

May 23, 2016

JUSTIN HAYWARD

Justin Hayward was 20 years old when he wrote "Nights in White Satin," the momentous hit that took The Moody Blues in a bold new direction. As their name suggests, they were a blues band when they formed in 1964 ("moody" was part of a gimmick where they would look very serene, never smiling in photos). Justin joined in 1966, replacing Denny Laine, who later teamed up with Paul McCartney in Wings. The band had gone as far as they could emulating American blues artists, so they set out to find a more distinctive sound.

"Nights in White Satin," the centerpiece of their 1967 *Days of Future Passed* album - the first with Hayward - took them down an untrodden musical path that made The Moody Blues one of the biggest bands of the late '60s and early '70s. The hits were written by either Hayward ("The Story In Your Eyes," "Tuesday Afternoon") or bass player John Lodge ("Ride My See-Saw," "I'm Just A Singer (In A Rock And Roll Band)"). In the '80s, they returned to the charts with two more Hayward compositions, "Your Wildest Dreams" and "I Know You're Out There Somewhere."

In April, Hayward set out on his Stage Door tour, named after a track from his 1977 solo album, *Songwriter*. The title reflects his journey from young boy hanging out by the stage door without a ticket to the artist going through it.

Carl Wiser (Songfacts): Where are you located today?

Justin Hayward: We're in Poughkeepsie. We're just basing out of here for a few days. It's convenient.

Songfacts: Justin, I was reading somewhere that there really was a set of white satin sheets.

Justin: Yes, there really was.

Songfacts: That got me thinking about your songwriting and how very often there is a tangible image or experience, but after you're done with it, it becomes this abstract and often spiritual song. Is that intentional?

Justin: What an interesting way of putting it, Carl. I think

you've got it there. Sometimes, you know, people include in their questions a much better answer than I could possibly give.

Yes, I think so. I never try to analyze too much. Writing for me is having a sort of picture, starting off with an idea and a line that will suggest some kind of images and then fulfilling the scenario of that particular story and making each word fit. And sometimes not just fitting in a sense, in a contextual way, but in a phonetic way as well, because the sound of the words is often just as important as the words themselves.

Graeme [Edge, Moody Blues drummer], when he started writing songs, he did great poetry, but sometimes I would have to tell him that you have to think of the sound of the words because they have to sing right as well.

But I digress. I'm trying to get back to get an answer as good as your question because I think you kind of said it there. Who knows what inspiration is? It's like a world of imagination. It's like having a room in your house that nobody else can go into and when you enter that room, life is just slightly different.



On the *Days of Future Passed* album, "[Nights in White Satin](#)" segues into a poem called *Late Lament*, written by Graeme Edge and read by the group's keyboard player Mike Pinder. The poem closes out the album, representing "The Night" and completing the concept, which is the stages of a day.

Songfacts: How did you feel about it when they tacked this poem onto the end of your beautiful song?

Justin: Well, I loved all that stuff. I loved that spoken word, because Mike Pinder had such a beautiful voice. He could certainly charm me - he charmed me into joining the group. Not that I needed much charming but I met him first and he always had such a gorgeous speaking voice. You could tell by the girls that fell for him - you could hear it. "007 Pinder" we used to call him because he could just do it with a few words. But I thought it worked really well.

It was Peter Knight's idea really to put the orchestra that way round and to interpret our songs in that way, and I think Peter Knight made that happen and he gave room for that spoken word to give us the continuity through the *Days of Future Passed* album. I'm not sure whether it's ever worked as successfully as it did on *Days of Future Passed* but it certainly worked for "Nights." It was a great introduction and a great lead-out for "Nights" as well.

Songfacts: I love that you open your shows with "[Tuesday Afternoon](#)," which I think you're still doing on this tour. Is that correct?

Justin: Yes. Last tour I didn't - I changed it around, but this time I do because it was the first hit for me as a writer in this country and it was huge for me. Huge.

