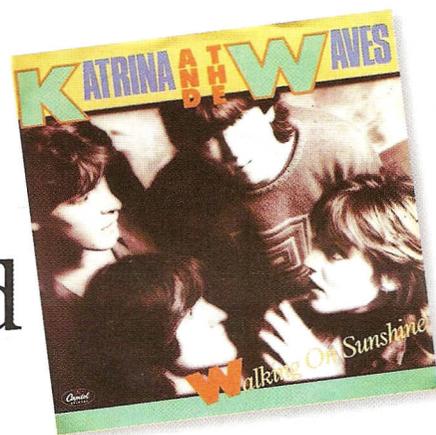


Some songs are smashes straight out of the gate. Others take years to insinuate their way into our lives. The super-hits live on through TV shows, cereal commercials and music to get married to. *Walking On Sunshine* started life as a pop record and eventually became a

singing toothbrush. **David Hepworth** talks to a lucky few who wrote the evergreen hits they could retire on.



Living on sunshine: *Walking On Sunshine* enabled Katrina & The Waves' songwriter Kimberley Rew to "retire from the big stage." It's been an airplay record-breaker, a movie soundtrack regular and even the tune played by an electric toothbrush (far left). This year the song celebrates its 25th birthday by popping up as a production number on hit TV series *Glee*.

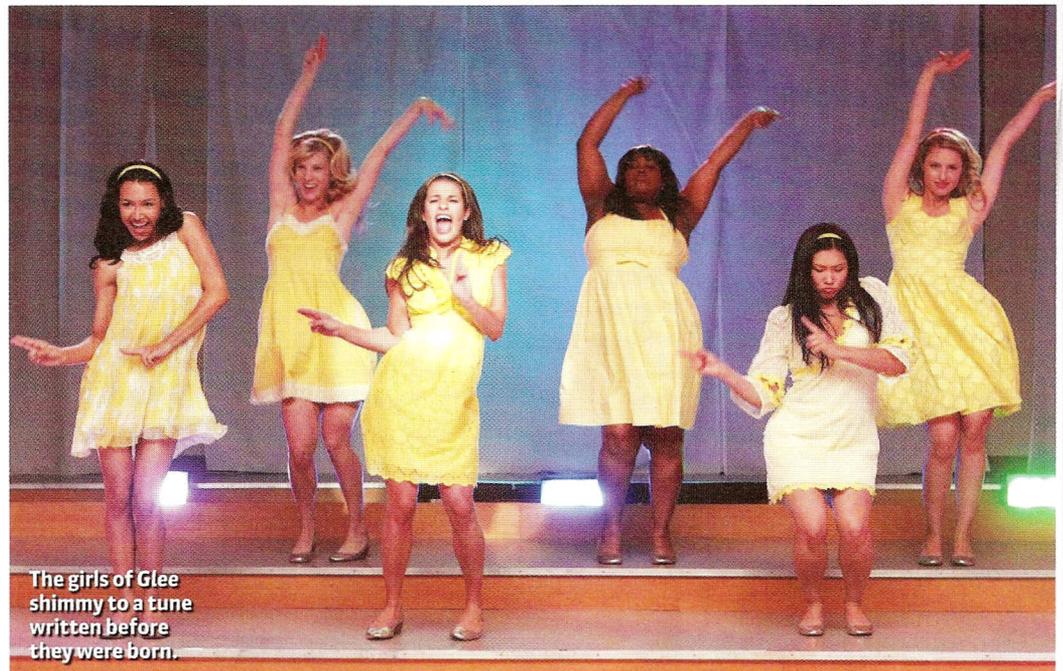


DONOVAN ENJOYED AN AVERAGE career as a recording artist. His first hit was *Catch The Wind* in 1965. *Barabajagal*, his last one, was four years later. Since then he has continued to tour and record, gone in and out of fashion and tried periodic comebacks, all without significantly moving the barometer of public perception. As far as most people are concerned, Donovan was a success for five years. But take the longer view, as his song publishers Peer Music certainly do, and Donovan has never stopped being a success. His signature compositions continue to earn serious money nearly 50 years after they were first put on record. Those records, in which Mickie Most's rock-lite arrangements underscore the singer's attractively fey delivery, are capable of conjuring another world. This anachronistic music can be put to regular use many years later, sometimes literally through *Catch The Wind's* use on a TV advertisement where the American utility company General Electric promote their commitment to wind turbines and sometimes counterintuitively, such as in the scene in *GoodFellas* where Robert De Niro and Joe Pesci brutally beat an associate to death in a bar as the jukebox plays Donovan's *Atlantis*.

