

The Modern Singer-Songwriter: From Woody Guthrie to Iris DeMent

Session 2

Galway To Graceland: Storytelling Songs

Joshua Gone Barbados Eric Von Schmidt

Cane standing in the field getting old and red
Lots of trouble in Georgetown three men lying
dead
Joshua head of the government
Said stike for better pay
Well the cane cutters are striking
But Joshua gone away

chorus:

Joshua gone Barbados staying in a big hotel
People on St Vincent got a many sad tale to tell

Sugar mill owner told the strikers
I dont need you to cut my cane
Bring in another bunch of fellas
You strike be all in vain

Lot of misery in Georgetown
You can hear the women bawl
Joshua gone Barbados
He don't care at all

Joshua gone Barbados just like he don't know
People on the island got nowhere to go

Get a bunch of tough fellas
Bring them from the Zion hills
Bring them on a bus to Georgetown
You know somebody will get killed

Sonny Child the overseer
Swear he's an ignorant man
He walking thru the cane fields
Pistol in his hand

chorus

Police giving protection
New fellas cutting cane
Strikers can't do nothin strike is all in vain

And Sonny Child he cursed the strikers waved his
pistol round

They're beating Sonny with a cutlass
Beat him to the ground

chorus

Cane standing in the fields getting old and red
Sonny Child is in the hospital pistol on his bed
I wish I could go to England Trinidad or Curaco
People on St. Vincent got no place to go

Joshua gone Barbados just like he don't know
People on the island got nowhere to go

The Wreck Of The Edmund Fitzgerald Gordon Lightfoot

The legend lives on from the Chippewa on down
of the big lake they called "Gitche Gumee."
The lake, it is said, never gives up her dead
when the skies of November turn gloomy.
With a load of iron ore twenty-six thousand tons
more
than the Edmund Fitzgerald weighed empty,
that good ship and true was a bone to be chewed
when the "Gales of November" came early.

The ship was the pride of the American side
coming back from some mill in Wisconsin.
As the big freighters go, it was bigger than most
with a crew and good captain well seasoned,
concluding some terms with a couple of steel
firms
when they left fully loaded for Cleveland.
And later that night when the ship's bell rang,
could it be the north wind they'd been feelin'?

The wind in the wires made a tattle-tale sound
and a wave broke over the railing.
And ev'ry man knew, as the captain did too
'twas the witch of November come stealin'.
The dawn came late and the breakfast had to wait
when the Gales of November came slashin'.
When afternoon came it was freezin' rain
in the face of a hurricane west wind.

When suppertime came the old cook came on
deck sayin'.
"Fellas, it's too rough t'feed ya."
At seven P.M. a main hatchway caved in; he said,
"Fellas, it's bin good t'know ya!"
The captain wired in he had water comin' in
and the good ship and crew was in peril.
And later that night when 'is lights went outta
sight
came the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald.

Does any one know where the love of God goes
when the waves turn the minutes to hours?
The searchers all say they'd have made Whitefish
Bay
if they'd put fifteen more miles behind 'er.
They might have split up or they might have
capsized;
they may have broke deep and took water.
And all that remains is the faces and the names
of the wives and the sons and the daughters.

Lake Huron rolls, Superior sings
in the rooms of her ice-water mansion.
Old Michigan steams like a young man's dreams;
the islands and bays are for sportsmen.
And farther below Lake Ontario
takes in what Lake Erie can send her,
And the iron boats go as the mariners all know
with the Gales of November remembered.

In a musty old hall in Detroit they prayed,
in the "Maritime Sailors' Cathedral."
The church bell chimed 'til it rang twenty-nine
times
for each man on the Edmund Fitzgerald.
The legend lives on from the Chippewa on down
of the big lake they call "Gitche Gumee."
"Superior," they said, "never gives up her dead
when the gales of November come early!"