Songfacts: And what's interesting about that song is Tuesday afternoon is the crux of the work week, but when you wrote it you were out in a field somewhere on a Tuesday afternoon in the sunshine, which is such an atypical

experience that seems to add some kind resonance to the song. But that's probably not what you had in mind when you wrote it.

Justin: I didn't have anything in mind. You're absolutely right about the sort of crux, the middle point of the week, I suppose. I did think about that and about being someone who's been lucky enough never having to do a proper job - I wasn't hampered by any of that kind of stuff.

It's not about my dog but I did have a dog called Tuesday at the time, and it just so happened we were sitting in the field together, that's all. But it was a Tuesday afternoon and I did smoke a joint and it was down there where I come from in the West Country and this song just came out.

It was such a simple song. I don't think any of us ever thought that this would be the single. It was just another song that would go as part of the stage show. I think it shocked all of us when it was released as a single.

Songfacts: Now, I know it drives you a little crazy when fans would see you as a guru type who has all the answers, but when you write these kinds of songs and you explain that they were inspired from above, you almost have to think that you're some kind of divine conduit. Do you ever see the songs that you've written and think that maybe somebody is trying to tell you something?

Justin: No, because inspiration has to find you working and you have to put the effort in. It's a bit like playing guitar. People say, "Oh, you've got talent. I never had talent to play." No, I just had a real desire to play and there's a lot of pain involved: Your fingers are going to hurt and it's going to be painful to learn to play. So, it's just a question of putting the effort in.

It's the listeners who bring the magic and the interpretations to these songs.

I think anybody can write songs if they really, really want to and if they're prepared to throw away 99% of what happens. And if they're prepared to spend a few days and get rid of stuff and be selective about it, then suddenly in some obscure moment something will happen and you'll grab onto it and think, "That's the thing that I need to expand on." So, you get that first few bars or that first line and then move on from there and then it's pure work from that point onwards.

Songfacts: Well, the way you write is not something you can learn in songwriter school. There are structures that are just unbelievable in your songs and they are completely unpredictable. For instance, you listen to a song like "[Question](#)" and it just goes all over the place, and I listen to "[Story In Your Eyes](#)" and it sounds like a freight train - it just keeps coming through. Can you talk about how you structure some of these songs?

Justin: As a writer I've always tried to see the whole picture before it's done. I am, I know, the most annoying person to be in a group with because I want the other guys to do it exactly the way that I want. Or at least I did - those days are gone now. I do solo things and you can call them Moody Blues, but since the '80s it's been about doing solo things but calling them Moody Blues.

But, I've always known what I wanted to do. Some guys

were content to write in the studio and let anything happen. They were prepared to share it, but I was always quite selfish about that. I wanted things to happen on time and I deliberately tried to keep away from the predictable, which wasn't as interesting.

I wish I could give as much as credit as you give to the songs, but really, I don't think they're that complicated. They do seem to flow for me, but that's maybe just the way with not having musical training or learning musical structure. Maybe that's just the way it happens if you're kind of an enthusiastic amateur like me.

Songfacts: Did you write "[I Know You're Out There Somewhere](#)" as a sequel to "[Your Wildest Dreams](#)"?

Justin: Yes, I did. In fact, both songs were done in my own home studio. I started doing that with a song called "The Voice" [1981]: I put the two guitars down to a click and a timecode and then took it into the studio.

So, I did the keyboard and the guitar and the Linn drum for "Wildest Dreams," which was finished first, and for "I Know You're Out There Somewhere" I decided to use the same keyboard sound and bass sound that I'd got on a Yamaha DX7 and continue that theme. It's identical tempo and everything.

So, yes, it was a deliberate attempt to continue it because it



was something else that needed to be said. It was a common experience that a lot of people had, and as soon as we did "Wildest Dreams" I realized how many people identified with that.

Songfacts: And you said "The Voice" was connected to those songs? That's a terrific song - I'd love for you to talk a little bit about that one.

Justin: Only in so much as that's the first thing I did where I did that at home with a couple of acoustic guitars to a timecode - it was actually before MIDI. So, the other guys were playing to my click, my timecode. I had already established the vibe of those acoustic guitars and the feel of it.

