

**Carly Simon**  
**Never Been Gone**  
**Liner Notes**

I decided to arrange a guitar-based version of “**The Right Thing To Do.**” I wanted to get closer to the song by trying to play it on a different instrument from the one I originally wrote it on (the piano). I spent a few months working out a pretty simple part on the guitar. The original had been in the key of C. I lowered it to the key of G. I sing lower now; anyway, it only seemed respectful. I should stand on street corners and do it honest.

I finished writing my arrangement and then practiced it for at least a month. I kept losing strategic fingernails, so I had fake nails glued to the ravaged ones on my right hand. While recording the guitar part at Ben’s house for this CD, it was as if I might just break into a Segovia like solo, so fluid I was with the strings in contact with the new nails. That comfort was immediately and uncomfortably truncated by the removal of the nails, which revealed nothing but the Rice Krispies, which I had dreaded.

“**It Happens Every Day**” is a lyric where I paraphrase all the long-winded philosophical ideas I’ve ever had about breaking up. It came so simply, as I listened to 78s from the fifties and started to play the guitar in a 6/8 feel — imagining what Sam Cooke or Otis Redding would sing and how the Everly Brothers would turn a phrase. Thirty years later, Ben and Peter Calo started to fool around with it, changing the feel and time signature. Still, my mind was agitating a flashback to the porch of the General Store where I met a boy who became a man, who became a great love, who then dispensed with my charms, as it were. Of course it’s debatable, but for the sake of the song, we can put emotional accents where we must. The words: “Twist their love into hate” summarizes how easy it is to alliterate your way into a big ol’ divorce. The outro which could be a new song called: “give it to the girls” was based on a bizarre memory of mine. As I was checking out on my big romance and decade of lasting love, there gathered on the sidewalk and on fire escapes a group of men who were giving me the ‘go ahead’ to move my bags into my girlfriend’s apartment. I still have no idea what they thought they were giving me the ‘high sign’ to do, but there they were, chorally encouraging me: “give it to the girls” and it riffed its way back to me during the final day of vocals on the song. “Give it to the girls” sounds like a cheerleading mantra. I felt as if I was the whole basketball team they were cheering for. How could they know? As I say, a bizarre memory. However some things just work as punctuation and then end up giving the song a new ‘twist.’

As I have sung “**Never Been Gone**” over the years, I come to care for it more and more. I wrote the melody as I was attempting a descant to “Greensleeves.” If you sing “**Never Been Gone**” while “Greensleeves” is playing, it just may fit neatly along side (don’t worry if it doesn’t). That’s where that simple anthemic melody comes from. It feels so very much about where I am existing these days as far as ‘pride.’ As usual, when I write a melody out of the blue and there is no existing lyric, I inevitably have trouble. So I call Jake (Jacob Brackman). He wrote the lyric. Many times, though, I have wanted to take credit because it feels as if I am the only one who understands ‘drown my pride in the sea,’ and how could he have known? Especially on the ferry to Martha’s Vineyard after a rejection or a tumble down the charts. It was Ben though, in this reinvention, who turned the time signature from a foxtrot into a waltz, the deviant little son of a gun, and we sang our brains out one night and the following day and the following night and one week later again.

This version of “**Boys In The Trees**” is word-for-word full of my mental pictures of these boys. And it has questions that I still ask as I let go one side of the rubber band around my wrist so it snaps me and reminds me that my thinking is outdated.

I made the most of my Yamaha Motif as I scanned it for sounds that would sonically agree with my words and melody. The vocal I stressed over for quite a while. It came together on a July night in 2009 as Larry watched over my shoulder, rode some of the faders, and I mixed it all on my little 24 track Tascam recorder. Light as a feather. And thank my lucky stars for Larry.

It’s the only track on the album I recorded, engineered and mixed. It turned up a collage of sounds, harmonies and vocals (Sally’s exquisitely gentle answers on the choruses and Forté’s several ‘man’ lines). It’s so fine to have Forté home and back and singing subtle parts that to me are a reminder of when and how so much in my life has changed.

David (Saw) was playing a glassy and folky version of “**Let The Riverrun**” one morning as I came downstairs. Ben joined right away to cement the idea, and I was once again seduced by these Young Turks. We went down to the Caribbean on a crazy vacation and played it endlessly in their very extravagant suite. Great acoustics, and tiny, pretty audiences. I had much help from the Gods and their dispatchers on writing this song and it turns out by the Grace of his Being, that it can be sung in many ways. Thankfully, most of those many ways feature Margaret Bell.

I never thought we could get through the re-record of “**You’re So Vain.**” Ben and David got the least likely guitar part down and I heard it upon entering the kitchen one morning last summer. The idea was to ‘chill’ and sing it. Well, sing it, but HOW? After struggling through a few live shows and turning the high notes an octave down (as in ‘walking onto a yacht’), I finally couldn’t sing it that way on the final recorded version. For days, trying to attain that note, all I did was crack and sound like a parched and strangled cat. Ben really tortured me on this vocal. I love him for it.