Graceland
Paul Simon

The Mississippi Delta was shining
Like a National Guitar
I am following the river
Down the highway
Through the cradle of the civil war
I'm going to Graceland, Graceland

In Memphis, Tennessee
I'm going to Graceland
Poor boys and pilgrims with families
And we are going to Graceland
My travelling companion is nine years old
He is the child of my first marriage
But I've reason to believe
We both will be received
In Graceland

She comes back to tell me she's gone
As if I didn't know that
As if I didn't know my own bed
As if I'd never noticed
The way she brushed her hair from her forehead
And she said losing love
Is like a window in your heart
Everybody sees you're blown apart
Everybody sees the wind blow

I'm going to Graceland
Memphis, Tennessee
I'm going to Graceland
Poor boys and pilgrims with families
And we are going to Graceland
And my travelling companions
Are ghosts and empty sockets
I'm looking at ghosts and empties
But I've reason to believe
We all will be received
In Graceland

There is a girl in New York City
Who calls herself the human trampoline
And sometimes when I'm falling, flying
Or tumbling in turmoil I say
Oh so this is what she means
She means we're bouncing into Graceland

And I see losing love
Is like a window in your heart
Everybody sees you're blown apart
Everbody feels the wind blow
In Graceland, in Graceland

I'm going to Graceland
For reasons I cannot explain
There's some part of me wants to see Graceland
And I may be obliged to defend
Every love, every ending

Or maybe there's no obligations now
Maybe I've got a reason to believe
We all will be received
In Graceland.

Tennessee Plates
John Hiatt

I woke up in a hotel and I didn't know what to do
I turned the TV on and wrote a letter to you
The news was talkin' 'bout a dragnet up on the
interstate
Said they were lookin' for a Cadillac with
Tennessee plates

Since I left California baby, things have gotten
worse
Seems the land of opportunity for me is just a
curse
Tell that judge in Bakersfield that my trial will
have to wait
Down here they're lookin' for a Cadillac with
Tennessee plates

It was somewhere in Nevada, it was cold outside
She was shiverin' in the dark, so I offered her a
ride
Three bank jobs later, four cars hot wired
We crossed the Mississippi like an oil slick fire

If they'd known what we was up to they wouldn't
'a let us in
Now we landed in Memphis like original sin
Up Elvis Presley Boulevard to the Graceland
gates
See we were lookin' for a Cadillac with
Tennessee plates

Well, there must have been a dozen of them
parked in that garage
And there wasn't one Lincoln and there wasn't
one Dodge
And there wasn't one Japanese model or make
Just pretty, pretty Cadillacs with Tennessee plates

She saw him singing once when she was
seventeen
And ever since that day she's been living in
between
I was never king of nothin' but this wild weekend

Anyway he wouldn't care, hell he gave them to
his friends

Well this ain't no hotel I'm writin' you from
It's the Tennessee prison up at Brushy Mountain
Where yours sincerely's doin' five to eight
Stampin' out my time makin' Tennessee plates

Galway To Graceland
Richard Thompson

Oh she dressed in the dark, she whispered, Amen
She was pretty and pink like a young girl again
Twenty years married, she never thought twice
She sneaked out of the door and walked into the
night
Silver wings carried her over the sea
From the west coast of Ireland to West Tennessee
To be with her sweetheart she left everything
From Galway to Graceland to be with The King

She was humming "Suspicion," that's the song
she liked best
She had 'Elvis, I love you' tattooed on her breast
When they landed in Memphis well her heart beat
so fast
She had dreamed for so long now she'd see him at
last
She was down by his graveside day after day
Come closing time they would pull her away
Ah to be with her sweetheart she left everything
From Galway to Graceland to be with The King

They came in their thousands from the whole
human race
To pay their respects at his last resting place
Ah but blindly she knelt there and she told him
her dreams
And she thought that he answered her - that's how
it seems
Then they dragged her away, it was handcuffs
this time
She said, My good man, are you out of your mind
Don't you know that we're married, see I'm
wearing his ring
From Galway to Graceland to be with The King
I come from Galway to Graceland to be with The
King

The City Of New Orleans
Steve Goodman

Riding on the City of New Orleans,
Illinois Central Monday morning rail
Fifteen cars and fifteen restless riders,
Three conductors and twenty-five sacks of mail.
All along the southbound odyssey
The train pulls out at Kankakee
Rolls along past houses, farms and fields.
Passin' trains that have no names,
Freight yards full of old black men
And the graveyards of the rusted automobiles.

chorus:

Singing good morning America how are you?
Don't you know me I'm your native son,
I'm the train they call The City of New Orleans,
I'll be gone five hundred miles when the day is
done.

