

# **LONELINESS OF THE LONG DISTANCE PUNNER**



**£4 A BARGAIN!**      **FRANK  
MCMAHON**

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## **Gatefold Sleeve**

I used to believe  
In the power of the gatefold sleeve  
The manifold secrets it would hold.  
All the meaning that would unfold,  
No cramped CD to deride,  
But an opened-up LP two feet wide,  
The jester and the chameleon  
Would surely confide their secret.  
A gateway to another world.

## **I Ignored a Lot of Good Music in 86**

I ignored a lot of good music in 86.  
Non heavy rock sounds way down in my mix.  
I did not make a Commotion about Lloyd Cole.  
Would not be satisfied with Orange Juice  
At the local rock pub.  
Thought the Smiths were as ordinary as their name.  
The shame of arriving late  
To a lot of good music  
But not too late;  
Found it at Nottingham Uni, autumn 88.

## **My Britpop Years**

Twenty Five in 95,  
Five years to thirty  
For the mind to get dirty  
The Britpop years  
Before the End of the Century,  
But that time remains a Blur,  
Alcohol and the occasional not quite Supergrass.  
Indie became mainstream for a while,  
Misshapes were no longer mistakes.  
There was the Oasis of the indie club  
In the desert of work and bills,  
Where Girls and Boys would endeavour  
To give each other their number  
On scraps on paper.

## **Kiss the Sky**

Hearing Hendrix makes me want to kiss the sky.  
Clapton et al bring me too far down to earth.  
Compared to Jimi there's an inspiration dearth.

## **Above Us Only Sky**

Did Mark Chapman really think  
That happiness was a warm gun  
On that mild night in December?  
Was it a way for people to remember him?  
Was he really “without distinction”  
Apart from the power to bring about extinction?

If he could make Lennon dead  
Would they end the voices in his head?  
He calmly watched John die  
Reading *Catcher in the Rye*  
Against a wall.  
John was pronounced dead at 11:07,  
Local time. Above him not heaven  
Only sky.

## **In Bulgaria Before the Fall**

In Bulgaria the Beatles were seen as evil,  
Never mind the Stones.  
You listened to a forbidden cassette,  
On one side AC/DC,  
Their democratic three chord electric charge  
Must have been a shock to the system.  
On the other side Foreigner,  
Maybe it was the name that was taboo  
And exotic  
In your closed country  
As the band were bland  
But maybe a teenage girl  
Wanted to know what love is.

## **John and Paul**

John and Paul had become estranged,  
Their once close lives rearranged.  
Their mothers dead too soon bond  
Now separated across the pond.  
Paul said we can work it out  
John said life is very short  
And there's no time for fussing  
And fighting my friend.  
They were no longer in Everly harmony.  
The heat of partnership gone.  
The senselessness of a warm gun  
Irrevocably blotting out John's sun.

## **Music Used to Matter**

Music used to matter  
Was not just a plastic toy  
In a packet of cornflakes  
A remarkable racket earned  
Bands their breaks  
Where the gatefold sleeve  
Was a gateway to a better world  
Where the lyric sheet made me believe

## **Elvis: Special Comeback**

The Comeback Special in black leather,  
You briefly escaped the Colonel's tether.  
Played electric guitar and no Christmas songs,  
But it was about when rather than whether  
The huckster would regain control.

Your rebirth continued in Vegas for a while.  
Neon Elvis, your name back in lights  
But Parker brought you down to earth,  
Shows twice a day seven days a week.  
You wanted to escape but you were too meek.

Ten years from the comeback Special  
No longer fitting into the black leather  
Back under the Colonel's tether,  
Until too many uppers and downers  
Meant you left the building for the final time.

## **Guaranteed Not to Split**

John Lennon's first guitar  
Said *guaranteed not to split*,  
Unlike Julia and Freddie  
And his future Fab Four



## **No More Jam**

You used to be thick as thieves  
With Bruce and Rick,  
But then decided to leave.  
The band split. That's it.  
You didn't stick together for all time.

They needed you more  
Than you needed them.  
They got used to jam  
On their bread and butter.

You rode away like a perfect lone ranger.  
No contact for over twenty years,  
A perfect stranger.