Songfacts: That song does not have an obvious title. How did you decide to give it the title "The Voice"?

Justin: You're absolutely right. In fact, I didn't have a title until the day of the mastering. It was called "Fat Arthur" for years because the engineer when we recorded it said, "What's this song called?" and I said, "Oh, I'll think of that after." He said, "OK, 'Fat Arthur.'" He misheard what I said.

So, on the tape box it says "Fat Arthur" and if you look at the scroll in the center of the original pressing it'll say "Fat Arthur" because I could not think of a title. I took it with the engineer, Greg [Jackman], all the way to the mastering suite, which I think was at Sterling Sound in New York. We went to Sterling and did it, and Greg said, "Come on, you've got to give it a title now because this is the mastering. Tomorrow we have to give it to the label." So, I just went through every word in the song and I just chose one.

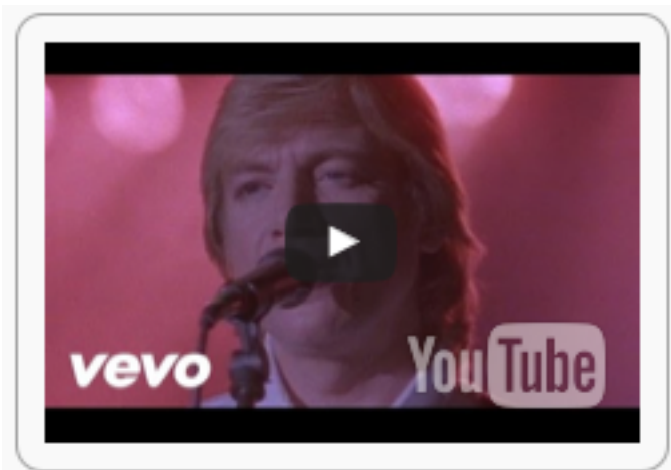
"Question" was another thing like that. It's not a natural title but I couldn't think what else to call it.

The video for "I Know You're Out There Somewhere" picks up with the scene where "Your Wildest Dreams" leaves off: Justin being shuffled out of the arena while the dream girl looks on helplessly. It was one of the first two-part videos - ZZ Top did something similar, picking up the video to "Sharp Dressed Man" where "Gimme All Your Lovin'" left off.

Brian Grant, who was one of the most successful directors of the early MTV era, did the "I Know You're Out There Somewhere" and "Your Wildest Dreams" clips. His other work includes Tina Turner's "Private Dancer" and Olivia Newton-John's "Physical."



Songfacts: How did you feel about the videos for these songs?



Justin: The videos for "Wildest Dreams" and "I Know You're Out There Somewhere" I thought were great because Brian Grant was a friend of mine and the record company let us have free rein to do what we wanted to do. And us and Brian, we just had a lot of fun with Arlene Phillips, who was working with the dancers, and finding some kids who kind of looked like us to give us the story. That was a great joy.

Before that and after that, I don't think we made a great video. When it was down to other people to do it, I think they kind of lost the plot a little bit. We were lucky to have those couple of years where we were recognized for doing great videos and it's the only time I've ever been recognized in the street. People would say to me, "Oh, you're the guy

on the Moody Blues video." That was quite fun for a while.

Songfacts: Many of your songs are framed in relationships but cover some broader themes, and one of them that strikes me is "Never Comes The Day." Can you talk about writing that song?

Justin: Well, I have to say that I suppose that time in my life was not an easy time for me. I was from a very different background to the other four guys in the group and there were things changing within the group. It was four very strong personalities, a lot of testosterone flying around. Some people were coming to the fore, other people were retreating. In a group like that, some people can handle that dynamic, but I was on the edge trying to get my own thing done because I didn't know how long this whole Moody's thing was going to last.

But I could see this dynamic changing within the other four guys, and it wasn't a particularly happy time for me. There was a lot of grief around my life. I was losing a lot of people; my family were very old – not my immediate family but all my aunts and uncles – so I went to a lot of funerals. I was definitely searching and seeking for someone, and I was in love, but I didn't think things were going to come right, and I think that's what the song tries to express. I'm dumping these songs on people, you know.