I was dealin' card games with the old men in the
club car.
Penny a point ain't no one keepin' score.
Won't you pass the paper bag that holds that
bottle
Feel the wheels rumblin' 'neath the floor.
And the sons of pullman porters
And the sons of engineers
Ride their father's magic carpets made of steel.
Mothers with their babes asleep,
Go rockin' to the gentle beat
The rhythm of the rails is all they dream.

chorus

Nighttime on The City of New Orleans,
Changing cars in Memphis, Tennessee.
Half way home, we'll be there by morning
Through the Mississippi darkness
Rolling down to the sea.
And all the towns and people seem
To fade into a bad dream
And the steel rails still ain't heard the news.
The conductor sings his song again,
The passengers will please refrain
This train's got the disappearing railroad blues.

Good night, America, how are you?
Don't you know me I'm your native son,

I'm the train they call The City of New Orleans,
I'll be gone five hundred miles when the day is
done.

Dixie Flyer
Randy Newman

I was born right here, November '43
My dad was a captain in the army
Fighting the Germans in Sicily
My poor little momma
Didn't know a soul in L.A.
So we went down to the Union Station and made
our getaway

Got on the Dixie Flyer bound for New Orleans
Across the state of Texas to the land of dreams
On the Dixie Flyer bound for New Orleans
Back to her friends and her family in the land of
dreams

Her old mother came to meet us at the station
Her dress as black as a crow in a coal mine
She cried when her little girl got off the train
Her brothers and her sisters drove down from
Jackson, Mississippi
In a great green Hudson driven by a Gentile they
knew
Drinkin' rye whiskey from a flask in the back seat
Tryin' to do like the Gentiles do
Christ, they wanted to be Gentiles, too
Who wouldn't down there, wouldn't you?
An American Christian. God damn

On the Dixie Flyer bound for New Orleans
Back to her friends and her family in the land of
dreams
On the Dixie Flyer bound for New Orleans
Across the state of Texas to the land of dreams
Across the state of Texas to the land of dreams

Goodnight Saigon
Billy Joel

We met as soul mates
On Parris Island
We left as inmates
From an asylum
And we were sharp
As sharp as knives

And we were so gung ho
To lay down our lives

We came in spastic
Like tameless horses
We left in plastic
As numbered corpses
And we learned fast
To travel light
Our arms were heavy
But our bellies were tight

We had no home front
We had no soft soap
They sent us Playboy
They gave us Bob Hope
We dug in deep
And shot on sight
And prayed to Jesus Christ
With all our might

We had no cameras
To shoot the landscape
We passed the hash pipe
And played our Doors tapes
And it was dark
So dark at night
And we held on to each other
Like brother to brother
We promised our mothers we'd write

And we would all go down together
We said we'd all go down together
Yes we would all go down together

Remember Charlie
Remember Baker
They left their childhood
On every acre
And who was wrong?
And who was right?
It didn't matter in the thick of the fight

We held the day
In the palm
Of our hand
They ruled the night
And the night
Seemed to last as long as six weeks
On Parris Island

We held the coastline
They held the highlands
And they were sharp
As sharp as knives
They heard the hum of our motors
They counted the rotors
And waited for us to arrive

And we would all go down together
We said we'd all go down together
Yes we would all go down together

Poncho And Lefty Townes Van Zandt

Living on the road my friend
Was gonna keep you free and clean
Now you wear your skin like iron
Your breath's as hard as kerosene
You weren't your mama's only boy
But her favorite one it seems
She began to cry when you said goodbye
And sank into your dreams

Poncho was a bandit boys
His horse was fast as polished steel
Wore his gun outside his pants
For all the honest world to feel
Poncho met his match you know
On the deserts down in Mexico
Nobody heard his dying words
That's the way it goes

All the federales say
They could have had him any day
They only let him hang around
Out of kindness I suppose

Lefty he can't sing the blues
All night long like he used to
The dust that Poncho bit down south
Ended up in Lefty's mouth
The day they laid poor Poncho low
Lefty split for Ohio
Where he got the bread to go
There ain't nobody knows

All the federales say
They could have had him any day

We only let him slip away
Out of kindness I suppose

The poets tell how Poncho fell
Lefty's livin' in a cheap hotel
The desert's quiet and Cleveland's cold
So the story ends we're told
Poncho needs your prayers it's true,
But save a few for Lefty too
He just did what he had to do
Now he's growing old

