

preacher boy estate bottled blues

lyrics

To Amy, My love.

Preacher Boy Estate Bottled Blues

Envelope Saltpeter Lost Johnny Lost A Wilder Edge Revelation Falls Armageddon Days Loveless The Fine and The Weak February Fever Moon Never Nothing Like That Pulling Black Flowers From An Hourglass My Love You Ain't That Bad Off West of the River As If Now I Understand

lyrics

Envelope is one of the most autobiographical songs I've ever written, but the first scene of its origin story is set in another singer's song:

Cherry says she's gonna walk
'Cause she found out I took her radio and hocked it
But Eddie, man, she don't understand
That two grand's practically sitting here in my pocket
Tonight's gonna be everything that I said
And when I walk through that door
I'm just gonna throw that money on the bed
(from Meeting Across The River, by Bruce Springsteen)

The Passenger meets Minnie the Moocher music was part of the concept from the start, and little has changed in the arrangement since I first performed it at the old Two Boots in Park Slope, Brooklyn, back when it was still on 2nd street. I remember leaving the stage after the set, and walking past the booth where the drummer's wife was sitting, and I remember her asking, "Did you write that last song?" And when I said "Yes," she said, "That's a good song." And I liked that she sounded a little bit surprised.

one step up, two steps back four good wheels, one bad track i tell you this, i miss the famine or feast at least, we got to eat ...

> i got one, and i lost three the lost and found was full of me what went up, came right down it's hard to grow, below the ground

> > chorus

oh, but sit down on the bed for a minute i got me an envelope with somethin' in it now, close yer eyes, and open up the letter see, i got me a break that's finally gonna matter i'll finally make you proud and we'll finally leave this town

i know you reap what you sow but what i don't know is, when will i show some sign i have paid for my errors my bad seed cannot grow forever

chorus

oh, do you ever pin your hopes on the promised land of the western coast? i daydream every day about writin' the song that'll pay our way away

> one for the money, one for the show one for the head, and one for the soul and one more, is all that i ask for this time, i'm makin' it last for you and you, you better ...

Saltpeter is a true story of the kind you might imagine. It took place on W. Division St. in Chicago, between N. Western Ave and N. Leavitt St. There was a shooting, and later the cops claimed to have found the gun, but I know they never found the gun.

they say they found the gun, but i know they never did

i seen him jump up, scatter like rabbits just a dirty bag of bones on the habit then came the lightning, and i seen inside it all the true black couldn't hide it

> and i heard the feet pound and i heard the heart pound and i heard the hammer pound down

they say they found the gun, but i know they never did

stitches crossed up like ties and rails fish belly white across the scales and i seen the ankle in the headlight and i seen the barrel glowing dead white

> and i had a long block and i heard a slow cock and i heard a clock tick tock

they say they found the gun, but i know they never did

Lost Johnny Lost was written in 2004, the year the Red Sox broke *The Curse of the Bambino*. The Johnny of the song takes his name from Johnny Damon.

Musically, the song is a layer cake of Bo Diddley beat variations, each one slightly different than the rest, until you have so many happening at the same time that a new beat emerges—one that no one's actually playing.

The organ parts are played on the old Hammond Sounder—affectionately known as "The Leatherman"—that I found in a dumpster in Denver.

The moral of the song is that, while the world may weigh a ton, you don't always have to take on the weight.

lost johnny lost

long hair burying the breeze a brick dust percolating wheeze a tailor razor up on your face the mercy of your eye, like a baseball base don't take on all the weight of this

a lady's question pistol in your eyes the quiver in the corner magnified captain sinking down on his ship a toast with the devil takes the first sip don't take on all the weight of this

chorus

just think about the playground back when you was just a kid when everyone was clappin' at the mighty things you did now lost johnny lost, don't ya be lost anymore just step right up, step right up, and take a good cut at what ya done come here for

> backyard curse upon your bond boston quarter lost in a pond babies in flags all the way up there the dying men and women with their hands in prayer don't take on all the weight of this

johnny let the leather coin purse be time before and after you're free johnny can't twist a hundred years everything was like this long before you made it here

When I was a kid, I went to Mystic Lake Camp in Michigan for a couple summers. One year, at night, around the campfire, one of the counselors told a ghost story. In that story there was a scene in which a couple in a car realizes a killer is on their roof, and blood starts to run down their window panes.

