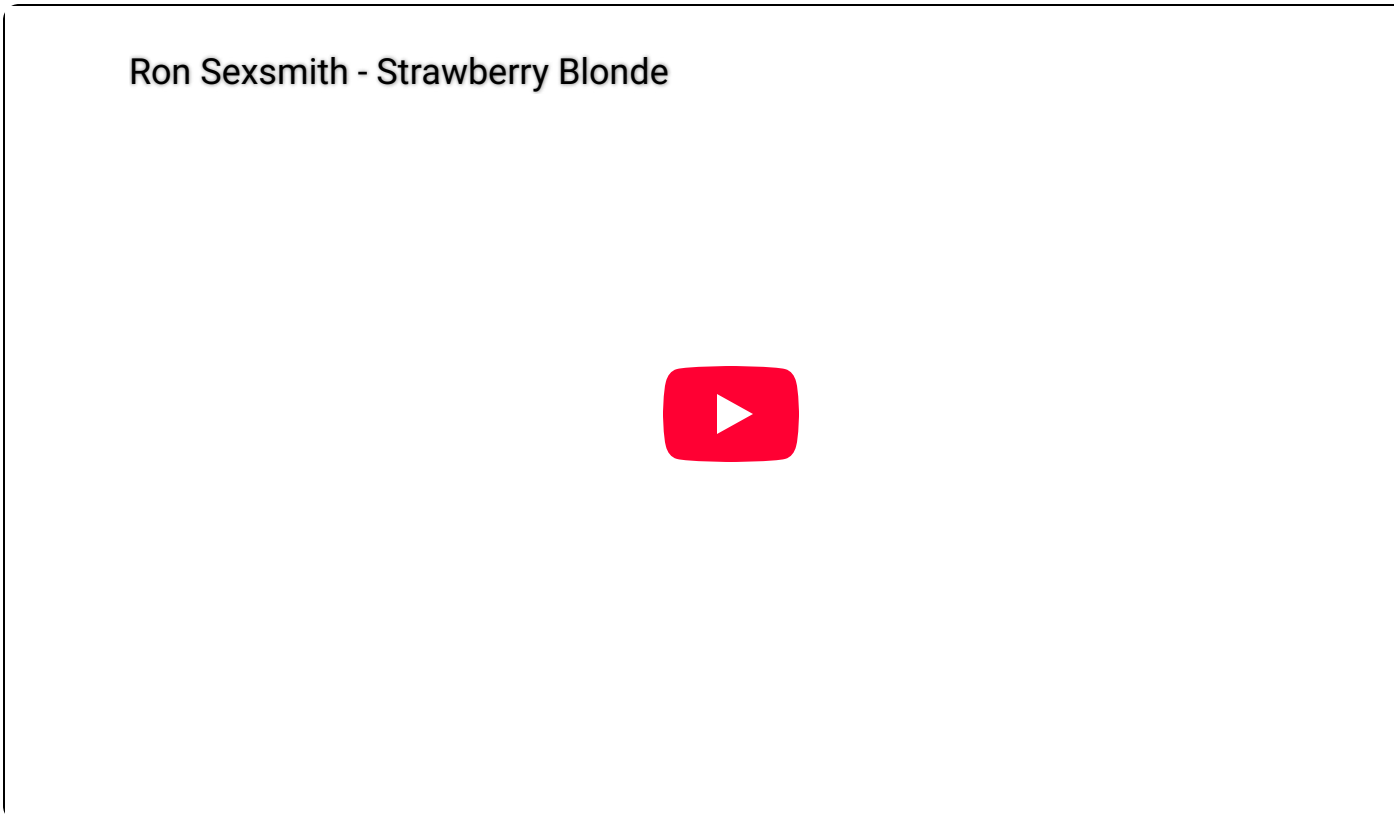
I met David Bowie once in Paris back in 1999 or maybe 2000? I was opening for an artist at the Olympia when I got an email from a friend of mine who was in town singing backing vocals for David at an intimate warm up gig. After my set we rushe on over to this club where Bowie was playing (Beth Orton was there too) Anyway, m friend invited me to the private after-show party somewhere else and at a certain pc I was sitting with my band at a long table when David showed up, sat across from m and asked me how my gig went! I got to chat with him for a bit and ask him about m fave Bowie song Can You Hear Me which he hadn't thought of in years. Needless tc say, it was a real "pinch myself "moment.