## **Black Drainpipes**

One of rock's greatest vocal pipes,  
He smuggled his black drainpipes  
Out from beneath the Gorgon gaze of Aunt Mimi,  
Hidden beneath some old baggy trousers.  
One of the great rebels in rock history.

A teddy bear beneath the Teddy Boy garb and barb.  
A pussy cat beneath the rock n roll lion's roar.  
Smuggling his black drain pipes out the door.  
The need to be surreptitious,  
Mimi always suspicious.

## **Philosophy at Eighteen**

Doing philosophy at eighteen promised  
To shed an analytical light  
On all my muddle headed thoughts,  
Like daylight on a pair of socks that seemed  
To match, both dark  
But one grey and one green.  
It didn't really.  
Friends and counselling made my thoughts fit  
Like two perfectly paired socks.

## **Returning to Higher Education**

Returning to higher education  
After a twelve year gap,  
I cycled to my first masters tutorial,  
My brain was a rusty chain  
Which came loose  
When the passages got too abstruse,  
Or maybe when I was too obtuse.

## **Rugby at School**

I always wanted to release  
The ball, which was not really a ball,  
Faster than if I had a hand grenade  
Wouldn't care where the pass went.  
Did not want rugby tackles  
Against my eggshell body.  
Can't say I moved the ball with aplomb.  
Got rid of it as it were a bomb.

It was called rugby football  
But was not played with feet.  
We couldn't play it in the street.

## **Bike Helmet**

Dad wanted to find me  
A bike helmet,  
Paternal instinct there yet  
At eighty one,  
Helped me free of stabilisers  
At five.  
Still wants me to safely arrive.

## **Fence**

Not being able to easily erect a fence  
Has put up another divide  
Between me and you dad.  
My DIY is bad.

## **Frank**

Frank is short for Francis  
Just like my dad  
We share Patrick too,  
A saintly Irish middle name  
But middle names  
Are like wisdom teeth  
Or tonsils or appendixes.  
Francis is the name of a saint,  
Francis of Assisi  
But that I aint.  
God has yet to assist me.

I was Frankie until I grew  
Then my name shrank to Frank  
Although my family  
Still call me Frankie.  
Frank is no longer a popular name  
Which I think is a shame  
As rare and archaic as Reg or Wilf.

## **My First Attempt at Public Speaking**

My first attempt at public speaking,  
Sixteen, debating on the existence or not  
Of God,  
Was like a bus constantly stopping and starting  
To pick up and drop off passengers,  
And at the lights.  
I tried to deal with the questions,  
Blank pauses like waiting and waiting  
For that late night Sunday bus.

The others seemed trained,  
Cars on the open highway  
That exists only in Jaguar adverts.

## **Performing New Material**

I want to be brave  
And not do the same poems each time  
Don't want to be like the Stones  
Who only perform songs from when their bones  
Were forty years younger.  
They know Brown Sugar will be sweet.  
The audience know the taste.  
The band provide satisfaction to the crowd,  
But why don't they try and be brave  
Unless they think that anything newer  
Than Jumping Jack Flash will crash.  
Would new songs just paint it grey?  
I'll try to be brave  
And break up the greatest hits with new bits.

## **Muse**

Most of the time  
We can't choose the muse  
I can command poetry into my brain  
As much as I can command the rain.  
I have to let the rain come to me  
To create a writing spree,  
To end this bout of drought.

## **Full Time**

Since I've gone full time  
I've no time for rhyme  
Those extra eight hours  
Have reduced my poetic powers.  
Economic necessity  
Means I don't really choose  
Those extra hours  
I lose my muse.

## **Creative Block**

When I have creative block  
I still write things down  
Like a broken clock  
That is still correct  
Occasionally.

## **Work**

Exhausted by the rubbish of work  
I lack the energy to put the bins out  
Wiped out by recycled bureaucracy.

## **Monopoly**

He made her think  
He was so valuable  
But he was overpriced,  
A snack at a motorway services.  
He tried to control her  
So he would have the monopoly.  
But there were alternatives,  
Less pricey, more nourishing,  
Away from his control.

## **Critic**

You scoff at those who make mistakes,  
Who need to take twenty takes  
To get their performance right,  
But you've never stepped up to the mic.