A Wilder Edge is about that story, and it's about Judas—the only one who knew whether the kiss was a betrayal or a gift.

shine, shine, the moonlight down leavin' a trail of bones on the ground ghost, ghost, who do you haunt? whoever don't walk where the moonlight wants

> run, run, with all yer speed charcoal ash the night wind bleeds and bleed, bleed, below my ledge and see me through to the wilder edge

fire, fire, it's so damn dark in the deepest vein of this soil's heart and fire, fire, the cold cuts thin a wound without, and worn within

chorus damn, damn, damn this dark and damn this flint, and damn this spark and damn, damn, disappear and damn your hide for dyin' here

cry, cry, and paint your doe light above, and black below she's young, young, and younger still the road first and then the kill

and tap, tap, above your head drippin' down the window red and turn, turn, your key to the left and drive yourself to the wilder edge

drip, drip, an icicle a suicide when the gutter's full and drip, drip, the last of the rain where the last of the winter wisdom remains I used to want to write a novel, and eventually I did, while we were living in Denver. It was called "Less And Less All The Time" and it was sort of a cross between the movie "Stand By Me" and Jim Thompson's "The Killer Inside Me." I sent it to many, many publishers and agents, and I got a surprising degree of interest, but in virtually every case, the verdicts were the same: "You're a good writer. The characters are good. The dialogue is good. But you have no idea how to write a novel." And then they would propose revisions.

Writing a novel had been agonizing. There was no way I could face revisions.

Later, when we lived in Brooklyn, I decided I wanted to start reading all the classics I should have read by that point, but never had. So I read War and Peace, Great Expectations, The Sound and The Fury, The Idiot, The Bible.

Eventually, I decided I wanted to write another novel. This one would be based on the premise that Revelations happened, and that it started in Brooklyn. And when I started to think about what that would be like, the first thing I realized was that it would have to happen in Fall.

I never wrote the novel, but I wrote Revelation Falls.

revelation falls

it's comin' in fall, and it's comin' in rain and it's comin' in dead, and it's comin' in change and it's comin' in silk, and it's comin' in sworn and it's comin' in strain, and it's comin' in storm

and it's comin' in fall, and it's comin' in rain and it's comin' in burnt on a lion's mane and it's comin' in cloak, and it's comin' in shawl if revelation comes, it's comin' in fall

chorus
and it's rainin' and it's pourin'
and it's too long i been chorin'
i'm gon' go to bed with a heavy head
and pray for light in the mornin'

it's comin' in fall, on a darkened day full of union blue and confederate grey bayonet red, gunpowder black gangrene black out a coal smoke stack

and it's comin' in fall, on a darkened day and it's spiralin' down, and it's fallin' away and it's comin' in leer, and it's comin' in drawl if revelation comes, it's comin' in fall

I wrote the first scenes of what would become Armageddon Days while on a plane, flying over Utah. It was a low-flying plane, and most of the imagery consists of descriptions of the landscape as seen from not-very-far above.

16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

Revelations 16:16-20

spirograph desert cities turn every geometric cheek against the dusty affections of a dying spider's creek as the rumpled chino desert waits for its creases to be raised by the hot steaming earthquakes of armageddon days

the ground takes a shadow from a plane below the sun and lays it in the scar of what a distant sea has done as the warm pipe-smoke mountains harbor both the blues and grays cleaving lakes with the bayonets of armageddon days

any blue-vein road could one day disappear into the ankle of a mountain should one choose to appear and where there's sand there's mud just as where there's hope there's haze and always, it's the towers of armageddon days

> boats die on the water, forever linked at seam with their own sterile reflections, and the brief light in between and lakes, like puzzle pieces thrown off in a rage frame all of the fields of armageddon days

the smallest trail a wanted man can leave is flight away on stilts along the line where the mountains must give way to the quilts that are made of crops, and salt flats, and dust bowl fields raised to the holding tank of purgatory's armageddon days

so if a star can be evil and a cloud can be a sieve then couldn't time, being distance, change the very way we live? and if satan finally loses on revelation's final page then why is everyone so afraid of armageddon days? All I recall is that I first got the idea for the verses from a short story by Rick Bass. I don't remember the story, or what the connection was, but I know he wrote it, and I know after reading it, I started writing this song.

The chorus was inspired by Eagle-Eye Cherry's recording of his dad's song Desireless. I was recording and touring a lot with Eagle-Eye in the years before Chicago, and I heard Desireless almost every night, all over Europe.

