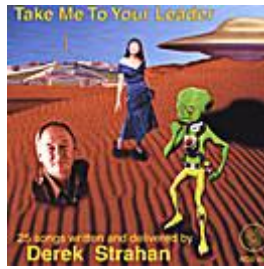


Mp3 Derek Strahan - Take Me To Your Leader



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Derek Strahan's original songs of satire and sentiment draw on different pop styles of the 60s and 70s when they were written for live gigs at folk venues and for a morning TV topical songs spot. Voice, guitar, harmonica, rhythm and digital add-ons. 25 MP3 Songs FOLK: Political, POP: 60's Pop Details: Take Me To Your Leader REVOLVE RDS 004 25 songs written and delivered by Derek STRAHAN (b.1935) SCROLL DOWN FOR FAVOURABLE REVIEW BY JOHN LEEMAN OF UK'S MUSICWEB, AND CD LINER NOTES. TRACK LIST 1. Take me to your leader 2. Age of the artificial man 3. Take time off for your children 4. Cain 5. Goin' home 6. It's all happened before 7. Domino rag 8. The puritan 9. Toad 10. Road statistic 11. Chain reaction 12. Mary Jane 13. The ballad of joking Jesus 14. Mountain and rain 15. Cross to the other side 16. Soldiers 17. Hear, hear 18. Mr. Smith 19. Instant speed 20. Transport strike blues 21. Here today gone tomorrow 22. To the virgins to make much of time 23. Keep Britain beautiful 24. Smiling portraits 25. Caroline Derek Strahan: voice, guitar, harmonica, keyboard for virtual bass and additional virtual instrumentation. Recorded 1960 - 1974; digital remastering: 2001 REVOLVE RECORDINGS RDS004 [74.19] FAVOURABLE REVIEW FROM JOHN LEEMAN AT MUSICWEB - musicweb.uk.net.au Listening to this disc of mostly satirical songs from the early sixties to the early seventies, I was left wondering how Derek Strahan (born Malaysia, educated in Australia and England) seemed to have passed me by at the time. As well as the tunes and the wit, there is some powerful stuff here and the intervening thirty/forty plus years has not blunted its impact. Not for me anyway, but then, being of that era, I suppose I'm ready-tuned. My first reaction was to recall the songs of Tom Lehrer, the American maths lecturer who started to become famous (or notorious) in the 1950s. He and Strahan were part of a singer/writer/composer/performer tradition that coincided with the post-war satirical movement. Whereas Lehrer accompanied himself ably on the piano, Strahan uses guitar and usually additional

forces with occasional harmonica interpolations a la Bob Dylan. Their songs are mostly of verse/refrain structure. Both employ the technique of writing jolly little tunes to act as vehicles for their blackest humour, the irony of which adds to the bite of the satire. In style and content Strahan is more eclectic than Lehrer, betraying influences that range from Noel Coward to sixties pop. He adjusts his delivery according to content, by, for example, assuming suitable accents such as Irish for "The Ballad of Joking Jesus" with its James Joyce text. Pompous English is assumed for his three 1960 satires on contemporary Britain. Brit-bashing was a popular Aussie pastime then and these songs do sound a trifle dated. Otherwise there is little that is not relevant to the present. A few things are a giveaway to the past, such as the use of the word "gay" to mean "jolly", and a younger generation may not pick up the political allusion in the Domino Rag. This song is a penetrating comment on what was the then high-profile domino theory which declared that if one "free" country just outside communist borders fell to Marxism, then the next one would tumble followed by others like a row of collapsing dominos. The theory, which generated much paranoia, dominated American foreign policy, led to the Vietnam war and persuaded many Australians that if Vietnam went down, Malaysia and Indonesia would soon follow. The lumbering jauntiness of the music's refrain, "We're all doing the domino rag", exudes a general mocking while the text goes so far as to give Johnson, Agnew and Nixon specific mention. This was courageous satire in 1970. Tom Lehrer would probably never have got away with this sort of thing in the States. Overall I found this a hugely entertaining disc. The sound is fresh thanks to some clever digital remastering that adds some special effects (wittily demonstrated in the opening Take me to your leader) as well as extra melodic and percussion forces. It is unremittingly tuneful and funny but when it ventures into serious black satire it does, within the genre, border on timeless genius. The song that moved me most, and chilled me most, was It's All Happened Before. It begins deceptively: If you had a little boy What would be his favourite toy - A working mode I - oh how nice - An anti- personnel device. If you had a little son, Would you teach him to hold a gun, And when he grew bigger Would you teach him to pull the trigger. The refrain gathers more meaning after each biting verse: It's all happened before, I's all happened before And it mustn't happen any more, But it's still happening now Yes, it's still is happening now And we've got to stop it somehow, somehow -the last line sung not with feeble optimism but with a sense of pragmatic impotence. Here's part of a later verse: Children play at tit for tat And we tell them off for that; When grown-ups play that kind of game It doesn't turn out quite the same. A choir is gradually added over the last refrain, sounding