A few gray federales say
They could have had him any day
They only let him go so wrong
Out of kindness I suppose

Millworker
James Taylor

My grandfather was a sailor
He blew in off the water
My father was a farmer
And I, his only daughter,
Took up with a no good millworking man
From Massachusetts
Who dies from too much whiskey
And leaves me these three faces to feed

Well, millwork ain't easy
Millwork ain't hard
Millwork it ain't nothing
But an awful boring job
I'm waiting on a daydream
To take me through the morning
And put me in my coffee break
Where I can have a sandwich
And remember

Then it's me and my machine
For the rest of the morning
For the rest of the afternoon
And the rest of my life

Now my mind begins to wander
To the days back on the farm
I can see my father smiling at me
Swinging on his arm
I hear my granddad's stories
Of the storms out on Lake Eerie

Where vessels and cargos and fortunes
And sailors' lives were lost

Yes, but it's my life has been wasted
And I have been the fool
To let this manufacturer
Use my body for a tool
I'll ride home in the evening
Staring at my hands
Swearing to my sorrow that a young girl
Ought to stand a better chance

So may I work your millwork just as long as I am
able
And never meet the man whose name is on the
label

It's still me and my machine
For the rest of the morning
And the rest of the afternoon
Solid gone for the rest of my life

Cold Missouri Waters
James Keelaghan

My name is Dodge, but then you know that
It's written on the chart there at the foot end of the
bed
They think I'm blind, I can't read it
I've read it every word, and every word it says is
death
So, confession - is that the reason that you came
Get it off my chest before I check out of the game
Since you mention it, well there's thirteen things
I'll name
Thirteen crosses high above the cold Missouri
waters

August 'Forty-Nine, north Montana
The hottest day on record, the forest tinder dry
Lightning strikes in the mountains
I was crew chief at the jump base, I prepared the
boys to fly
Pick the drop zone, C-47 comes in low
Feel the tap upon your leg that tells you go
See the circle of the fire down below
Fifteen of us dropped above the cold Missouri
waters

Gauged the fire, I'd seen bigger
So I ordered them to sidehill and we'd fight it
from below
We'd have our backs to the river
We'd have it licked by morning even if we took it
slow
But the fire crowned, jumped the valley just
ahead
There was no way down, headed for the ridge
instead
Too big to fight it, we'd have to fight that slope
instead
Flames one step behind above the cold Missouri
waters

Sky had turned red, smoke was boiling
Two hundred yards to safety, death was fifty
yards behind
I don't know why I just thought it
I struck a match to waist high grass running out
of time
Tried to tell them, step into this fire I set
We can't make it, this is the only chance you'll get
But they cursed me, ran for the rocks above
instead
I lay face down and prayed above the cold
Missouri waters

And when I rose, like the phoenix
In that world reduced to ashes there were none
but two survived
I stayed that night and one day after
Carried bodies to the river, wonder how I stayed
alive
Thirteen stations of the cross to mark to their fall
I've had my say, I'll confess to nothing more
I'll join them now, because they left me long
before
Thirteen crosses high above the cold Missouri
waters
Thirteen crosses high above the cold Missouri
shore

The Sentinel **John Gorka**

Francis called me Joe
But that is not my name
I told him what it really was
But he lost it just the same

When they made the Francis plan
They took too much off the top
The sentinel of Seneca, the 800 block

He would scare the kids
And the would run away
Till they found he was one of them
Though he was big and gray

Already 55
He dressed as though he cared
He wore his time out on the block
Beneath his close cut hair
He always had a word
For anyone who stopped
The sentinel of Seneca, the 800 block

He'd say you can't park there
And strangers they would go
They would do just what he said
Because they didn't know

Francis lived alone
And that's the way he died
I wonder if they'll need a guard
On the other side
Some people roam the world
To make some kind of change
The parking up on Seneca, will never be the same

They say he got a job
On some other hill
And if you don't miss him
I know the neighbors will

(Repeat 1st verse)

Sailing To Philadelphia **Mark Knopfler**

I am Jeremiah Dixon
I am a Geordie boy
A glass of wine with you, sir
And the ladies I'll enjoy
All Durham and Northumberland
Is measured up by my own hand
It was my fate from birth
To make my mark upon the earth...