## **Doug**

Doug was not used to this new world  
Of man bags and man hugs.  
The most physical contact he could take  
Was a firm, manly handshake.  
He did not warm to the snowflake.  
Such people he'd gruffly deride.  
Would never admit to feeling lonely.  
Widowed. Harold and Reg had died,  
One by suicide.

## **Second Generation Irish**

I can't say I'm as English  
As you can get,  
As English as *Waterloo Sunset*.  
I'm not as Irish as I'd like to be.  
Was not raised where shamrocks grow.  
I'm as Irish as a *Rainy Night in Soho*.

## **Gaza Strip**

Gaza, stripped of all rights  
Stripped of their property,  
Stripped of access to water  
Stripped of the right to vote  
Stripped of their voice.

Gaza, soon to be the size of an airstrip,  
Then the size of a cricket crease.  
Israel wants Palestinians to cease.

## **Balloons**

Management want us to hang balloons  
To celebrate 70 years of the NHS.  
But balloons are fragile and gone soon.  
The NHS has taken the balloon fragile  
And made them football tough.  
Has done this since 1948.  
We've had enough hot air  
From those that don't care,  
Inflated promises that fall flat.

## **Beggars Belief**

They may not be fragrant  
But society's stench is much worse  
A disregard so flagrant,  
That beggars belief.  
Move them off the streets  
Because there's a royal wedding  
They've still got to find another place,  
Cold with no bedding.

## **Blue**

You weren't yellow  
You were just blue  
Felt you had nowhere to go  
Life had gone from grey to black  
You felt there was no way back.  
Your finances in the red  
There's no debt collectors  
When you're dead.

## **Heavy Rock Pub in England World Cup Fever**

Escaping from overheating England fans  
Climbing on top of and inside a bus, the driver  
Just trying to do his job in the heat,  
I found the Gifford, rock pub.  
The only punches  
Were the thuds on the bass drum.  
The only raised voice  
That of the cool female singer.  
Hard rock but people easy to relate to.  
Colourful crowd dressed in non-funereal black  
With sunny smiles.  
A place you could go in alone  
Despite the upside cross throne,  
Safer than the red crosses on white,  
Looking for a sacrifice even in victory.

## **Since I've Gone Full Time**

Since I've gone full time  
I've found less time to rhyme,  
Less time to find metaphor  
To muse on what life is for.  
Non frantic Fridays have gone.  
Between my front door  
And the shop floor.  
Inspiration is fleeting,  
Supplanted by yet another meeting.  
4:30: Out of work at last  
Surely its time now for the muse:  
A meal and a shower and a little booze,  
Then it's snoring and snooze.

## **Football is Not Coming Home**

Football did not in the end, come home.  
Home was a back to back  
With a tin bath and outside toilet  
And a laced leather ball  
Bounced against the wall,  
Now demolished.

## **We May Have Taught the World Football**

We may have taught the world football  
But like someone teaching three chords  
On a guitar.  
But the pupil progresses far  
And learns solos, arpeggios, finger picking  
Barre chords,  
While we strum the same three chords,  
The equivalent of hoof and route one.  
We wonder why we don't win the talent competition.

## **Entitlement**

His entitled voice a siren  
To arrest those  
Who do not show enough attention.  
His eyes flashing blue lights.  
All others should give way sharpish.  
If life is a road he thinks he can smash through it.

## **Stones in My Running Shoes**

The minority that discourage,  
Who are envious of courage,  
Are just stones in my running shoes.  
I can pick them out  
And toss away their blues.

## **Drowned**

When I was seven I prayed to God  
To help me to learn to swim,  
To overcome my fear of water.  
He did not answer my small call.  
Today, I know such a being  
Allows storms and despots to stand tall.  
Allows slaughter and innocents drowning.  
God does not intervene.  
It seems obscene.  
My belief quickly drowned.

## **Alpha**

If you were to ask for help  
You'd feel as if you'd failed.  
Even if you were impaled  
On a spiked railing  
You'd say you had things under control  
And refrain from any admission of pain.  
You will free yourself or not at all,  
From the shark toothed rail.  
You're the Alpha male.