increasingly and ironically celestial. I was listening to this at a time when major powers have taken to the gun as a problem-solver of first resort. Opposing groups continue with relentless tit-for-tat killing as if that would solve anything. Against this backdrop I thought the 34 year old song a most telling, concise elaboration of the philosopher Hegel's observation, made in 1837: What experience and history teach us, however, is this, that peoples and governments have never learned anything from history.

John Leeman
CD LINER NOTES DEREK STRAHAN - an advisedly brief autobiography: Born in Penang, Malaysia in 1935, I first came to Australia as a boat person at the age of 5, when my family evacuated to Perth, Western Australia, following the fall of Singapore to the Japanese in 1942. The positive influence of the following three years in Perth stayed with me, motivating a return to Australia in 1961. Leading up to that were 16 years in the UK, comprising 6 years incarceration at a boarding school in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where I learned to dislike bigotry and puritanism; then 3 years scoring a BA in Modern Languages at Cambridge University followed by 5 years in London as a freelance actor, musician and casual teacher. In Australia, since 1962, I've been active in the music and film industries as writer, composer, performer and producer/director. Writing:- TV serials, series, feature films, corporate videos, song lyrics, libretti. Composing:- music for over 30 documentaries, 3 feature films, more than 20 works of concert music.

GENESIS OF THE SONGS Over a 15 year period, till 1974, I wrote songs to sing with guitar, and performed them at various clubs and folk venues: in London in 1960/62 and then in Sydney from 1962 onwards till 1974, sharing gate money with fellow artists. I earned slightly more money in 1970/71, writing a few topical songs for the ABC current affairs show This Day Tonight and scoring a weekly spot over 9 months with the Channel 7 Breakfast Show - fronting to sing a new topical song live every Monday morning at 6.50am before the 7 o'clock news - and before clocking in to start a day's school teaching at 9.00am. I left school teaching to become a full-time script-writer for Australia's first TV serial "Number 96", and song-writing gave way to writing film and concert scores. The songs in this selection are from analog tapes made over the period 1960-1974, mostly of voice, guitar and harmonica only. In the process of digitally remastering these I have added bass lines to most songs, and sometimes extra instrumentation and effects. SPECIAL THANKS - to Sean Peter of AutoPilot Productions for the digital remastering. Sean is himself an accomplished composer/writer with an impressive track record, including several stage musicals, children's' music, film, many TV and radio jingles. Since graduating with a composition major from Southern Cross University, Sean has worked as a sound designer, sound engineer, and

composer/lyricist for many of Australia's leading arts companies including the Sydney Theatre Company, Company B, Junction Theatre, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the Sydney Opera House and the ABC. It was a pleasure to work with Sean on the digital remastering of these analog song tapes. His generous contribution extended beyond the technical skills of a recording engineer. He also gave valuable creative input during the process of adding musical components to the original recordings. All percussion tracks and special effects were created by Sean; he also created the entire virtual rock band for "Road Statistic"; and it was his brilliant idea to back "Domino Rag" with a German band - giving my bass line to a tuba, and adding exotic percussion. INFLUENCES The 20th century produced its share of singer-songwriters, and I acknowledge stylistic influences as follows: in the late 50s and 60s I admired several Gallic chansonniers, especially Georges Brassens (French) and Jacques Brel (Belgian), who wrote original lyrics combining satire and sentiment. Brassens also created ballad settings of French poetry - prompting my settings of verse by Robert Herrick and by James Joyce. In the 50s Tom Lehrer was a solitary satirist, but by the 60s and 70s the English-speaking world had caught up with European trends and singer-songwriters emerged in the UK and North America. Their work began to infiltrate and then dominate pop music: artists as diverse as Chuck Berry, Lennon-McCartney, Donovan, Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan (to mention only several). In an earlier era Noel Coward was also part of this auteur tradition, and he reinvented himself in 1955/56 recycling his 30s cabaret songs for Las Vegas audiences. Singing point material is 70 acting, and the Coward influence combines with French style in my 3 early Brit-bashing efforts "Keep Britain Beautiful", "Caroline" and "Smiling Portraits". The astute listener will hear other influences, accents and modes of address assumed throughout. The lyrics of several of my songs on this CD are specific to their period: "Instant Speed" and "Domino Rag" to the 70s the latter being about Vietnam.

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