Who or what is the greatest influence on your work?

It was Ray Davies who first made me want to be a songwriter at the age of 15. But a

few years later I got into the music of Gordon Lightfoot and Leonard Cohen etc. I f that somewhere between the British Invasion music I loved as a kid and the more fo influences coming from my own country, I was able to land on a sound that I could my own. I should also add Charles Dickens because I devoured almost all of his boo at a young age. I believe that his sense of humour and humanism had a big influenc on me in terms of writing the more observational songs like Strawberry Blonde and others.



What would people be surprised to learn about you?

I'm quite the luddite. I don't own a cell phone nor know how to drive. I love scary movies as long as they're not the slasher kind. I mostly listen to vinyl and love to dr red wine while I'm doing that. What else? Um, I'm a real fussy eater. I eat everythin plain and I don't like Italian food.

What are you scared of?

I'm sometimes scared of being misunderstood by people. I get scared of not being a

to play music anymore, or of losing people who are close to me. I feel the world has become quite puritanical and judgmental and that can be scary also…

If you could go back in time, where would you go?

I think I'd go back to Clear Lake, Iowa, 1959 and somehow convince Buddy Holly n to get on that fateful airplane. I just feel we were all robbed of a special talent who v just getting started. I've always related to him more than Elvis Presley because he w melodic and, like me, he wore glasses. I don't know if there would've been The Beat without Buddy.

What do you wish the 18-year-old you knew?

I was so unprepared for life when I was 18 and maybe most of us are. But I wish somebody would've told me it was all gonna work out. Although I guess I probably wouldn't have believed them anyway.

What's the secret to a long life?

Not sure, but I have a feeling that it has something to do with staying in touch with the things that inspired us as a child. I think the tragedy of most people is that they forget about joy and the wonder of living. And then they grow old in their heads be their body has even caught up with them, if that makes any sense? Other than that say red wine, music, laughter and good friends.

What one book would you recommend we read?

I love musical biographies but one that I've enjoyed fairly recently was called I'll Sle When I'm Dead by Crystal Zevon. Warren Zevon's music singlehandedly got me through the pandemic and so it was a fascinating read and quite the page turner. H was definitely wrestling with some demons, but he did so with such a swashbucklin attitude. His music makes me feel heroic.



What was the home you grew up in like?

Well, it looked like every other house on our street. Back then it was my mom and h three boys. We lived in government housing and so almost every family was a low-income single parent situation. But there were loads of kids around so it was never boring. We listened to a lot of music at our house and we ate a lot of bad food. Back then my mom didn't care what we ate as long as we ate something. So, there were many nights where I had instant waffles for dinner. When my mom re-married in 19 we had to move someplace else.

How do you spark creativity?

Mostly by going for walks. I call it the Winnie the Pooh method... I'll start walking humming to myself and generally there'll be something on my mind that I'm worrie about or perhaps curious about. Before long It'll start taking shape and I'll realize t a song is coming through. It's hard to talk about it without sounding like a big weir

Is there a God? If so, how does He manifest?

I believe so but it's not easy to explain. As a kid I used to think that God was behinc the sun and that was how he or she was able to keep an eye on everyone. I've always seen God as a benevolent being and not an angry judgmental creature. I feel we are receiving signs all the time but that most of the time we don't notice it. I think it's c job to notice it...We'll hear a line in a movie sometimes that seems to stick out in a profound way. Like the Pink Floyd song we'll catch a fleeting glimpse of something that resonates. Anyway, I think it manifests like this, but I could be wrong.

Do you mind getting older?

Yes, I don't like it one bit. My hair is thinning. I find it almost impossible to lose weight. I have all the aches and pains that I knew were coming my whole life but st it doesn't quite prepare you for it. I really can't say for sure that getting older is bett than the alternative.

What's the best advice you've ever been given?