I first saw bones under the water in Ireland, off of New Pier, just down from the ruins of the house where the Desmond of "Cemetery Stout" lived.

I proposed to my missus on New Pier.

All of which is to say that happiness and sadness can co-exist in equal measure.

loveless

walking by the lake lighting fires along the shore that the geese that used to winter here don't need anymore and it's november third and the snow is on the ground and a letter in the mail confirms they've laid a lover down

chorus
oh so sad to be loveless
oh so sad to be loveless
oh such a shame to be loveless
oh so strange to be loveless

the forest is still save for the sound of the trembling trees and prayers that have lost their way and their imposters in the breeze a lake for the winter to kill a sun for someone to deny an axe to leave its cold red kiss where a love has knelt to die

chorus

bones glow in the water a legend, a laborer's song crows have walked this snow, i know though the wind says that they're gone the bones of spring are buried beneath the wake of white november's oar a lover spills a tear and watches the circles spread until they die against the shore

The Fine and The Weak is a Renga Kaleidoscope. A linked hallucination spun from Biblical thread. An allegory of industrialization. A parable on the perils of inheritance.

the spoils of life are both fine and weak a circus mirror for the grotesqueries we won't speak we won't speak that name, we won't name that wound all the songs that we sing have all come un-tuned it's all come un-tuned like a dancer's slip like a drunken old captain down with the ship gone down with the ship, as dust to dust to rejoin all the bones that preceded us they preceded us to the farther shore where the wheel of fire won't spin anymore won't spin or even light or even offer up change so farewell to the wild, unruly, and strange unruly and strange, like the dreams we duck like the black on the glass from the stack of a truck from the stack of a truck comes a hovering guilt blacking in the white lines where somebody got killed somebody got killed where the spool melts down where the strip of our life comes fully unwound so fully unwound in an amber slick that when we try to walk through, our soles all stick our soles all stick to the way we were and the less we know now, the more we once seemed sure oh, we once seemed sure that the future was close as the father to the son to the holy ghost but the holy ghost plays unholy games he might blink with hope, but he bets with shame yes, he bets with shame on an un-rollable rock until there's no more dust left on anyone's clock now, anyone's clock has a chance to be right and still we can't divine day without invoking night when we invoke night what we mean is the moon we feel the tides of our women in the ocean's womb in the ocean's womb every secret splays for the alphabet of history to spell its own days to spell its own days, to write its own wrongs to bend in the pitches of the un-tuned songs all the un-tuned songs, all the hollowed-out pelts all the unsung saints, and the way they all felt that's the way it all felt, when the patient and meek finally came to inherit both the fine and the weak

The physical setting for February is an area in the West of Ireland called The Burren. The region—covered with limestone hills, and gnashed by the wild Atlantic—is a strange mix of lunar and pastoral, and a place to believe in ghosts, and we did.

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood."

Revelations, 6:12

sit down and hear my story of when the moon turned red before me a bull stood wild and wary in the cold of february the wind slithered past like a ravenous moray, i stood framed in my doorway the stars disappeared to let our darks duel, no longer turning upon their white spools within this end, noise begins low-down, like this sound of an old violin bow found braided with wax and drowsy, great jars of ink broke around me

the last thing that i remember, the moon turned as red as a simmering ember gazing from its coal like a cinder, bright enough for my eyes to blister

there's dreams, and then there's dreaming, donkeys on the cliff with the lighthouse beaming one eye lit to a long-gone ferry, i watched it, wild and wary and i dreamt of the souls of the boatmen on the underside of the ocean icicle strings made of rain and spittle met the mist and the moss in the middle of a wellington print in a trail cut cloven, in and out of the stone so woven fire fading, failing its chimney, mouth open, but no words within me

the moon, repainted by a crimson filter, burnt the walls within my shelter gazing from its coal like a cinder, bright enough for my eyes to blister

to the north, the pockmarked quarries, in all their shivering glory boiling bell, born of an old church, recovering prayers hovering like vultures and our shadows, gaunt and garbled, slow-dancing upon the marble our brown bones, them that we buried, the crow judge, wild and wary too dark yet to see the ashes, until the moonlight's crimson sashes cast out in searing flashes, from within the midnight's ebony lashes

and thus i saw the searing ember, to this day i still remember the moon gone red like a february winter, gazing from its coal like a cinder Fever Moon is a sort of chronicle of hallucinatory dopamine dreams, and the weird tidal calm at the center of delirium.

