

Dan Fogelberg: A Remembrance

Dan Hardison

During the 1970's there was a small music club in Nashville, Tennessee, called the Exit/In that was "the place" for listening to live music. On one particular evening after dinner with a friend, we walked across the street to the alley entrance (hence its name) of the Exit/In. At the door, we asked who would be playing that night – it was Dan Fogelberg.

At the time, I had not heard of Dan Fogelberg. We were told at the door that he was a folk singer/songwriter who played guitar and piano, and would be performing solo. That was good enough for me. The Exit/In had a separate bar and a "listening room" with tables that provided a small, intimate setting for listening to live music. We sat within a few feet of the small, low stage, and Dan Fogelberg. The performance that night was incredible and I was a new fan.

Fogelberg was living in Nashville at the time doing session work and trying to get his musical career off the ground. He had just released his first album "Home Free". That first album was not a great commercial success, but it got enough attention to have Joe Walsh produce his second album. That album, "Souvenirs", along with the single "Part of the Plan", took off and a star was born.

Fogelberg's career went through a succession of 15 studio albums – most going gold or platinum. His most successful song was the 1979 love song "Longer." However, it would be the following double-album that would take him to the peak of his career. "The Innocent Age" was a very personal album that produced what would become his most memorable songs: "Leader of the Band," a tribute to his bandleader father, and "Same Old Lang Syne," a song about an actual chance meeting with an old love at Christmastime.

His music was usually defined as soft rock, but he also recorded country, bluegrass, and jazz. His songwriting was often personal, reflecting on emotional issues. He was also known for his live performances and through the years I was also able to see him

perform at the Opry House in Nashville, a coliseum show at Auburn University in Alabama, and at Walnut Creek Amphitheater in Raleigh, North Carolina. These later performances were far different from that early setting at the Exit/In.

Fogelberg's last studio album was "Full Circle" released in 2003. It was a fitting album because it was not only one of his best, but was also a return to the music he was recording early in his career encompassing the same heart felt sound and poignant writing. As he was preparing for a tour in 2004, he received a diagnosis of prostate cancer. With his musical career on hold, he battled the cancer, but on December 16th, 2007, Dan Fogelberg died. He was 56.

Fogelberg was part of a musical era that brought the songwriter to the forefront with the likes of James Taylor, Carole King, and Jackson Browne. His music found a home along with the folk/country-rock sounds of The Eagles, and Crosby Stills and Nash. With his soft contemplative songs, it seems almost ironic that one of his best friends was Jimmy Buffett. Of his own work Fogelberg said, "You've got to just follow your heart and do your best work... There is no doubt in my mind or heart that everything I've done is exactly what I intended to do."

And now, he is gone. In his passing, he has left us with thirty-plus years of wonderful music – and memories.

And down in the canyon
The smoke starts to rise.
It rides on the wind
Till it reaches your eyes.
When faced with the past
The strongest man cries...cries.

And here is a sunrise
To set on your sill.
The ghosts of the dawn
Moving near.
They pass through your sorrow
And leave you quite still...
Sitting among souvenirs.

— Dan Fogelberg, from *Souvenirs*



Rising to the Morning
Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina
Photo by Dan Hardison