He calls me Charlie Mason
A stargazer am I
It seems that I was born
To chart the evening sky
They'd cut me out for baking bread
But I had other dreams instead
This baker's boy from the west country
Would join the Royal Society...

We are sailing to Philadelphia
A world away from the coaly Tyne
Sailing to Philadelphia
To draw the line
The Mason-Dixon line

Now you're a good surveyor, Dixon
But I swear you'll make me mad
The West will kill us both
You gullible Geordie lad
You talk of liberty
How can America be free
A Geordie and a baker's boy
In the forest of the Iroquois...

Now hold your head up, Mason
See America lies there
The morning tide has raised
The capes of Delaware
Come up and feel the sun
A new morning is begun
Another day will make it clear
Why your stars should guide us here...

We are sailing to Philadelphia
A world away from the coaly Tyne
Sailing to Philadelphia
To draw the line
The Mason-Dixon line

California Snow
Dave Alvin

I'm just trying to make a living, I'm an old man of
39
With two kids and an ex-wife moved up to
Riverside
I'm working down on the border driving
backroads every night
Mountains east of El Cajon, north of the Tacate
line

Where the California summer sun will burn right
through your soul
In the winter you can freeze to death in the
California snow

I catch the ones I'm able to, watch the others slip
away
I know some by their faces and I even know some
by name
I guess they all think we're all movie stars and
millionaires
I guess that they still believe dreams come true up
here

But I bet the weather's warmer down in Mexico
And no one ever tells them about the California
snow

Last winter I found a man and wife just about
daybreak
Laying in a frozen ditch south of the Interstate
I wrapped them both in blankets, but she'd
already died
The next day we sent him back alone across the
borderline

And I don't know where they came from or where
they planned to go
But he carried her all night long through the
California snow

Sometimes when I'm alone out here I get to
thinking about my life
Maybe I should go to Riverside and try to fix
things with my wife
Or maybe just get in my truck and drive as far as
I can go
Away from all the ghosts that haunt the
California snow

Where the California summer sun will burn right
through your soul
But in the winter you can freeze to death in the
California snow.

In the winter you can freeze to death in the
California snow.

The Jesus Says Hello Tango
Bill Danoff

I've been on a vacation, been gone a year or so
No, it's not the kind of place where you would go
It wasn't bad for a visit but I really couldn't stay
I met some friends of yours there, by the way

chorus:

Jesus says hello, he's been released you know
The rich man thinks he's married to the virgin
queen
And the general is getting better though he's
violent now and then
And your former comrade Jesus says hello to his
former friend
Your former comrade Jesus says hello

Well, the place I stayed was a palace with softly
padded walls
surrounded by a fence of over ten feet tall
The food there was very healthy and my servant
was the best
I guess I'll go back there next time I need a rest

chorus

Well, I'll probably have to go back there cause I
just don't feel at home
This town is worse than the dumbest nurse I've
ever known
I'd like for you to come with me cause we got a
room to fill
The fool is gone and someone has to pay his bill

chorus

Lawyers, Guns And Money
Warren Zevon

Well, I went home with the waitress
The way I always do
How was I to know
She was with the Russians, too

I was gambling in Havana
I took a little risk
Send lawyers, guns and money
Dad, get me out of this

An innocent bystander,
Somehow I got stuck
Between the rock and the hard place
And I'm down on my luck
And I'm down on my luck
Well I'm down on my luck

Now I'm hiding in Honduras
I'm a desperate man
Send lawyers, guns and money
The shit has hit the fan

Send lawyers, guns and money...

The Road Goes On Forever
Robert Earl Keen

Sherry was a waitress at the only joint in town.
She had a reputation as a girl who'd been around.
On Main street after midnight, a brand new pack
of cig's,
a fresh one hanging from her lips, a beer between
her legs.
She rides down to the river, and meets with all
her friends.
The road goes on forever and the party never
ends.

Sonny was a loner, older than the rest.
He was goin' in the Navy, but couldn't pass the
test.
So he hung around town, he sold a little pot.
The law caught wind of Sonny and one day he
got caught.
But he was back in business when they set him
free again.
The road goes on forever and the party never
ends.

