

Bryan Adams

Bryan Adams has 30 years of hits, including four #1s in the United States and eight in his native Canada. He writes this stuff, you know. Writes for other folks too: Joe Cocker, Aretha Franklin, Neil Diamond and Mary J. Blige have all recorded his songs. So who impresses him? We had to ask...



Carl Wiser (SF): You've worked with some amazing people. What is your most memorable collaboration, either as a writer or performer?

Bryan: Working with Tina Turner was amazing. I used to go to see her in the clubs when I was in my late teens/early 20's before she hit the big time. It was incredible to watch her. Amazingly when we toured together years later, I never saw Tina walk through a performance, she always put on a great show, and was gracious and grateful to her audience. It was such a privilege to have sung with her, especially since I was only 24 at the time.

SF: What are some examples of songs that you wrote from personal experience?

Bryan: All of my songs come from personal experience lyrically, wouldn't be able to write them otherwise.



SF: Of the songs that you've written, which are you most proud of?

Bryan: The really early ones. They were part of the learning experience to be able to write the songs that everyone knows now. You need to learn to crawl before you walk.

SF: What's the story behind the song "Straight From The Heart"?

Bryan Adams: I wrote it when I was 18 and it was one of the first complete songs I'd ever written. I'd been living in Vancouver and teaching myself piano and this came out. Sometime after I had written the song, my friend Bruce Fairbairn was producing an album for an artist called Ian Lloyd, and wanted the song for him. The song went on to be recorded by many people including Bonnie Tyler, and I didn't actually record "Straight From The Heart" until 1983 for my "Cuts Like A Knife" album. It was my first top 10 record.

SF: What were the influences on "Summer of '69," and does the title refer to the sexual position?

Bryan: It's a very simple song about looking back on the summertime and making love. For me, the '69 was a metaphor for making love, not about the year. I had someone in Spain ask me once why I wrote the first line "I had my first real sex dream"... I had to laugh.



SF: The song "Heaven" has an interesting history. How do you feel about that song, and what are your thoughts on the DJ Sammy version?

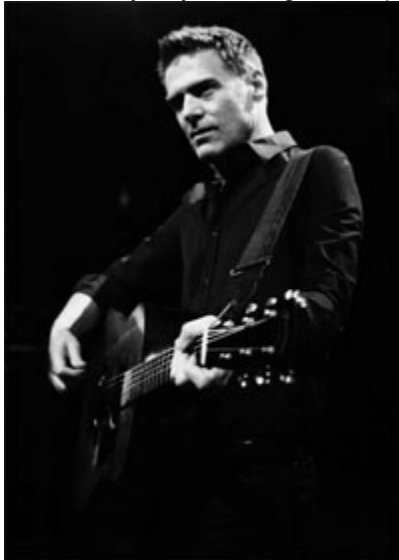
Bryan: Everyone loves this song, and I was thrilled at the dance version produced by Yanou. It's always interesting to hear how other people interpret your music, sometimes, like this version, they connect.

Mutt Lange, whose credits include AC/DC's "Back In Black" album and Def Leppard's "Hysteria," wrote and produced songs with Adams for his albums "Waking Up the Neighbours" and "18 'Til I Die." The monster hit "(Everything I Do) I Do It for You" was a collaboration with Lange.

SF: What's it like writing a song with Mutt Lange?

Bryan: Mutt is great to work with because he is committed to making sure the songs have the best of everything before they go out into the world. We've had three number one records together and many good times, a true friend.

SF: Did any of your songs end up sounding completely different from how you envisioned them?



Bryan: if you listen to my MTV Unplugged record and check out the difference between "I'm Ready" on that record and the original, you can see songs can be reinterpreted. The thing to learn as a songwriter is there are many ways to consider a song, they don't have to be the way you wrote them. Bands are a good way to work out a song, playing them live is also a great way to discover what a song is made of. Like many things, sometimes songs need time, or should I say you need time to work on your songs.

SF: What's the story behind "Please Forgive Me"? We read an interview where you said it was a rare use of modulation.

Bryan: We needed a song for the greatest hits album, which was entitled "So Far So Good." Mutt Lange came up with the idea for the song and we wrote it while working in France in 1993. It was the first time we had recorded with a whole band in the studio, some of the musicians I'd never worked with before like David Paich on piano. Before this band session, we had recorded the album "Waking Up The Neighbours" instrument by instrument. It was good to be back with a band.

Yes it was one of the first songs I agreed to use a modulation in as I never liked modulations in songs unless you were modulating from verse to chorus like I did on "One Night Love Affair." I don't do the modulation in "Please Forgive Me" when I sing it live.

SF: Please tell us about the song "On a Day Like Today". ([here's the official video](#))

Bryan: It started from a track sent to me by Phil Thornalley. I was in Jamaica writing for that album, and it was the right sentiment to be singing at that time "...the whole world could change, the suns gonna shine, shine thru the rain..." It's totally Jamaica, but it was also interesting as things for me had changed, and I was about to embark on a whole new live show with just a three piece band, and even more daunting was my record company got out of the business and then the internet arrived.

SF: How has your songwriting changed over the years?

Bryan: Such a difficult question to answer as I'm not aware of any changes. I think if anything, the process is just as hard as it ever was. I've never found it easy to write, but somehow every year I'll write a few songs.

SF: How do you feel about making music videos, and which is your favorite?

Bryan: Probably my favorite music video was "The Only Thing That Looks Good On Me Is You." ([see it here](#)) When I watch my old videos on YouTube I sometimes think that the film doesn't match the music, and that was when videos mattered! I once worked with a director who said to me, "If it's not unusual why do it?" Nowadays, I think the best videos are the live ones, as they truly showed what was going on with the artist and the song.

SF: You're an accomplished photographer. How has your photography influenced your music?

Bryan: If anything it's simply another creative outlet, much like learning to master an instrument. There is so much to learn, even if it's empirically. People always ask me for advice on songs and how to do it, and I always say play them live. You have to get out of the studio and perform them to figure out if they really work or not.

Get more Bryan at his outstanding website, bryanadams.com

This interview took place October 23, 2009