## **Making Things Better**

Sometimes we try to make things better,  
Try to say the right thing  
Like saying “you’re nearly there”  
To a runner, after twelve miles,  
Words of encouragement,  
Before realising he’s not doing the half,  
He’s doing the full  
He’s running on empty,  
Fourteen to go.  
I tried to help his energy grow  
Only succeeded in making him go slow.

## **Private School Weller**

For your children you want the best.  
What chance have they got  
Without a tie and a crest?  
Why send them to schools  
Comprehensively underfunded and over tested?  
You did not want your kids to sound like Ali G,  
But not everyone is as free  
As you. For you the fees are probably a trifle.  
But not everyone has the royalties  
From the Jam, from *Eton Rifles*.



## **Not Sensible**

You found it incomprehensible  
And indeed reprehensible  
To be sensible.

Who wants to be guarding the towels  
And clothes, when everyone else  
Is skinny dipping?

You wanted edge  
Not a life of trimming the hedge.

## **Shower**

You think of them as needing a cold shower,  
As them lot being a shower,  
But that hasn't got the power  
To change them. You think changes  
Come through making them cower.  
You show them only your wrath  
As though their lives are a warm bath.

## **Identity**

I'm second generation Irish  
But the old country is somewhere I've barely been.  
I'm quite green about that land of green;  
A week spent there every couple of years as a kid.  
A land of rain and post partition pain.

I can pay 80 quid to make my passport green  
But maybe all it means  
Is getting through Post Brexit airport security quicker.

But maybe I should explore my ancestry.  
I like how they talk in Cork.  
Explore more the Monaghan bog  
My dad forsook for Black Country smog.  
My surname means Son of the Bear.  
How much do I care?

## **Red Ink**

Her expression and tone of voice,  
A haemorrhage of red ink  
Across all submissions of ideas.

## **No Running Technology**

Running technology is great  
But sometimes it begins to grate.  
I don't always want to say Amen to Garmin  
And Strava can be a lot of palaver.  
Don't look down at those little screens  
While running, look up at scenery stunning.

## **North and South**

They say it's less friendly down south  
But I don't know, I've not lived there.  
Are Southerners only as friendly as people north  
Of the Watford Gap at Christmas?  
Is it permanent Yuletide on Tyneside?  
But this poem seems too satirical.  
Maybe it should be more empirical.  
Maybe down south I'll reside,  
Spend some time there non Yuletide  
And then I'll be able to decide.

## **Satellite Town**

Living in a town that's just a satellite  
Is nothing less than shite.  
It's no longer a planet in its own right,  
Just one of many moons  
That the planet dwellers won't visit anytime soon.  
The satellite can feel the pull  
From the big city planet  
Where there's no permanent lull.

## **Just Desert**

You only contact me  
When you need something,  
As if I am water, a colourless liquid  
You take for granted.  
You make a desert out of fertility.  
Helping you feels like futility.

## **Orange and Green**

Even when they were caught orange handed  
Nothing was done.  
Seamus had been green  
But after all the things he's seen,  
He became convinced that the Armalite was right.

## **Gone Away**

You've not seen them change their profile  
For a while,  
Or like an event.  
You wonder if they went.  
It was unusual for them to fail  
To reply to your email.  
They've still got their answer phone  
And their ring tone.  
Maybe they're taking a holiday,  
Maybe they've gone away,  
Crossed that border.

## Choice

His time at Harrow made his outlook narrow.  
They are born to win at Winchester.  
Getting to the top is not a great feat in Eton.

It's easy to deride those who can hide  
From poverty's rising tide.  
The titled and the entitled  
With their cut glass noise,  
Little Lord and Lady Fauntleroy's,

But they are still only girls and boys,  
And did not make their school choice

## Buses

Love arrives like buses,  
Only once an hour,  
If you're lucky,  
Once in a blue moon,  
Which won't happen anytime soon,  
The Haley's Comet Sunday rural bus service  
And the lonely wait  
For the next bus  
Seems like an eon.

But you don't like to fuss,  
Even as you see all the couples  
Talking about *us* and *we*,  
Their smug happiness intrusive.  
You wait for that bus so elusive.

## **Obligated**

You felt obligated  
Felt it was your duty,  
Your responsibility  
But after too many selfless acts,  
You felt like Elvis in Vegas,  
At the tail end,  
Seven days a week, twice a night  
For years.  
The neon glamour wore off  
But the Colonel Parker voices in your head  
Pushed you on and on.