It started as a joke—greying temples, white castle, a red rose.

But then came the change from major to minor ...

fever moon

i saw grey at the temple i saw blue in the sky i saw white at the castle with a black eye

chorus
night sweat soak broke hallucination
not yet doc, i like this prescription
deep pill chill refill my irrigation
back in the cups i changed up my station
from pirate to tycoon ...
fever moon

i saw red at the rose spreadin' green on the lawn i saw brown at the derby but the gold was gone

chorus

i saw bronze take an age i saw silver place i saw rust take a belt from an ashen face

My missus and I were driving east—the wrong way—from California.

We were possibly somewhere between Tuolumne and Bridgeport, but more likely outside Salinas, when these images started appearing in my head.

I was at the wheel, so I asked her to write them down for me.

Those images became Never Nothing Like That.

My '36 National Resophonic is tuned to an open m7 chord here, and this is the only song I've ever used this tuning for. It has a melancholy that never quite resolves, and so feels open—like Kerouac's hopeless and hopeful Big Sur ...

The headland looks like a longnosed Collie sleeping with his light on his nose, as the ocean, obeying its accomodations of mind, crashes in rhythm of sand thought-----

from Jack Kerouac's "Sea: Sounds of the Pacific Ocean at Big Sur"

never nothing like that

deep in the dark californian night driving straight into the stars half of the moon sits on top of the hillcrest to x-ray the clouds and their scars

spanish accordions dog all the handprints but changing for change sake was soothing the bargain begins at the first sight of mountain to obey the mystery of moving

> damp in the cold californian morning the eye behind the wave brown into green, into green, into blue into blue into some deeper grave

apple-skin fledglings supine on wood that's been waxed to slide over violence the bargain begins at the first sight of ocean to obey the mystery of silence

sometimes i wake with the lightning in my eyes and the echo of some thunderclap jesus, man, what a motherfucker of a storm i have never seen nothing like that

deep in the dark californian night the iambic frame of the naked pushing the screen up against all the water listening for sounds that sound sacred

belatedly praising the roots for their honor grateful the earth remains porous the bargain begins at the first sight of breathing to obey the mysteries before us to obey all the mysteries before us Pulling Black Flowers From An Hourglass was completed sometime during September of 2004. In October of 2004, Mount Saint Helens erupted.

pulling black flowers from an hourglass

there's nothing quite so lonesome as an empty ferris wheel rusting on its hinges in the rain save for that feeling when you're driving down a lonely stretch of 5, next to tracks that are carrying no train

and I can see the body of a bird that met its doom just another case of roadkill for the highway to consume and you know that I've been feeling every life that I pass pulling black flowers from an hourglass

> i can see the fog come tumbling down the hillside like a tree whose will has been broke i can hear the raindrops spattering on my hood like a playing card pinned to a spoke

and I can see a scarecrow with nothing to protect just another broken phantom in the caverns of neglect and you know that I've been feeling every life that I pass pulling black flowers from an hourglass

the lake moves left to right, and the old men do the same when they take their favorite circuits 'round the shore but there's a mighty hidden shadow looming out over the blissful and it's too hard for the old men to ignore

Saint Helens had a fire buried well within her soul it's so frightening how the relapse of a saint can take its toll and you know that I've been feeling every life that I pass pulling black flowers from an hourglass

I am afraid sometimes that I may have borrowed too much from the end of my life to keep myself alive during those times when I wasn't sure if the pain I was feeling was a real injury or a dreamt one, and whether when I asked for help I was awake or not.

I feel very fortunate I haven't died yet, because I think I could have.

Most of all, I feel very fortunate that the woman who is my love, is my love.

i nearly drowned again it was all i could do to find the air my eyes can see above and below the ground but i can't hear music anywhere

> chorus help me my love, i think i'm hurt oh help me my love, my love, my love

fell from a plane again broken wire underneath my surface i hear the outside of the walls falling in i'm so tired of bein' nervous

chorus

i nearly went outside but it's too much to know as much as i do time means circle and line by my love, i mean you

You Ain't That Bad Off is one of the snarkiest songs I've ever written.

I was just plain pissed off and jealous that another songwriter I knew was getting a lot of great press, and all his press described him as this down-and-out character, and at the time I really *was* down-and-out, and he was this total ivory tower phony playin' at bein' a gutter junkie, and I was really furious about the whole thing.

Which is pretty embarrassing to admit.