"You never know when you write a song what kind of lifespan it's going to have," says Mike D'Abo, who wrote *Handbags And Gladraggs* over 40 years ago. "So many songs sink without a trace. But if you write a song that hangs around for years not only does it provide a useful bit of earnings but also it seems to generate a power and momentum all of its own."

These special songs may attract scores of cover versions, hitch a ride on somebody's marketing plan, become fortuitously identified with a major movie or the first port of call for the lazy film editor wishing to announce a subject, suggest themselves to a programme director needing to mark a particular time of year, slot into a multi-platinum computer game or find themselves in the narrow repertoire of songs that people pick to celebrate the key rituals of their lives. They make fortunes for publishers and put roofs over their composers' heads; at the same time they often create cracks in bands formed in more carefree times.

Sometimes they happen right out of the box. At other times they have to be roused from a long sleep. At their biggest they are far bigger than the writer to whom they first occurred



The girls of *Glee* shimmy to a tune written before they were born.

and, like the soundest of sound investments, they carry on attracting exploitation and making money while the artist is sleeping. In a sleepy pub in a Cambridge back street on a midweek evening in January, I told Kimberley Rew that *Walking On Sunshine*, the song he wrote for his group Katrina & The Waves back in 1989, had just turned up as a major production number in America's biggest TV hit, *Glee*.

He knew nothing of the show or the song's use, even though the clip had already had 2 million views on YouTube. As record companies bemoan the fact that the record-buying public on which they once depended now have far more leisure options, the writers and publishers of songs are finding that there have never been more ways of making money out of song copyrights, often from those same options.

Nigel Elderton runs the UK arm of Peer Music, a company accustomed to looking after songwriters whose material outlives

their success as a recording act. Donovan was attracted to them in the early '60s because they handled Buddy Holly. "Donovan has always represented a certain set of values and there's been a lot of demand for his songs and his sound lately. Sync rights, as we call them, are now an increasingly important part of the business. Publishers and record companies didn't think of this kind of thing until the Levi's ads in the mid-'80s. I set up the first synchro-

nisation department when I was at EMI music. Now everybody regards it as a serious revenue earner, particularly when the revenue from record sales has dropped like a stone. How much? It's impossible to say what you might get for a commercial. It's a negotiation. The Rolling Stones are reputed to have got a million dollars for the use of *Start Me Up* in a Windows commercial in 1995. But that was worldwide and it was exceptional. You might get £50,000 for the use of a song in a major TV and radio commercial. That's for a year. That's just for the song."

This may seem modest until you calculate that in the last few years Donovan's *Mellow Yellow* has been used to advertise The Gap, Marks & Spencer's Free Range Eggs, Mr Kipling's Yellow Drizzle Cake and Kraft Mello among others; *Sunshine Superman* has been used by Magners Cider; the relatively obscure *I Love My Shirt* by K Swiss watches and *Happiness Runs* by Fruity Cheerios. Similarly, in the 21st century his music has been on TV or film soundtracks for *Confessions Of A Dangerous Mind*, *Futurama*, *The Simpsons*, *The Rules Of Attraction*, *Edison*, *Skins*, *House MD*, *Nip/Tuck*, *The Invention Of Lying* and *Dancing With The Stars*, again among others. This is not bad for somebody who stopped having hits 40 years ago.