I was staying at the Roosevelt Hotel (in Los Angeles) in 1993. I had met a bunch of potential producers to do my debut album and I was confused as to who to pick. Or of them was T Bone Burnett who encouraged me to talk to his friend Bob Neuwirth This is basically what Bob said to me: "The record company doesn't give a shit abou you so just make the album you wanna make cos ultimately it's your name on it and you're one who has to live with it." Of course I took all of this to heart.

What's the secret to a happy relationship?

Be forgiving. Try to help out whenever you again. Try to understand where your partner is coming from and meet them halfway if possible. Don't leave dirty dishes floating in the sink overnight.

What's your greatest regret?

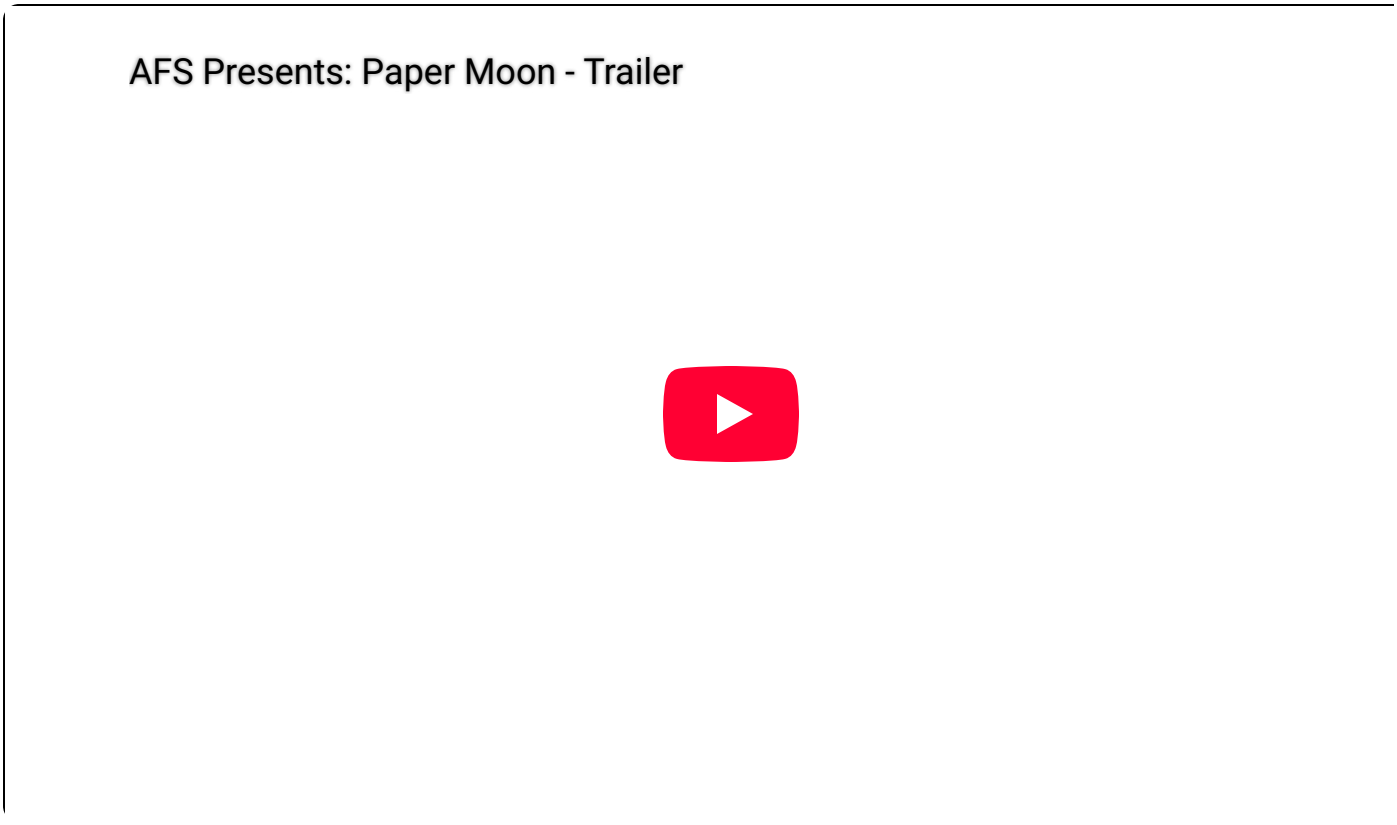
I wish I had been around more for my kids when they were growing up. I missed so many soccer games and school plays. I missed some holidays and reading them bed time stories etc. I regret some of my behaviour on the road which ultimately led to

family falling apart. I regret not singing better on my first 6 albums. I wish I could redo them all.