Take a well-earned rest,  
Or you'll leave the building for the final time  
Well before time.

## **Respect**

You told her it was ridiculous  
That she believed in a sky fairy,  
But could not understand why she got lairy.

## **Waiting**

I did not want to go out with her  
Not because commitment is frightening,  
And not because I'm expecting love lightning  
Or a thunderbolt,  
But I want at least some electricity  
That will give me a shock,  
Make my world rock  
For a while.  
You might think beggars can't be choosers,  
But those thoughts are for losers.

## **Memories of Running**

People fail to go running  
As they've not done it  
For a long while  
And imagine they couldn't  
Run a mile.  
They have memories of cross country running  
With the unsporting sports teacher gunning  
For someone.  
They remember the pain and the rain  
But they wouldn't be running for a bus  
They'd be running without fuss  
In a group or solitary  
With no whistle and track-suited  
Would-be military.



## **Warriors and Worriers**

When he said warrior  
I thought he said worrier  
About the battle-scarred centre half.  
Most warriors are worriers  
Would never admit it  
Before they go into battle  
Although not all worriers are warriors.  
Warriors worry about the barriers  
To victory.

## **Come Up and See Me (Make Me smile)**

It took me a while  
To realise  
That Come Up and See Me  
(Make Me Smile)  
Was not a happy song.  
I was wrong  
In my initial view.  
The gap between how I saw it  
And how it was  
Was as wide as the Nile.  
Steve Harley was not about to smile.

**Mobiles**

We check up on our phones  
As if we were nurses on ten minutes obs  
And they were patients  
In a mental health unit  
Feeling suicidal.

**Nobody Is Born Forlorn**

Nobody is born forlorn  
We are born brown or pink not blue.  
Its only later that dreams are torn  
Like ripped-up paper aeroplanes.

## **Escape**

Running through the woods,  
I thought I'd found rustic escape,  
But after a while, the sniffer dogs of reality,  
The city and the nine to five,  
Arrive, the hounds of hurry and hassle.

## **Wired**

You drink because you're wired  
Next day you're so tired.  
The electrics aren't working.  
You blow a fuse  
Don't feel plugged in  
Don't feel connected  
You then drink because you're wired.  
Can't remember all that's transpired.  
You no longer feel inspired.

## **Good Year**

Goodyear has gone,  
Leaving the local economy flat  
But finally the Wolves  
Are having a good year.  
Industry is back on the pitch,  
If not outside the ground.  
The players have no inflated egos  
And the dream is not likely to be punctured  
Anytime soon.  
The owners are planning the future,  
the long game,  
but not the long ball game  
where the ball comes back shortly.

## **The Accent Went**

The accent went,  
The sing-song vowel spent.  
They were not the currency  
Towards being taken seriously.

Oral invisibility you wanted  
To master,  
The sound of a newscaster.  
A khaki voice in the battle  
To be accepted.

## **Lazy**

Predictive texting is making us lazy  
With our spelling,  
As if we are pushed around  
In a wheelchair  
And losing our mobility.  
We're losing our spelling ability

## **Clocks Go Back**

Late October  
It's time to fall back  
As the daylight retreats.  
Don't lift your head above  
The parapets  
Until the first vernal showers.  
Hide in the trench until then.  
Wait for spring  
With its recruitment posters  
Inviting you to enlist  
Into the army of optimism  
And the promise of summer.

## **Twitter**

The world is somehow shitter  
Now that Twitter  
No longer means the sound  
Of swallows in the sky,  
Is no longer the word used by Keats.  
It automatically gets a capital T  
As I write this.

## **Running Through a Field of Wheat**

Theresa May has said the worst  
Thing she's ever done  
Was run through a field of wheat  
I think it's that more and more  
Can't afford to eat.  
To austerity she makes no concession  
Leads more and more into recession.  
If she was Catholic  
Could be absolved at confession.

## **Of the Poetic Thomases**

Of the poetic Thomases  
I prefer Edward to Dylan  
His poetry has no car chases  
No special effects  
No flashy celluloid  
Just the story, words and feeling  
No explosions,  
Just spare lyrical emotion.