"We're negotiating at the moment for the use of *Mellow Yellow* in a soft-drink commercial. We've re-recorded some of his old songs because then we can do better deals with people who want to use those songs. They don't have to pay what the record company want as ▶

.....
**"I wrote
 Walking On
 Sunshine in a
 rented room.
 I lived in other
 people's houses
 for about ten
 years. Then we
 had a hit record
 and I bought
 a house"**

well as what we want. We can provide the sound recording as well. When we did some deals with the re-recorded tunes, the penny dropped for Donovan. His voice may be a semitone lower but he can still do it.”

Donovan is unusual in having half a dozen songs attracting covers and sync uses. Often it's just one. Veteran music publisher Tom Bradley tells me about the author of one such. In 1960 he was in a band in Swindon along with a younger player who was brave enough to set off for London. “And this was before the M4,” he points out, admiringly. After coming under the benign influence of Marty Wilde, the young guitarist was hired to replace Denny Laine in The Moody Blues. They recorded a song the boy had written at the age of 17. That song, *Nights In White Satin*, changed the direction of the group and turned them into a franchise that still flourishes today. “He can never get away from that song,” says Bradley of his old friend Justin Hayward, now 63. “He does very well. Lives in Monaco. The Moody Blues tour America every year and do great business. I don't know whether I'd want to play those old songs every night but that's the life he wanted. He's still driven by the same things that drove him when he was 15. All songwriters are like that. They're all insecure and they need reassurance.”

Bradley stresses that even the most successful songwriters derive the majority of their income from a tiny fraction of the songs they've written. Formerly Sting's publisher, he estimates that between a quarter and a third of Sting's publishing income is owed to one song, *Every Breath You Take*. “You go anywhere in the world and turn on the local radio and you'll hear a Sting song within an hour, and it's quite likely to be that one. Commercial radio is not interested in music. It's interested in advertising and therefore they programme the most popular songs all the time. Hence *Every Breath You Take*.”

How much is all this airplay worth? In 2007 the alliance between MCPS (the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society, which represents songwriters) and PRS (the Performing Rights Society, representing recording artists) paid £155 million to writers and performers of recorded works for the right to play them on the radio. That's in the UK alone. At the end of last year, Google, the owners of YouTube, paid an undisclosed lump sum to PRS for the music they'd been streaming on their sites. These are all revenue streams for the people who hold the rights. “Publishers have always taken a longer view than record companies,” says Bradley. “Airplay to publishers is not promotion. It's income.”

IN THE PUB IN CAMBRIDGE WHERE HE'S PLAYING his regular Wednesday-night show, Kimberley Rew proudly shows me a battery-driven toothbrush that plays his song *Walking On Sunshine*. This is just one in the Tooth Tunes series, promising “Music In Your Mouth”. “Instantly change volume with brushing pressure,” announces the packaging. Rew, who's preserved it in its blister pack, produces it as an example of the unpredictable places a hit song may take you. Still boyish in the latter half of his fifties, the unassuming Rew is the last person you would suspect of having penned a money-spinning song. His website features pictures of him blinking alongside Celine Dion (he wrote a song called *That's Just The Woman In Me* for her album *Taking Chances*) and a representative of the American collection agency BMI to mark the fact that *Walking On Sunshine* has had 2 million plays on US radio. That kind of airplay means you don't have to work again. He looks like a slightly greyer version of the young man who played guitar with Robyn Hitchcock in The Soft Boys, formed in Cambridge in 1977. Unlike most veterans he doesn't betray a trace of bitterness about the hand rock has dealt him, not least because he's written a couple of songs that on their own would be able to put a fairly decent roof over most heads.

After The Soft Boys split in 1981, he joined US Air Force brats Katrina Leskanich as singer and boyfriend Vince De La Cruz on bass plus his old drummer Alex Cooper to form Katrina & The Waves. This group married the pizzazz the band had developed playing an unforgiving live circuit with Rew's rare gift for writing pop songs.

“I can remember writing *Walking On Sunshine*,” he says. “I was living in a tiny rented room in somebody's house and I didn't have a proper tape recorder but I just wanted to write something that was upbeat in a kind of Motown vein. I lived in rooms like that for about ten years. Then we had a hit record and I bought a house. I had the riff first and then the lyrics came very quickly. I played it to the band and from the start we did it in the way you hear it today. I knew it was pretty good. Some of my songs are better than others but nobody said, ‘This is going to make us stars.’ The song may come quickly but getting the feeling that you need, the bounce and energy that's going to communicate, that takes all your life up to that point. It's a combination of something very quick and something very slow. I've always had

to concentrate very hard. It's not something that comes naturally to me.”