This version of “**You Belong To Me**” is a more straightforward R&B treatment than its original — cranked with Ben Thomas’ Funk bass part. My godson, John Forté’s interpretation is lusty to me.... and furious in a good way. Then after hearing it, Ben was jealous that he hadn’t been in the studio when John cut the track. So, the two Bens (Taylor and Thomas) went up to the studio here on the Vineyard and messed it up with finger paints, Marley-Bone, drums and bass. This is the version for playing with the top down. If the top won’t go down, take it off! It’s a little bit of all of our interpretations and I’m proud to be the singer!

Not to be overlooked for an instant, Michael McDonald wrote the melody to “**You Belong To Me,**” and if we stepped on his toes at any time here, I am sorry. But Michael and I never DID tell each other what the hell we were doing during the writing nor the recording of either of our versions. Surprise, Michael. This is for you too.

“**No Freedom**” is a song the lyric of which I wrote a few years ago while on holiday. Anguilla was gorgeous, but it didn’t make me free. As long as I am locked in my brain, I am locked in a maelstrom of uncontrolled and sometimes unbidden thoughts. The lyric is pretty straightforward: “There ain’t no freedom when you got a worryin’ mind.”

Last winter I showed it to David and then Ben, who finished the song in our great kitchen, where the acoustics are so infinitely attractive and flattering to the voice and the guitar, where anything is possible. It is one of the few appearances (“You Belong To Me” being the only other track) of the big drums.

“**That’s The Way I’ve Always Heard It Should Be**” is a dark song. The lyrics are not the lyrics that should be sung at a wedding. It is filled with descriptions that are sad and scary. Can you miss the words: “but soon you’ll cage me on my shelf?” In the same way that “Anticipation” is deceptive about how ‘glorious is the moment,’ “That’s The Way...” is about the dark story that precedes the words about the shelf. For this version, I used a guitar part for the continuous thread around through which the strings and vocals are set. The song pounds away at the chorus as if marriage was supposed to be aspired to, attained, and forever gloried in. Jake wrote the lyrics – but then again, Jake always seems to be able to get in to my head.

By the way, ‘dark’ is the new ‘edgy.’ I am not going to use it again in any of the descriptions of the songs I write. Nor in any of my journal entries. The word ‘dark’ stops here!

I owe the song: “**Coming Around Again**” to Mike Nichols. He is a mentor to many people, but he’s my mentor more.

I had already composed an original version of “Itsy Bitsy Spider” and, when coming to writing the main and only song for the movie “Heartburn,” it seemed as if a little Angel (the one in charge of ‘bookends’) came down on my shoulder and a melody emerged to nearly the same accompaniment as “Itsy Bitsy Spider.” I changed a few chords and soon, there was the revelation to me of the complete song. More acoustic and less-produced, this track is without the crazy in-love-with-Russ-Kunkel drum loop. Then I improvised a new vocal on the outro, which is now my favorite way of having a stream of consciousness moment. The improvisation is wistful and wise to me. It teaches me where I am with that song’s openly private sorrows. It revealed itself to me singing with nary a left-brain moment.

“**Anticipation**” is a song reflective and inclusive of an emotion I couldn’t have evoked even if I tried, when I wrote it in 1971. It has an easier to read irony in the lyric “And I tell you how easy it feels to be with you...but I rehearsed those words just late last night...” How difficult it really is to feel in the present. Present pleasure lasts only second to second. It drifts off far too fast.

“**Songbird**”: Thirty-nine years ago I wrote a song about how NYC emptied out on holidays. I didn’t go much further in the composition (called, I suppose, “Hallelujah For The Year”), before a bird landed on my brick windowsill on East 35th Street. From that point on, I began singing in a way as if the songbird had heard me playing in my living room, and had agreed with me. I changed to accommodate the very minute, musical variations of that bird. It felt like the so-looked-for “message” in one’s life; that everything is collaboration with the universe. The “**Songbird**” became the song.

I only re-found this recording (originally, squeaky piano stool and all) on a Walkman, in 2009. I gave it to Frank Filipetti to see whether it was salvageable. He was hopeful. I added a second vocal on to the second verse, which transits to a further new verse and vocal, written this past winter, cold and raw.

This song is a tip of the hat to the old me when I wasn’t writing for anyone but myself. Ben guided me through the new last verse. More tips of more hats, including the evocative string writing; and including Frank Filipetti who brought the sounds of the song into an available universe.

#### **Note to Frank**

*Whenever it says this on any album of mine: “so and so and Frank Filipetti,” it means: “Frank Filipetti.” Whenever it says: “so and so with Frank Filipetti” it means: “Frank Filipetti.”*

*He is the driver. He has the car. He knows the car and its engine and its body. Frank has always been so encouraging to me. I feel good enough to ride in the passenger seat.*

*When Frank wants to be a part of a project, it means the project will be twice as good as if he had not signed on in the first place. In recording and engineering **Never Been Gone**, he followed a path down a wandering and winding and sometimes dangerous road. He drove the car. What was the car he drove anyway? I think an ancient and very cared for one. Not a dent anywhere. And you never know the year or the make. Don’t need to.*

*It’s Frank’s car. Let’s go to Italy and make our next album. You can drive ‘cross the Atlantic, no?*