Sonny's playin' eight-ball at the joint where
Sherry works
when some drunken out-of-towner put his hand
up Sherry's skirt.
Sonny took his pool cue, laid the drunk out on the
floor.
Stuffed a dollar in her tip jar, walked out the
door.
She's running right behind him, reaching for his
hand.
The road goes on forever and the party never
ends.

They jumped into his pickup, Sonny jammed it
down in gear.
Sonny looked at Sherry, said Let's get on out of
here.
The stars were high above them, the moon was in
the east.
The sun was setting on them when they reached
Miami Beach.
They got a hotel by the water and a quart of
Bombay Gin.
The road goes on forever and the party never
ends.

They soon ran out of money but Sonny knew a
man,
who knew some Cuban refugees, who dealt in
contraband.
Sonny met the Cubans in a house just off the
route,
with a briefcase full of money and a pistol in his
boot.
The cards were on the table when the law came
bustin' in.
The road goes on forever and the party never
ends.

The Cubans grabbed the goodies, Sonny grabbed
a jack,
He broke the bathroom window and climbed on
out the back.
Sherry drove the pickup through the alley on the
side,
where a lawman tackled Sonny and was reading
him his rights.
She stepped out in the alley with a single shot
four-ten
The road goes on forever and the party never
ends.

They left the lawman lying, they made their
getaway.
Got back to the motel just before the break of
day.
Sonny gave her all the money, and he blew a little
kiss.
"If they ask you how this happened say I forced
you into this."
She watched him as his taillights disappeared
around the bend.
The road goes on forever and the party never
ends.

It's main street after midnight, just like it was
before,
twenty-one months later, at the local grocery
store.
Sherry buys a paper and a cold six-pack of beer.
The headlines read that Sonny is going to the
chair.
She pulls back onto main street in her new
Mercedes Benz.
The road goes on forever and the party never
ends.

Desperados Waiting For A Train
Guy Clark

I played the Red River Valley
He'd sit in the kitchen and cry
Run his fingers through seventy years of livin'
And wonder, "Lord, has every well I've drilled
gone dry?"

We were friends, me and this old man
We's like desperados waitin' for a train
Like desperados waitin' for a train

He's a drifter and a driller of oil wells
And an old school man of the world
He taught me how to drive his car when he was
too drunk to
And he'd wink and give me money for the girls
And our lives was like, some old Western movie
Like desperados waitin' for a train
Like desperados waitin' for a train

From the time that I could walk he'd take me with
him
To a bar called the Green Frog Cafe
There was old men with beer guts and dominos
Lying 'bout their lives while they played
I was just a kid, they all called me "Sidekick"
Like desperados waitin' for a train
Like desperados waitin' for a train

One day I looked up and he's pushin' eighty
There's brown tobacco stains all down his chin
Well to me he's one of the heroes of this country
So why's he all dressed up like them old men
Drinkin' beer and playin' Moon and Forty-two
Jus' like adesperado waitin' for a train
Like a desperado waitin' for a train

The day 'fore he died I went to see him
I was grown and he was almost gone.
So we just closed our eyes and dreamed us up a
kitchen
And sang one more verse to that old song
Come on, Jack, that son-of-a-bitch is comin'

We're desperados waitin' for a train
Like desperados waitin' for a train.

He Went To Paris
Jimmy Buffett

He went to Paris looking for answers
To questions that bothered him so
He was impressive, young and aggressive
Saving the world on his own
But the warm summer breezes, those French
wines and cheeses
Put his ambitions at bay
The summers and winters scattered like splinters
And four or five years slipped away

He went to England, played the piano
And married an actress named Kim
They had a fine life, she was a good wife
And bore him a young son named Jim
And all of the answers to all of the questions
He locked in his attic one day
He liked the quiet, clean country living
And twenty more years slipped away

Well the war took his baby, the bombs killed his
lady
And left him with only one eye
His body was battered, his whole world was
shattered
And all he could do was just cry
The tears were a falling, and he was recalling
The answers he never found
So he hopped on a freighter, skidded the ocean
And left England without a sound

Now he lives in the islands, fishes the pylons
And drinks his green label each day
Writing his memoirs, losing his hearing
But he don't care what most people say
Through eighty-six years of perpetual motion
If he likes you he'll smile and he'll say
Jimmy some of it's magic and some of it's tragic
But I had a good life all the way

And he went to to Paris, looking for answers
To questions that bothered him so