The group financed their own album but couldn't find a record company in Britain or the US interested in putting it out and therefore in 1983 *Walking On Sunshine* emerged, to no great fanfare, on a small Canadian label. They continued to tour and the song went down well with audiences. Meanwhile an earlier Rew song, *Going Down To Liverpool*, was covered by The Bangles on their successful album *All Over the Place*. In 1985, by now signed to EMI in the US, they released a reworked version of *Walking On Sunshine*, punched up further by the addition of horns. “On the second one I played two guitars, the rhythm plugged into the desk. I didn't think the horns would make so much difference but, well, all power to the horns. The second one was again produced by Pat Collier but it was mixed by Scott Litt, who worked with REM. He had a radio ear. We weren't particularly extrovert people but when

we played we were. The record just came to be associated with sunshine.” This time it went Top 10 in the US, UK, Canada, Australia and beyond and found its way into the repertoire of radio programmers the world over, a position it has held ever since. In a recent American radio poll it came second in the most programmed summer records of the year.

Walking On Sunshine has featured on the soundtrack of countless films, including *Look Who's Talking*, *High Fidelity*, *American Psycho*, *Bean*, *Herbie: Fully Loaded* and, most recently, *Moon*; it has been danced to by competitors on US show *Dancing With The Stars*, performed as an audition number on *America's Got Talent* and, most recently, appeared on the high-rating show *Glee*. Bob The Builder did a version called *Working On Sunshine*. “It's very much bigger than the band,” he concedes. “People remember the song but not the band.”