For reasons I no longer recall, the working title for this song was "A Mushroom In Dirt," and that may allude to a subplot I've forgotten.

The last verse comes from a story told in Charles Bukowski's novel Ham on Rye, in which he describes the moment he realized that the world prefers pretty lies to the truth.

you ain't that bad off

you like to think you're such a sad pup man, dust yerself off and get up you ain't that bad off

limpin 'round on a broomstick cane boy, you know you oughtta be ashamed you ain't that bad off

chorus

i seen ya sightin' on the left field line actin' like you s'pect to get a curve this time i know you seen it was a change up sign a swell like you just got to bide his time fore he be drinkin' champagne, and smokin' sweet tea and forgettin' that he ever used to run with me go write a poem on a page, and mail it off fast and address the damn thing to kiss my ass

> you think yer born beneath a bad sign? man, you been drinkin' off a ripe vine you ain't that bad off

> you positively drippin' dirty sympathy but i seen yer tower gleamin' ivory you ain't that bad off

> > chorus

i hear they talkin' 'bout you these days 'bout all yer crazy down and out ways but you ain't that bad off

ten out of ten prefer the pretty lies the pollin' shows nobody realized you ain't that bad off

I wrote West of the River while lying in the grass in a park in Chicago.

I was really obsessed with Division Street, and Nelson Algren, and we were living in Ukrainian Village, and I just kept writing and writing about Division Street, and we lived on Iowa Street, which was just a handful of blocks from The Rainbo Club, and this song has my favorite lyric from the whole Estate Bottled Blues album:

off in limbo where the spoil of the unholy heist goes arms akimbo in mockery of the jesus christ pose

west of the river

west of the river under a big lake country lost sky there's a sliver of darkness on the stem of a god's eye

hung and spinnin'
in the window of a medieval dream
i feel forgiven
in the welcome of a wind blowin' clean

chorus finally on division dirty jewel, empty quiver magic and religion, in a duel west of the river

west of the river and east of the western side undelivered trapped somewhere unstamped along the ride

> off in limbo where the spoil of the unholy heist goes arms akimbo in mockery of the jesus christ pose

The lyric for As If Now I Understand was written at The Rainbo Club.

The whole Moleskine-and-a-Space Pen thing started in Chicago, and every time I finished a lyric in a Moleskine at The Rainbo Club I would go into the bathroom there, and I'd write the name of the song on the wall (which you could do, because it was a Space Pen), with the date.

My missus used to love to play pinball at The Rainbo Club, so she'd play pinball there after a long day at the Art Institute, and I'd write songs, and then I'd put their titles on the wall, with the date.

And this is a yin-yang blues, and the white half with the black dot is about masculinity, and the black half with the white dot is about mortality.

how else to describe the slow accumulation of all these meager losses, but as waves the moon provokes into a rage whose passion drives them upwards, and whose tiny violent fates drives them down into a froth whose dissipation seems to mimic the acknowledgment of age

and how else to describe the awkward fundamental curiosity of wondering if the flame we once called life could be lit again but to note the earthen core, and the temporary permanence of sun, that seem a constant while our bodies seem but sitting rooms we visit in

chorus

and "chris," you say, and then put our your hand and as men do, then i take it, as if now i understand

how else to describe the differences in illness that disfigure without killing, but as cliffs against a wind off the pacific holding seeds of stronger flowers, or of acrobatic bushes or of crevice-buried grasses with tenacious old savannah dreams to mimic

chorus

how else to describe the body in this chair and the notebook in this lap, and the space-pen in this hand, attempting new refrains but as specter in the costume of a fleshly aspiration chasing that which panic teases cooling blood into believing that the soul has yet retained

