

WHEN I'M 64 – music for Babyboomer Funerals

by **Simon Smith of Green Fuse**
Contemporary Funerals

The earliest babyboomers are now 64, and many are prepared to think about funerals, sweeping away the 20th Century taboo. If you are a babyboomer, one thing you probably know is that you don't want a Victorian style funeral, with solemn black, a vicar and Abide With Me. What you'll want is something different. And the music definitely must be different, to reflect your own particular tastes.

The best music to play at a funeral is the music the person who has died loved, and which family and friends associate with them. One lady in her sixties came into Showaddywaddy's Under The Moon Of Love and went out to Abba's I Have A Dream, another had Blue Hawaii by Elvis. One man had his heartthrob Doris Day singing The Deadwood Stage ("Whipcrackaway!") at the end of the ceremony. I love music and I have studied hundreds of songs for lyrics, style and tempo, many of which have been played at funerals and some of which are my own personal choices, and have come up with a Babyboomer Top 20 (not in any particular order):

My First, My Last, My Everything – Barry White – the ultimate declaration of love and devotion "I know there's only one like you, There's no way they could have made two. Girl you're my reality, but I'm lost in a dream, You're the first, my last, my everything."



Let It Be – The Beatles - Beautiful and singable. "When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me, Speaking words of wisdom, let it be. And in my hours of

darkness, She is standing right in front of me, Speaking words of wisdom, Let it be."

Break On Through To The Other Side – The Doors - Deep and mysterious "I found an island



in your arms, Country in your eyes." It's all in the title.

We Love You – The Rolling Stones - "We love you, we do." A very moving way for a community to

express their feelings of love and a great song for the end of the ceremony as a valediction.

My Sweet Lord – George Harrison – a classic 70s track to express being reunited with God.

Fire and Rain – James Taylor - A lovely, slow and thoughtful song. "I see fire and I see rain, I see sunny days I thought would never end, I've seen lonely times when I could not find a friend, But I always thought that I'd see you again."

Shootin' Star – Bob Dylan - Slow and very Bob Dylan, "I saw a shooting star tonight, and I thought of you, You were trying to break into another world, a world I never knew, I always kind of wondered if you made it through, Seen a shooting star tonight, and I thought of you."

Into The Fire – Bruce Springsteen – Not only a fabulous song with a great lyric about going "upstairs, into the fire . . . love and duty call you someplace higher", but also a singable and inspiring chorus which goes, "May your strength give us strength, May your faith give us faith, May you hope give us hope, May your love give us love."

Goodbye My Friend – Linda Ronstadt - Brilliant melody and beautiful voice, "Life's so fragile and love's so pure, We can't hold on but we try . . . But I'm OK now, Goodbye my friend, You can go now."

Heaven Can Wait – Meatloaf - The big man at his most sensitive and melodious, if Bat Out Of Hell seems too much try this one "Heaven can wait, And a band of angels wrapped up in my

heart, Will take me through the lonely night,
Through the cold of the dark."

Spirit In The Sky – Norman Greenbaum - Everyone had this single in 1969 with the great guitar riff "When I die and they lay me to rest, I'm gonna go to the place that's the best, When I lay me down to die, I'll be going up to the spirit in the sky."



You're Missing – Bruce Springsteen

- The Boss again, this time with a poignant and beautiful song about how everyday life will never be quite the same again.

"Coffee cups on the

counter, jackets on the chair, Papers on the doorstep but you're not there, Everything is everything, But you're missing."

Turn Turn Turn – The Byrds - To everything there is a season – Ecclesiastes done in a very '60s way.

Pebbles In The Sand – Melanie Safka - For all those (like me) who fell in love with Melanie in the '70s, her wonderful voice rings out above a simple acoustic guitar, about picking up a pebble and "I taught the sea my song, And it sings for me when I am gone."

Rose Of My Heart – Johnny Cash - I can't think of a more beautiful love song, sung so tenderly with a voice full of vulnerability. "You are the rose of my heart, You are the love of my life. A flower not fading or falling apart, You're my harbour in life's restless storm, Rose of my heart."

Who Knows Where The Time Goes – Sandy Denny - A legend with an ethereal voice who died tragically early herself, this is a timeless song of hope and renewal "And I am not alone while my love is near me, I know it will be so until it's time to go. So come the storms in winter and then the birds in spring again, I have no fear of time."

Three Little Birds by Bob Marley – a song to say that everything's gonna be alright, we've had a few people choose this to brighten and comfort at the end of the ceremony.

And a few wonderful instrumental pieces:

Albatross by Fleetwood Mac – late night parties of youth, so romantic.

Samba la Pata by Santana – simply ethereal.

Wild Theme by Dire Straits – a slow one with that great Mark Knopfler sound, with audience appreciation.

Another one that gets me every time is Bobby Jean by Bruce Springsteen. I chose it for someone who committed suicide because of the lyrics "I wish I could have known, I wish I could have called you, Just to say goodbye, Bobby Jean." There's dozens of great songs, including newer ones by the likes of Jeff Buckley (Hallelujah and Eternal Life), Moby (Into The Blue and We Are All Made Of Stars), Coldplay (Don't Panic), Puff Daddy (Missing You). What have you heard that you really loved, or what would you



choose for your own? I'd love to hear your suggestions.

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