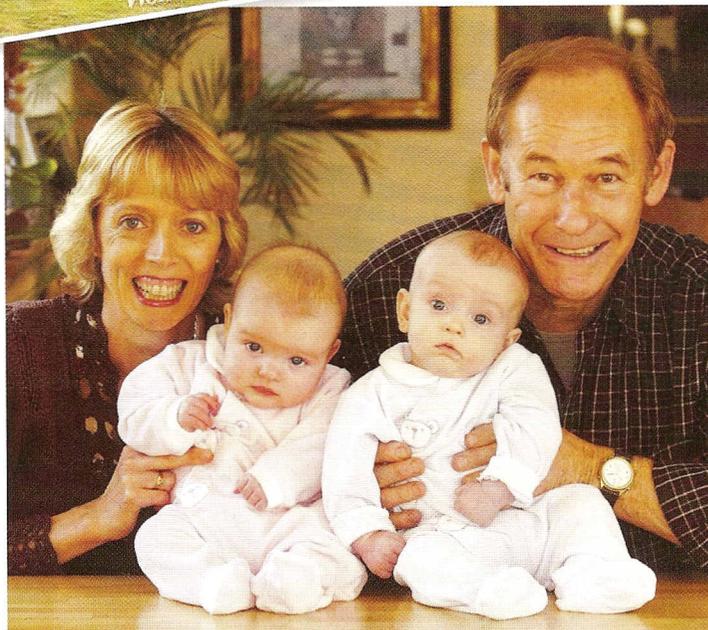
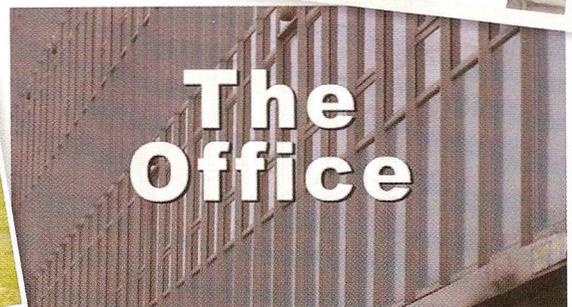
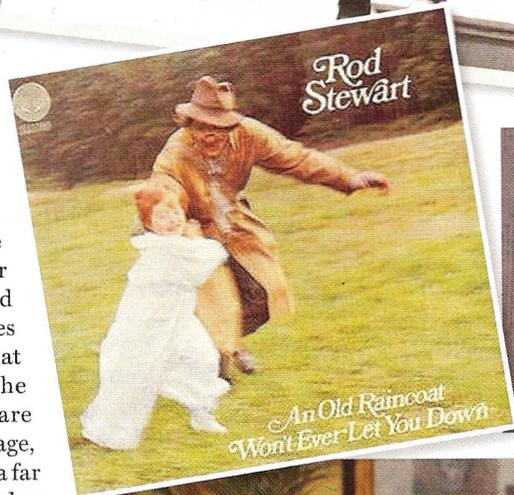
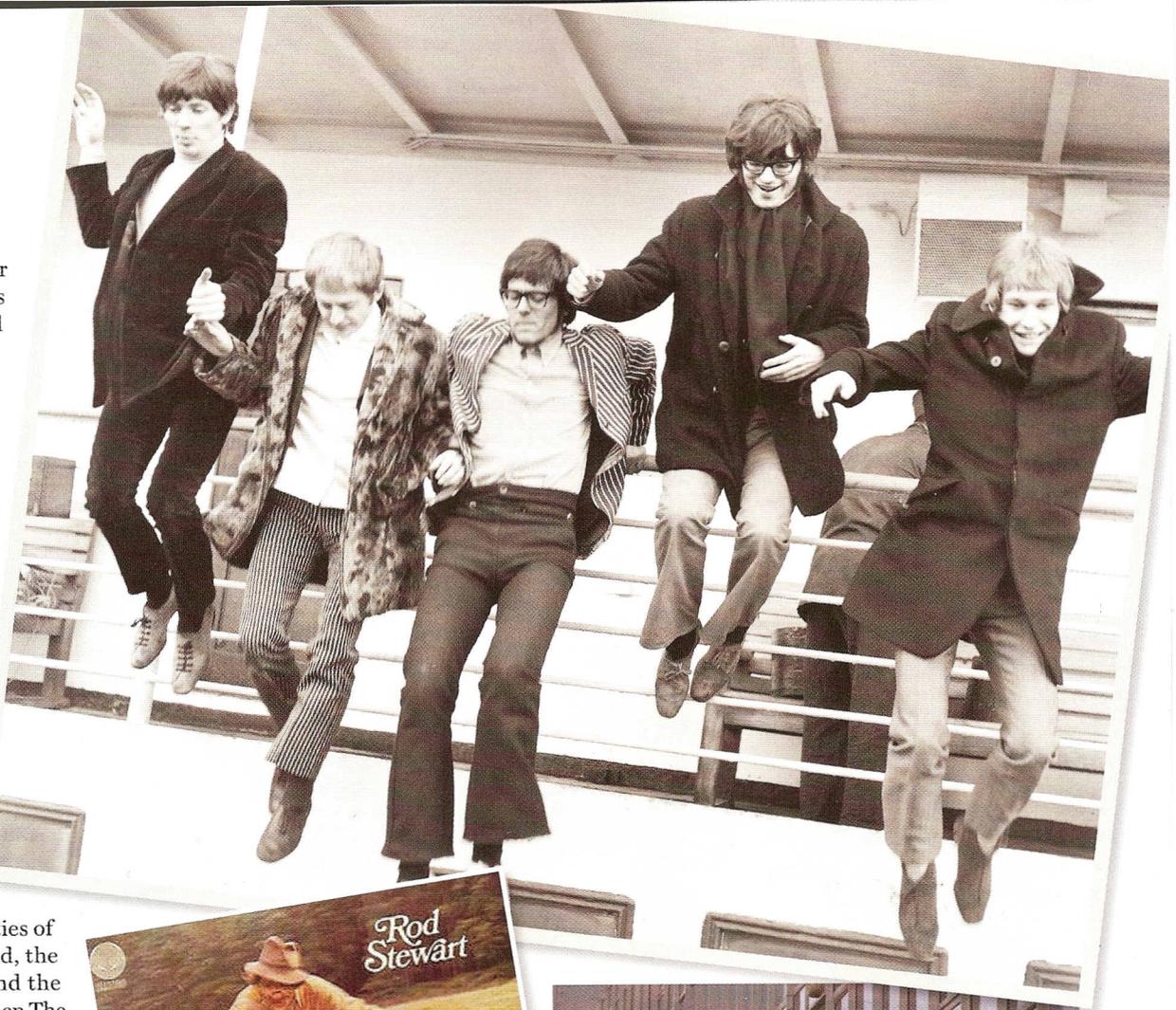
The group never matched its success but in 1996 Rew wrote the British entry for the Eurovision Song Contest and once again showed his versatility by coming up with a winning tune in *Love Shine A Light*, performed by Katrina & The Waves. Leskanich left in 1999, since when there have been the usual wrangles over uses of the name, with Katrina wanting to go out as Katrina & The New Wave while the remaining Waves briefly toured with another singer. Rew says he has “retired from the big stage”, although he still makes records and plays once a week at the Hopbine pub with his