All songs written by Christopher "Preacher Boy" Watkins

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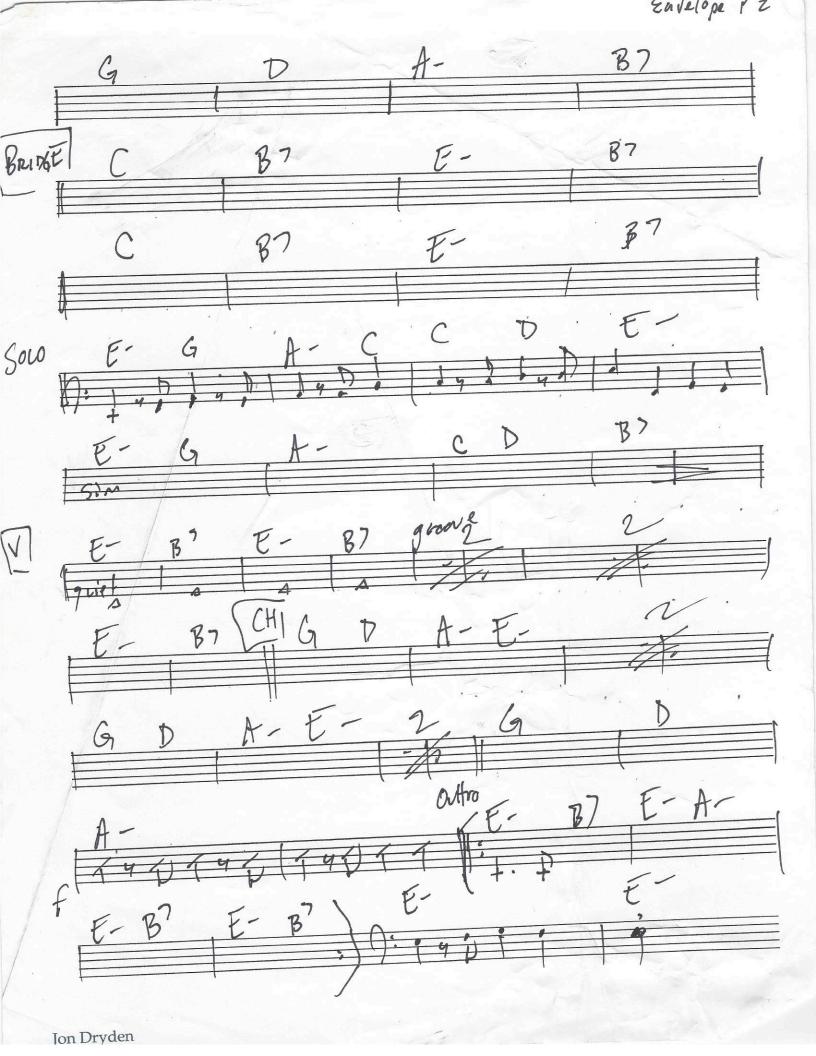