What's the worst thing anyone has ever said to you?
"I think it would be best if you didn't come". This was said to me by a friend of twe years who is now, sadly, a former friend. I've gotten over it but at the time it was qu a slap in the face.

When and where were you happiest?
In Stratford Ontario where I live, just a few weeks ago. I had this amazing feeling o happiness for no particular reason. Now it's gone. It didn't last very long sadly, but hope it comes back.

What's your favourite film and why?
My answer to this question is always "Paper Moon" by Peter Bogdanovich. I think i might be the most perfect film. Both Ryan and Tatum O'Neil are perfect in it, and I especially love the music and the shimmering black & white photography.



Can you cook - what's your signature dish?

I can't cook but it doesn't stop me from trying! I found that I can make a pretty goo breakfast though. Which is nice, 'cos breakfast has always been my favourite meal.

How would you like to be remembered?

Mostly, I'd like to be remembered as a good songwriter or maybe even a great songwriter? Actually, I think I've been a much better songwriter than a human beir for the most part. However, I believe it best to be remembered as a good human bei if possible.

What is your desert island disc?

Where would I even plug my record player in on a desert island? Anyway, to answer your question I'll say either Warren Zevon's self-titled album or Who Are You by Th Who (it's my fave Who album).

The Who - Who Are You (Promo Video)



Which living person do you most despise?

Donald Trump hands down. I've never seen a human being before that was so void decency, civility or of any redeeming qualities truth be told. He's a petulant, humourless, ignorant, dishonest, classless bully and now in his second term, we've discovered that he's evil as well. And don't get me started on the GOP

On what occasion do you lie?

Only if I'm trying to spare someone's feelings or if I'm trying to embellish a story th needs help.

Have you ever been arrested?

I have not.. although one time a cop punched me in the stomach. I was drinking wit some friends underage down by the beach in my hometown. And some cops arrived break it up. Thy said we were trespassing, and I spoke up that we didn't see any "No Trespassing" sign and was met with a hard elbow to the gut which knocked all the wind out of me and made me not like cops very much.

When and why did you last cry?

I don't cry very often although I do get sad. The last time I remember crying, I was listening to the Bob Dylan song Boots Of Spanish Leather and I just broke down bu can't say why... It was very reassuring though, because sometimes I feel like something's wrong with me if I don't cry.



Do you have a temper? How does it manifest?

I don't really have a temper but I can get very anxious or worked up. I've had many panic attacks in my life. An especially bad one happened the night before I flew to l to make Long Player Late Bloomer. We had attended a taping of Elvis Costello's sh Spectacle in Toronto and as I was leaving I collapsed to the ground in a shivering p I thought I was having a heart attack but I think it just was all the stress of making new album with Bob Rock and worried that I wouldn't be good enough.

Which talent would you most like to have?

I wish I was better on piano. My mom played piano as a kid and I always hoped tha my grandpa would give her their upright but instead it went to her sister who used to put plates, doilies and photographs on. Huge waste, 'cos if I had that as a kid I'd like Elton John by now.

What's the closest you've ever come to death?

My childhood friend Carl and I used to used to break into this old abandoned facto

just to hang out in there. One time there was a fire and so we went inside to check the damage. Well, there was this wooden walkway on the top floor that we'd always walk across to get to our hideout, but it'd been damaged in the fire, so I fell through and just about went crashing all the way down to the ground and certain death. I shudder to think about it now.

Do you have any phobias?

Yeah, I'm a walking phobia. I have various compulsive disorders and behavioural addictions. I get really visibly upset if the furniture gets moved around or when there upheaval of any kind. I can't be around that. I need to have a routine wherever I am I find it hard to cope.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

This one is easy. I think my greatest achievement (outside of being dad to two really great grown-up kids) is to have survived this roller coaster of the music industry. And to have created a body of work that I can be proud of. Other than that, I haven't achieved very much although I once ate an entire Lemon Meringue pie.

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