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“Six months later one of my ex-wives rang me to say Handbags And Gladrags was being used on this new programme on BBC called The Office”

girlfriend and musical partner Lee Cave-Berry. He also walks the coastline of England and Wales. De La Cruz has just gone back to the US, while Lesnacich, after a period as a DJ, plays on the oldies circuit, where she fronts the old Eurovision hit and others. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the record that changed all of their lives. It's reissued and made available on iTunes.

No good deed goes unpunished, and it's almost inevitable that the authorship of a big song causes tension within a group. No matter how much the rest of them may have sweated over the recording and how much of its appeal might be down to the qualities of the vocal or the drum sound, the lion's share of the credit and the money goes to the writer. When The Animals' *House Of The Rising Sun* was credited to "traditional arranged Alan Price" in 1964, the rest of the band didn't realise that 50 years later their erstwhile keyboard player would still be getting what publishing sources estimate as \$50,000 a year out of that credit. But even in cases where the authorship is not in dispute there are inevitable jealousies when, in middle age, the band notice that one of them has a far bigger house than the rest of them and no longer feels the need to bash up and down the motorway doing gigs to make the mortgage payments. It's this that has occasioned court cases involving the members of Spandau Ballet and accounts for why Procol Harum's *Whiter Shade Of Pale* has put so many barristers' children through school.

Kimberley Rew isn't comfortable talking about his attempts to make sure that the rest of the band shared in the rewards that flowed from the publishing of *Walking On Sunshine*. "I've tried. It hasn't really worked out ideally, so I can't really say anything about it. It will bring up insoluble problems. It wouldn't be fair on the other guys to talk about it." One account holds that he has shared the publishing with the rest of the band but then subsequently bought their shares back from them. He refuses to confirm this. I ask him if he's set up for life. "I didn't have a house when I wrote this song,



Once I was a young man: Mike D'Abo wrote *Handbags And Gladrags* when he was in Manfred Mann (top, far right); the Rod Stewart version (on his disastrous solo debut) eventually earned him money, but it was the hit by The Stereophonics and the song's use on the titles of *The Office* that bought the gladrags for the twins he fathered in his sixties.

It's bought me a house and I can go to the bar and buy a round of drinks and not worry about it. It's been very good to me. But if it hadn't happened I would probably still be playing in this pub but not quite in the same style."

MIKE D'ABO WAS 23 IN 1967 WHEN HE wrote *Handbags And Gladrag's*. He's 65 now. "My children range in age from forty-two to two," he says at his Gloucestershire home. The 42-year-old is the actress Olivia D'Abo. The two-year-olds are twins. Before they were born he was thinking of moving with his new wife to New Zealand in order to lower his cost base. Years spent playing the oldies circuit, entertaining at summer balls with variations on the former members of his old group

Manfred Mann and eking out what revenue he could from his old publishing credits had left him contemplating retirement uneasily. Then, from two directions at once, his old song enjoyed a second wind and with it came a windfall.