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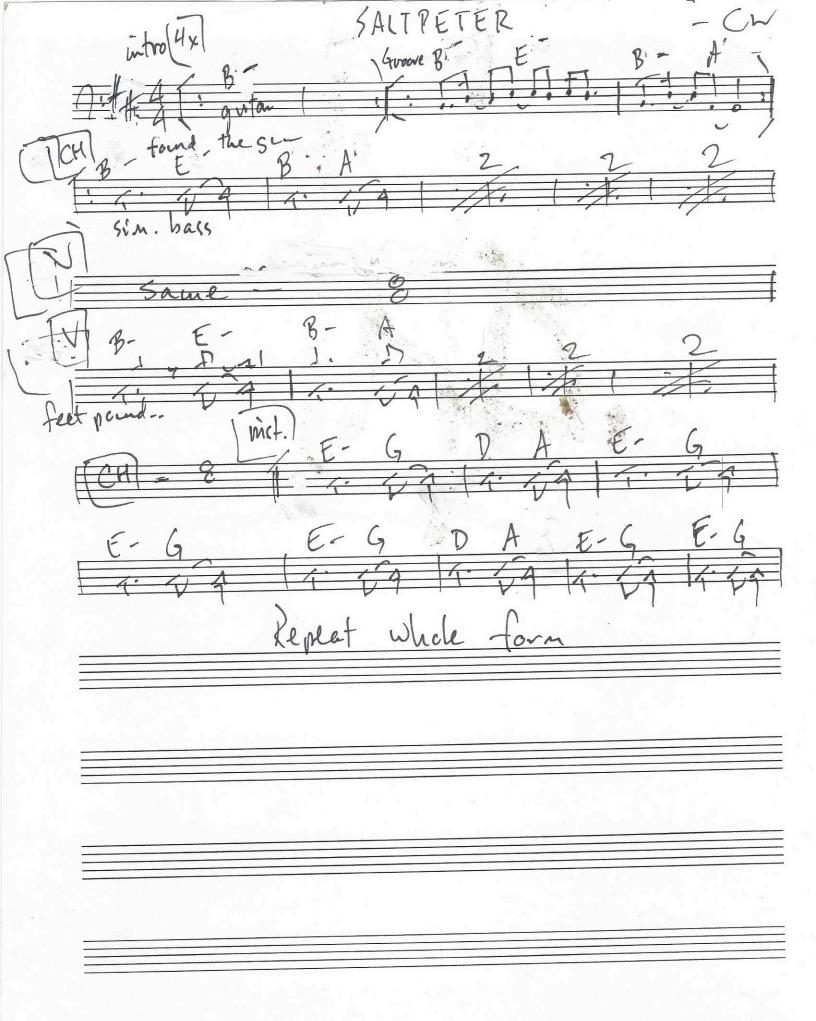
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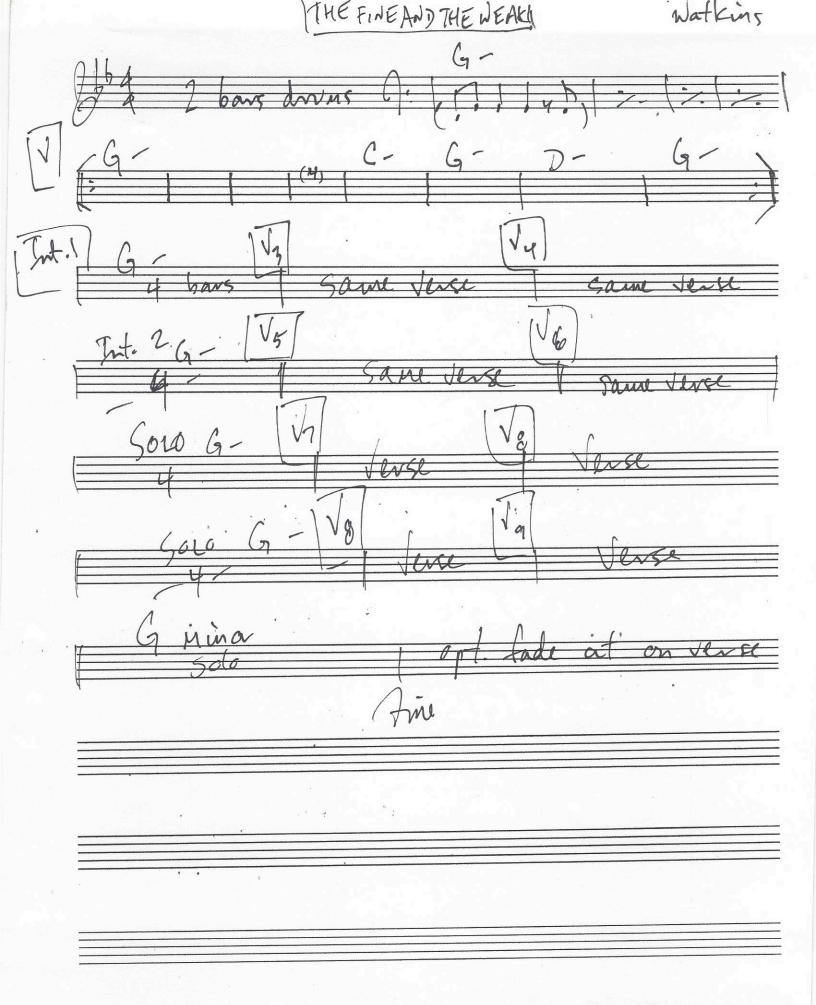






