

REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

CHAZ JANKEL AND DEREK HUSSEY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: <https://vimeo.com/233846230>

How did the song Reasons to be Cheerful come to be made?

Reasons to be Cheerful came about - what year was it? 1979? Quite possibly. Ian and the Blockheads were in Italy and due to a technical difficulty at a gig, the gig was cancelled so we had a couple of days off in Rome. The first evening we were there in a very plush hotel, we got a little bit inebriated, let's put it like that, you know in the bar and later that evening I was in my hotel room and I started banging out a rhythm which was like this [taps rhythm] - as you do. And I thought Oh! I don't know why but for some reason I thought was a bit special so I called up Ian his room and I said 'Ian you've gotta hear this'. I mean I know that sounds crazy but that's what happened. I went down to his room I said check this out [taps rhythm]. And he went 'great great. Good night.'

And the next day he calls my room and says Chaz come down and bring your guitar with you. Which is what I did and when I got to his room there was a full lyric of Reasons to be Cheerful. And I just started playing my little guitar riff. And we got to the middle and he said I'd like to give Davey Payne a little squirt because you know he's been with me a long time. He was the original Sax player with them- The Blockheads. Plus Ian had played with him in other bands and he said so let's put a pretty bit in the middle and you know we'll get Davey to play over it and then he can get his share of the song. And that was literally how the song came together. And I think the next day we recorded it at Decca in Italy. And that was it.

How did *If it Can't Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong* originate?

'If It Can't Be Right It Must Be Wrong' came about because Jen, who's producing the show Reasons to be Cheerful, I think requested a new song! And so she got onto Derek and myself and said "Would you write this song?" And Derek, I mean miraculously came out with an amazing lyric which he sent to me and I just looked at the lyrics and spontaneously came up with a melody and a chord sequence and that was it basically!

I think the song's vital, I think the song is vital. You know song writing I think is one of the few areas and, you know, books or, you know, writing books are the two areas - and filmmaking - I'd say are the three key areas where you can express yourself and say what's needed. Treasury funds so miss out...they're going in the wrong direction and not going towards what they needed- where they're needed. And this song is all about that, it's about you know putting money where it's really needed, not into trident missiles and you know not into bombing Yemen. You know there's lots of places where money should not be spent. But disability is where it should be going.

What do you think of Graeae's Interpretation of *If it Can't Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong*?

The interpretation of this song is spot on. From a technical point of view, John Kelly moved it up a tone from A-minor to B-minor - for those who are interested. And Joey has like tagged on a little reprise on the end of the song. The spirit is fantastic. I mean literally the hair on my head was standing up. There's some very tasty little backing vocals coming in towards the end. Yeah I couldn't be happier.

The Blockheads have their 40th Anniversary this year, a new album and a documentary. How does it feel to still be so loved 40 years on?

Well I just find it amazing. I'd never have thought that I'd be standing here 40 years after I started the band with Ian, that the show would be going on you know we'd just be doing gigs and getting the reactions we do.

I never take it for granted. In fact I'm always a bit surprised when it comes to the show- wow you know they love it! It's something that as I say I never to be taken for granted, it's a fantastic feeling. I mean Ian did say way back, he said "Chaz one day you know we'll be as big as Lennon and McCartney". And I went oh- uh- No way. And you know I've never really looked it like that but there's something enduring (Ian During- excuse me) about the songs there's something that is... I think it's spirit, Ian's honesty, the wit - the humour in the songs, that keeps it alive! The new album we've written, Derek and myself, Beyond the Call of Dury, I'm really proud of it. I think from the first note to the last note it's very strong, very very strong lyrically, musically. The band.

You know funnily enough is I think we're playing better than ever. We're listening more to each other. We're not trying to fill every gap, there's a kind of language taking place. You know it's a great album. And I'm proud of it.

Why do you think everyone should go and see Graeae's Reasons to be Cheerful?

This new production of Reasons to be Cheerful it just makes you feel alive. It makes you feel you want to engage in it. It just lifts the spirit. You get totally involved in it. The spirit coming off the actors, it you know...infiltrates, you can't you cannot escape it. You just get involved in it and you just come away with a fantastic feeling, you feel strengthened by it.

How did you feel when you first saw Reasons to be Cheerful in 2010?

Well it was just you could feel the electricity coming off of the stage, the energy and the joy of performance and all the senses were touched I don't think I've been to the theatre before when you know you had somebody singing, you had the screen behind with the words for the hard of hearing and so all your senses, you added all that together, it bombarded the senses it wasn't just like watching a production. It was like being in the soup being stirred with a ladle. It was it was all encompassing. And I found that quite invigorating. It was really really really good. I've never experienced watching a show with all those senses being activated.

Would you agree that the summer of 2017 has seen music reclaim its status as a vehicle for protest?

I was a child of the 60s, and in the 60s we had some great... there was a lot of protest about you know about the Vietnam War, all sorts of things.

I mean Big Bill Broonzy sang about you know being looked at as being a man you know on the racism thing, Buffy Sainte-Marie -The Universal Soldier, Tom Paxton - Talking Vietnam. It was all over the place. Bob Dylan of course he got all the pats on the back but there was some brilliant folk-singers that had

always got a message to portray on the protest front. So yeah it was a thing in the 60's the protest song and then it sort of disappeared a little bit, it lost its cache a little bit maybe, because after the 60s things did get better. You know most people could afford to get taxis, you know it was half a crown to get in a taxi, it wasn't really very expensive. Austerity disappeared for quite a long while but it slowly crept back in and there's more to rail about now than there was maybe 10 or 15 years ago.

And it's very important music carries that message to any person that's disenfranchised or disgruntled people. It gives a voice to their protest. And so long live the protest song. I love them!

How did it feel to write a new song with Chaz and Graeae's John Kelly for the 2017 tour?

Writing a song with Chaz was great because the brief was, um...there was a little list of things that Graeae would like you know incorporated into the song, a little list of grievances. *If it Can't Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong*, it's sort of is a play on words really, obviously it's wrong that disabled people and anybody with any problems has their disability allowances, and it's hard to fill out the forms and claim when somebody saying well you have to justify you're particular problem. Because that's wrong. You know in any fair minded society it's the vulnerable that need our help the most.

What do you think of Graeae's interpretation of *If it Can't Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong*?

Oh well as an ensemble it was absolutely fantastic. It just gives weight to the lyric, you know, for the cast of Graeae to say and they'll bring it across in a much better fashion than me just mouthing the lyrics. I've just supplied the vehicle for them.

Reasons to be Cheerful's Extensive community engagement program has encouraged protest songs to be written across the country. What do you think of the initiative?

It's brilliant because everybody's got their own personal axe to grind about whatever it is. Everybody's got something that they're not happy with. And if it's your particular beef then you're going to think of the best way of articulating that.

Why do you think everyone should go and see Graeae's Reasons to be Cheerful?

Well because they'll be missing out if they don't!

I like to do things... I went to see the All Blacks play rugby, I've been to Lord's to see a Test match, I've been to the ballet to see that, I've been to the opera- you know it's not all particularly my bag, I've been to the Proms, when you're there you get something out of these things that you can't explain and somebody can tell you they've been but you never know until you go and it doesn't have to be your bag but you can feel something when you go to see something that's really good. And Graeae and this particular production goes in one of those big things.