"I wrote it in 1967 when I was in Manfred Mann. I knew it was something rather special in that I knew I'd got a bit of divine inspiration. In those days there were two types of songs. You either wrote aiming to be commercial, in which case you had to have a hook that the butcher boy would whistle. On

the other hand there was the song that was written from the heart that people would say 'that's beautiful', but you never expected it to generate record sales because it was aiming too high. *Build Me Up Buttercup* (a hit for The Foundations in 1968) falls into the first category and *Handbags* the second.

"Manfred Mann didn't know what to do with it. He didn't have a clue how to play the countryish Floyd Cramer piano licks that were part of the song. I got a call one day from Andrew Oldham and Tony Calder, who'd started Immediate, and they asked me to produce Chris Farlowe, who was coming off a hit with *Out Of Time*, and the other was a totally unknown guy called Rod Stewart. So Farlowe said he wanted to do *Handbags* and we did an arrangement and I played the piano and it got a certain amount of airplay and charted at 32 in 1968.

"I went down to a club to see Rod Stewart as the lead singer with the Jeff Beck Group. I played him *Handbags* and he said he wanted to do it. I said he couldn't because I was already doing it with Chris Farlowe. Nine months later he showed up at my door in Albion Street just off Hyde Park and he said, 'Great news - I've got an album deal with Mercury and we're

going to record *Handbags And Gladrag's* tomorrow morning.' This was seven o'clock the night before. He insisted on changing the arrangement. He didn't want my piano so much. He wanted me to arrange something for flutes. So I had to overnight produce a whole new arrangement, but I couldn't write a note of music.

"By nine o'clock I'd come up with the counter-melody that was to become the oboe part. By ten o'clock I was ringing round every arranger in town that I knew and they all said they couldn't get it done by ten. I'd booked ten musicians and I got through to this guy who lived in Finsbury Park and he said, 'If you pay me for my time and a cab, I'll come over.' He came over and stayed till five in the morning writing down the parts. We showed up at ten the next morning and Lou Reizner was producing. This was the first song. I'm playing the piano with Ian McLagan on organ plus Ron Wood on bass and Micky Waller on drums. We did one take which I thought was a bit all over the place and I told Rod he'd got the words wrong. Rod missed the internal rhyme and I was not happy with the grammatical side of things, but that's the only take he ever did. Lou said, 'That'll do, we're moving on to the next one.'

"By 10.30 we'd done and I left, tail between my legs. The album sold a few thousand albums all over the world. But Rod was slowly building. Two years later, once *Maggie May* has come out and the world had gone mad for Rod Stewart, Mercury started recompiling his old stuff and *Handbags* started turning up on *Sing It Again Rod* and other compilations. So I was not complaining. It wasn't until 1991 that he re-recorded it - and again I didn't think he did it very well - for his *Unplugged* album, which went to number one in America, so that suddenly earned me quite a lot of money out of the blue.

"Get to millennium eve 2000 and I was playing with my band The Mighty Quinn at a hotel in Southampton and somebody rang me to say, 'Your song's on *Jools Holland*.' Kelly Jones from The Stereophonics was playing it. I'd never heard of him. Six months later one of my ex-wives rang me to say it was being used on this new programme on BBC called *The Office*. They'd wanted to use the Rod Stewart version, couldn't afford it and so they'd re-recorded it. My publishers knew nothing about this. Anyway, I called The Stereophonics' management and told them I'd written it. They said I was

wrong, it was Rod Stewart. Anyway, I said, why don't they record it? Funny you should say that, they said, they're mixing it today and it's their next single." That single came out in 2001 and went to number four in the charts. The album was number one.

Mike D'Abo and his new family never moved to New Zealand. "I have felt at times in my life a little embittered because life hasn't dealt me a very fair hand. For instance, I never got paid a penny on *Build Me Up Buttercup* when it got to number one in America in 1968, because it was infringing a Motown song and they got all the royalties. But thankfully that's been rectified and that earns me something because it's a big party favourite with young people thanks to it being featured in *There's Something About Mary*. Songs do come back. They've both been very good to me and updated my credentials. At the end of the day I'm delighted and very well adjusted to it all."