Songfacts: I'm interested in how you decide what songs you're going to play on your current tour. Many of these songs bring back so many of these times, and they're difficult times, as you say. How do you go about picking which ones go together?

Justin: Well, I try to do things that we've never done before or that maybe didn't work with the group, because now we've got two drummers and big loud amplifiers and a big P.A. Some things just don't lend themselves to that kind of

treatment, so I've tried to look at some deeper album cuts that people really like and bring those to the fore, and I've tried to do things that I think selfishly help me, kind of cathartically, to try and explain different times in my life and to help me understand the songs and what I was talking about.

I have some new music as well, which I'm very pleased about, and I've included a couple of solo things in the set too. So, I'm absolutely loving it and, of course, I'm with two of the greatest musicians you'll ever see in Mike Dawes and Julie Ragins.

Songfacts: What is one of the songs that helps you understand these things about yourself?

Justin: I do a song called "You Can Never Go Home." It was sort of lost on the end of an album somewhere [*Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, 1971] and I never really thought much about it. Then I met somebody one day and they really got quite emotional about that song and I thought maybe I'll just try it on stage. I tried it and it really worked and it resonated with people, and I think it's helped me to look back and try to rationalize what was going on in my own life.

Songfacts: I'm sure you've had many people interpret your songs and come up with all kinds of ideas on what they mean, especially with "Nights in White Satin." What are some of the more bizarre interpretations you've heard?

Justin: Aah, well that's the thing. You know, usually it's just a song. It's just a song. It's the listener that brings that stuff to it. I always think that about a concert. Otherwise, it would just be a kind of enjoyable soundcheck, but that's about it. It's the listeners who bring the magic and the interpretations to these songs.

There was a time in the late '60s when people were crediting us with having some kind of knowledge of other things. It's true that some of us - myself and Mike and Ray [Thomas] - were reading a lot and going through meditation and searching and seeking for different kinds of enlightenment and putting that into songs because we were absorbing so much stuff - we were reading so much and looking for so much. So, we were guilty of that, but in the end, I know as a music fan myself, I don't want to meet the people that wrote those songs. I don't want to ask them to explain them. I would rather have my own explanation.

A lady called [Bettye Lavette](#) did a version of "Nights" a couple of years ago and explained the song to me. I'd written the song when I was 20 years old, for goodness sake, and I never really knew but her interpretation explained it all to me in three minutes. I wrote it when I was like 20 years old and I heard it for the first time when I was 65 - it was a curious thing.

Songfacts: What did she tell you it meant?

Justin: She made it about her daughter, and when you make it about one specific person and you make every word relevant to that particular relationship that had a bitter kind of twist in it, then it hung together as a piece of work and as a piece of writing and as a paragraph or a chapter in a story that was very, very interesting.

I wrote to her and told her, and she wrote back and she said, "Baby, I love that song and I do it every night and I'm very, very thrilled." It made a huge difference to me because there had been some awful versions of "Nights."

Songfacts: Yes. But she sung the hell out of it. That was really something.

Justin: Yes, she certainly did.

Songfacts: One of the songs that really seems to have that kind of broad-based appeal where anybody can find something in it seems to be "I Know You're Out There Somewhere," because it sounds like a song you'd hear in church.

Justin: Well, I think it's a common experience. Don't people want to know what happened to the first person they ever loved? I think they do. And the only warning I can give is, don't. You know, let bygones be bygones and let your memories be memories.

But, it's a wonderful thought and we all think about that. We've all got a first crush and we still put that person on a pedestal, so it is a common experience that I think was interesting and worth expressing and sharing.

Songfacts: What's the best part of your job?

Justin: Well, I think the best part of my job is the hour after the gig when you've done it, when you've delivered. It's a wonderful life to be able to turn up, do something that you really like even though it's nerve-wracking, get paid and leave. And it's all over within 12 hours. That's the best thing I like. It's an honest way to make a living: you arrive, you play, you get paid, you leave.

Get tour info at justinhayward.com.