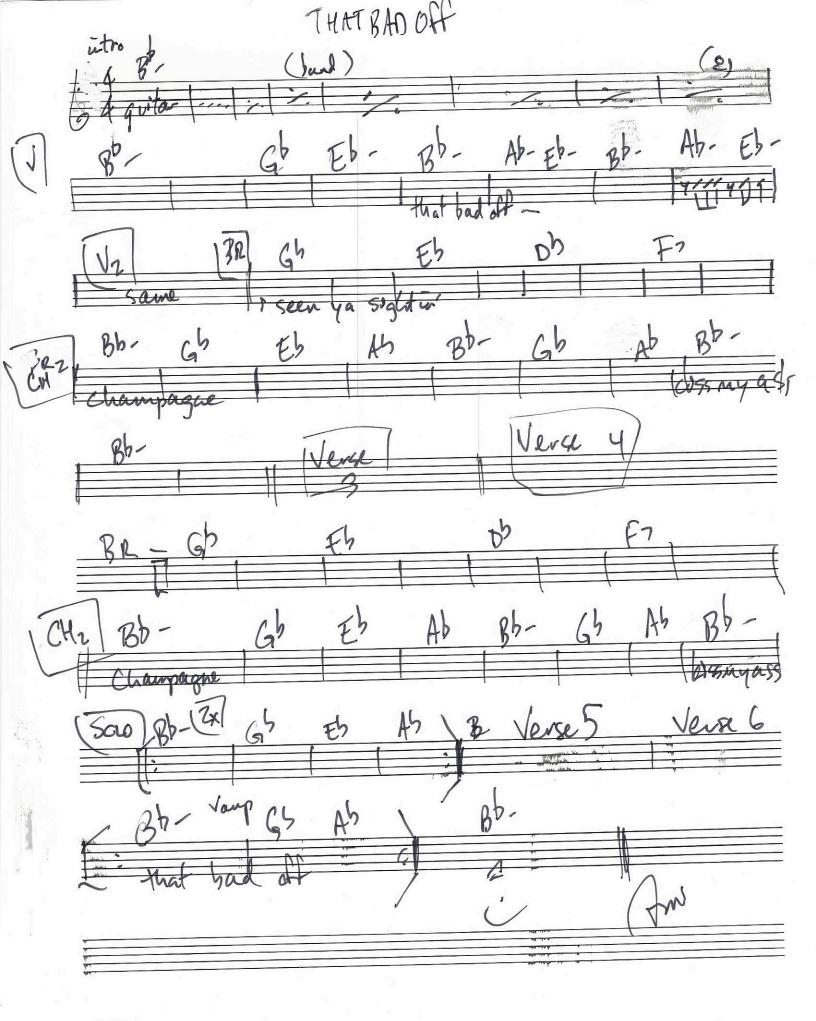




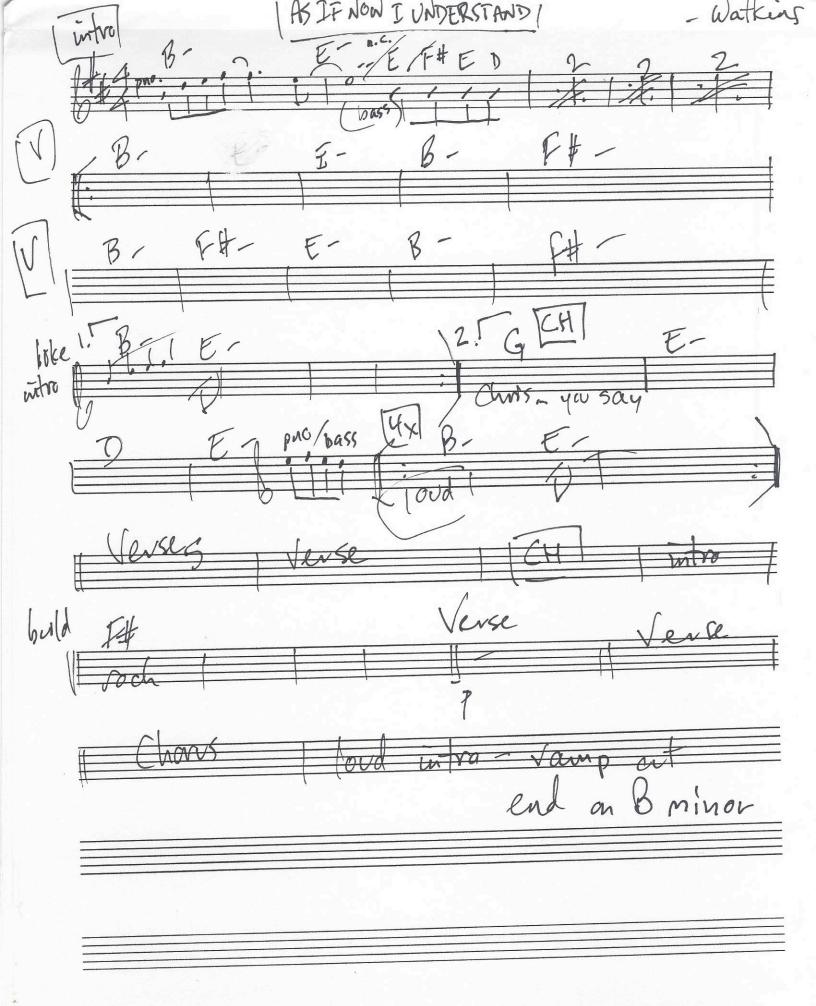














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