LONG BEFORE THE MUSIC BUSINESS CAME TO BE all about hit records, the holy grail of publishers was the song that everyone wanted to play on their piano at home and which consequently sold a lot of sheet music. *You Raise Me Up*, which was written by the Norwegian Rolf Lovland and the Irish novelist/songwriter Brendan Graham, has proved that's still possible, provided you come up with a song that people wish to incorporate into their lives.

In the world where pop rubs shoulders with classical in the approximate vicinity of inspirational music, *You Raise Me Up* has been a phenomenon. Lovland, whose instrumental music comes out under the Secret Garden brand, has written Eurovision-winning songs. In 2001 he came up with a melody and sought out the Irish writer Brendan Graham (who had previously written the lyrics for two Irish Eurovision-winners) to pen some lyrics for it. Graham recalls how it happens:

"They called me and said they were in Leopardstown and could I come and listen to what they had. I said I could come in ten minutes. They were calling it *Silent Story* at the time. I thought it sounded like *Danny Boy*. I got the title *You Raise Me Up* that afternoon." The resulting song was released by Brian Kennedy, Secret Garden and the London Community Gospel Choir in 2002. Its refrain goes as follows:

"You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains;

You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas;
I am strong, when I am on your shoulders;
You raise me up... To more than I can be".

That version went to number one in Norway. Daniel O'Donnell's version entered the Top 20 ▶

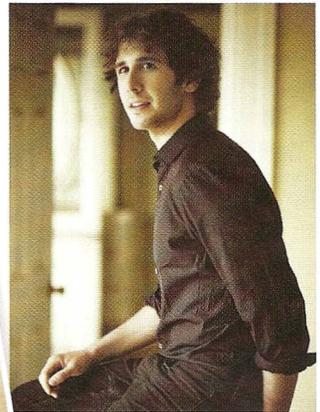
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**"You go
anywhere in the
world and turn
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song within an
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quite likely to
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You Take"**
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in the UK the following year. Three years later Westlife's version went to number one in the UK. In the United States the producer David Foster, the Canadian behind the success of Michael Bublé and other stars of the new MOR, was presented with the song by Peer Music and decided that his charge Josh Groban was going to record it that afternoon. This version was number one for six weeks in the US Adult Contemporary Charts. It has since been featured on number-one albums by Paul Potts, Il Divo, Russell Watson, Celtic Woman and many other acts readers of this magazine may not think about very much. It has been covered over 130 times already.

It has also been widely used in a ceremonial context. In 2005 it was performed at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony. In 2007 it was sung at the opening of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Brian Kennedy sang it at George Best's funeral in 2005. Olympic champions have skated to it.



Rewards in heaven: Irish novelist/lyricist Brendan Graham (left) wrote the lyrics for *You Raise Me Up* to someone else's tune. It's had over 130 cover versions by artists including Josh Groban (right) and Celtic Woman (bottom) and been used at public ceremonies like the funeral of George Best (top). "In these times people need something to hang on to."



"You Raise Me Up appeals to a broad church of people who don't know what it's about. To some it's parent, lover, husband. It's the third most popular father/daughter dance at American weddings now"

Peer Music's Nigel Elderton admits that he buried his own father to it.

Brendan Graham recognises that, unlike songs in the hymn tradition from which it sprung, *You Raise Me Up* enjoys the advantage of never quite identifying who the "he" might be. "It appeals to a broad church of people who don't know what it's about. To some it's parent, lover, husband. It's the third most popular father/daughter dance at American weddings now. Josh Groban says it's all about his parents. His manager says it came along after 9/11 when the American people wanted something to draw them together. In these times, with institutions crumbling, people need something to hang on to, a kind of spirituality that fills the gap. There's a climb in the melody that goes with the lines 'You raise me up' and that helps."

Nigel Elderton estimated, quite early in the song's commercial life, that Brendan Graham's share of the proceeds from *You Raise Me Up* would amount to 2 million pounds. It's certainly provided him with enough to move from Dublin to a house overlooking a lake. I asked the 65-year-old lyricist if he is a believer.

He laughed. "If I wasn't then, I am now." ■