## **Cyber Kisses**

We exchanged two months of messages  
And mutual kisses into double figures,  
Although only on a screen  
To say you rocked  
My world would be hyperbole  
But suddenly I was blocked.  
The What's App showed just one tick  
Which meant it was an x,  
A no rather than a kiss.  
You erected a cyber fence  
Unassailable  
I speculated about offence  
Had caused this.  
I'd thought I'd built up a picture  
Of your life at least half complete,  
But it turned out  
You never wanted to meet.

## **Magdalene Laundries**

The Magdalene Laundries  
Made those young girls feel dirty,  
Put on a boil wash of blame.

Today I'll claim my green passport,  
Second generation,  
Somewhere I might choose to live  
And not feel the dirt of Catholicism.

## **Time Denier**

I've been a time denier.  
People don't usually say you look your age,  
But they don't hand me the night club flyer.



## **Facebook Never Shows**

Facebook never shows  
The crossings out,  
Paper scrunched in the bin,  
The bum notes  
Only the finished and pristine.

## **Walkers and Talkers**

The people who do f... all  
Will never fall  
Because they never stand up.  
The sit down criticisers should put up  
Stand up or shut up.  
Do the talk only once they've done the walk.  
It takes guts to stand up,  
At first toddle along  
Only slowly walking strong.

## **White Rabbit**

I was going to pop into White Rabbit,  
But it was more ladies that lunch  
Than Naked Lunch.  
Was not Alice through the Looking Glass,  
Down the Rabbit Hole.  
I retreated to my male watering hole.

## **Holding Down a Job**

Holding down a job sounds hard work,  
As if it were a person possessed,  
Needing to be exorcised  
Or a criminal needing to be restrained,

## **Americanisms**

I used to think that all Americanisms  
Were ruining English  
In the way that a pub  
Would have its snugs and lounge removed  
To make it open plan,  
Send ambience down the pan,  
And made into a theme bar.

Used to think all Americanisms were a slaughter  
But English is always changing  
Or we'd all still sound like Chaucer.  
I prefer truck and trash  
To lorry and rubbish  
But awesome is still garbage.

## **Gaelic**

As I'm a second generation  
Soon to be citizen of that green nation,  
I thought a lot about an emerald passport  
I thought about learning Irish,  
Sister language of Scots Gaelic.  
How would I tell them apart on the page;  
Irish has the dashes leaning to the right,  
Non-politically that is,  
Scot's Gaelic to the left,  
Leaning towards each other  
Across the Irish Sea.

## About the author

I've been writing poems for twenty years. This is my twelfth volume of poetry.

This book contains eighty poems. The book costs £4 so that's just 5 pence per poem, a lot cheaper than Faber and Faber (I don't have the right connections). Nearly all of the poems are short. If they were a person they'd be Ronnie Corbett or maybe Napoleon or possibly Prince. Lionel Messi is also quite short but I can't claim that they are that good.

There should not be too many obscure, esoteric references (It's not the Waste Land), but the internet is there to help if needed.

I'm a founder member of DIY Poets, a Nottingham based poetry collective the aims of which are to encourage more people to perform their poetry and get their words into print. It also wants to make poetry less of a minority sport. At the moment it's the croquet of the arts. DIY Poets want it to be cricket at the very least. (There's more about DIY Poets in the advert below).

### **DIY POETS**

A Nottingham based poetry collective trying to rescue poetry from elitism and being ignored.

DIY Poets have monthly meetings upstairs at the **Broadway bar**, Broad Street, Nottingham city centre, 8pm on the first Wednesday of each month.

DIY Poets produce a free poetry magazine based in shops, bars and cafes throughout Nottingham city centre.

DIY Poets produce a quarterly night of spoken word and music at the **Maze** on 257 Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG1 3FT

**For more information phone 07889 765917 or email:  
diypoets@yahoo.co.uk**

**Join us on Facebook  
VISIT OUR WEBSITE @: [www.diypoets.com](http://www.diypoets.com)**

### **Review of Difficult Second Volume:**

“What appears to be a flat back four of everyday prose is illuminated by bursts of free verse magic, placed all over the pages with pinpoint precision by a playmaker of modern poetry. Thatcher, racist humour and narcissism are tackled and exposed for what they are.” **Left Lion magazine**