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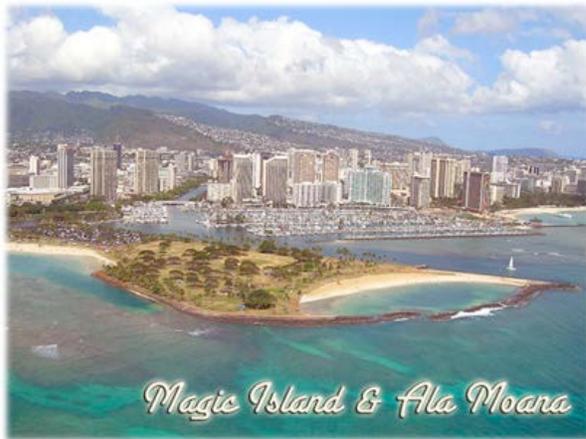
MAGIC MOMENT ON MAGIC ISLAND

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A Paper Presentation by LEE C. PAYTON - Original Content © 2013.



A) *Sally from Beijing*

It was Tuesday, January 8th, 2013, the last day of the HUIC Arts, Humanities and Social Services Conference in Ala Moana. That morning I participated in a fantastic workshop on drawing for the non-creative. When the Conference ended, I really needed to wind down before exploring Oahu during the remainder of the week. I took my guitar out to the big tree on the southern most stretch of Magic Island to practice and relax and enjoy the sunset.



I had been practicing for about an hour when a young girl walked up with her chaperone, and asked if she could join me. She said her name was Sally, and that she went to high school in Beijing, and that every year a group of students would come to Hawaii to study. In my experience as a professional performer, sharing music in such an intimate context can be very rewarding, often as much as a sold-out venue. Sally asked if I would play a song for her. I asked her which artist was her favorite. She said Taylor Swift, but I didn't know any Taylor Swift songs.

I played several songs that I did know, including *I Saw Her Standing There* - the Beatles hit, which goes over big with everyone in every crowd, everywhere I've ever played it. Sally didn't recognize the Beatles song, or any of the other songs.

She asked if I would play her an original song that I had written. I played a song from my CD Last Dance entitled *Too Late to Stop Now*, a song that also has an interesting story behind it. Sally said she liked the song and the melody, but that it was difficult to follow the lyrics and the story because of the language translation between English and Chinese / Mandarin.

I said, 'Sally, this is a test. I'm going to play a song that I *know* you will know. I may not play it perfectly, but this is a test. This song will cross cultural barriers, language barriers, and travel through time. Please sing it with me.' And I played for her *Take Me Home, Country Roads* by John Denver. She knew every single word, and sang along with the entire song! No difficulty with translation whatsoever!

It was truly a Magic Moment... on Magic Island.



I was impressed and reassured by the power of song. Sally asked if she had passed the test. I said, 'With flying colors!'

When I told her *why* she knew the song, Sally said it always amazed her the timeless, boundless, limitless power of song, music and melody to transcend language barriers, translation barriers, cultural barriers, and to even travel through time.

I couldn't have said it better myself.

Music is an ultimate universal language. It innately contains the power and emotion to transcend translation, to conjoin cultural heritage, and to create Magic Moments between human beings, like the one with Sally from Beijing. It is interesting to note, that Sally is in high school in China in 2013... *Take Me Home, Country Roads* was released in New York in 1971! This is a difference of over forty years! Sally couldn't have been over fourteen. How is this possible? Is it purely magic? Or is something else going on?

B) *Take Me Home, Country Roads* by John Denver

> Play DVD Chapter 3 (TRT 04:00 minutes) - Documentary [John Denver Remembered](#)

In the early 1970's John Denver performed at Constitution Hall in Washington DC. Coincidentally, the President and the Premiere of China were in attendance. After the concert, the Premiere, being obviously moved by Denver's style, his songs, and his repertoire, asked for copies of his album. Denver's manager asked how many cassettes he wanted, and the Premiere said '500 copies.'

Years later, when John Denver was a star in the United States, he wanted to go to a place where he would not be recognized, where he had never traveled to before, where he'd never recorded songs or performed concerts. So off he goes to China. As Denver put it, when he got off the plane in Shanghai, dozens of people started gathering around him and pointing, saying 'John Denver! That's John Denver!' This completely baffled the American music star, as he had never been to China before, as a visitor or a performer.

It turned out that the Premiere had taken the 500 cassettes and given them to all the radio stations in China. Prior to this, Chinese radio stations had not been granted permission to play Western music. John Denver's album was the only American music allowed to be played on Chinese radio, and in just a short time, *Take Me Home, Country Roads* became a hit in China. It has become one of the most popular songs in the country, and remains synonymous with Western popular music and culture. For her whole life in Beijing, Sally probably heard this one song more than any other.

C) *Too Late to Stop Now - An Original Song by Lee C. Payton*

The original song that I played for Sally, *Too Late to Stop Now* began in the recording studio as the closing song on my debut full-length album, entitled Catharsis, © 1993. This album has since evolved into two different CDs.

Too Late to Stop Now was written on the piano in the key of F, which is often times the key in which gospel songs are written. The basic structure of the song is that of straight-ahead country rock with verse/chorus/verse/chorus, etc. But the lyrics, the key it's written in, and the overall message, are that of a gospel song.

> Play Segment of Original Studio CD Recording - Key of F

As I began performing the song live, it was easier to play and sounded better on acoustic guitar, when transposed down a half-step and performed in the key of E.

The CD Live at the Monticello Opera House features the only live performance of the song in the original key of F, and features a very rare rock and roll performance from trained opera singer Jessica Wright. After the Opera House gig, I performed *Too Late to Stop Now* on solo acoustic guitar for many years in the key of E.

> Play Segment of Live Recording from Monticello Opera House CD - Key of F

Very similar to taking my guitar to Magic Island to practice, while living in Chicago, I often take my instrument to the lakefront at Montrose Harbor to practice. Ancient Greek philosophers would practice their orations by the seaside, because the volume level of the crashing waves trained them to project their voices.

Something about playing music outdoors seems to increase the connectivity with Life, with the Audience, with Inspiration, and with the Muse that is benevolent to both creators of the arts and consumers of the arts. There have been countless Magic Moments whenever music is involved, more so than with any other artistic medium I have experimented.

On the way to Montrose Harbor is Graceland Cemetery, which was often intriguing but always closed. Cemeteries offer tranquil walks, meditative moments, and awesome names for songs, characters, albums, scripts and screenplays. It's a simple creative strategy really... dead people can't sue you.



On one particular outing, the gates to Graceland Cemetery were actually open, so I finally got to walk around inside the place.

It was tranquil and meditative enough for a brief diversion, but there is only one gate in and out of there. Having never toured Graceland before, I thought I would find a gate at the opposite end from where I entered. There wasn't one.

After 30-minutes trekking through the bowels of Graceland Cemetery and no luck finding another way out, I *really* wanted to be out of there. It became intensely uncomfortable realizing I was stuck in the realm of the deceased when I should be singing and playing music in the land of the living... or at least out by the lakefront.



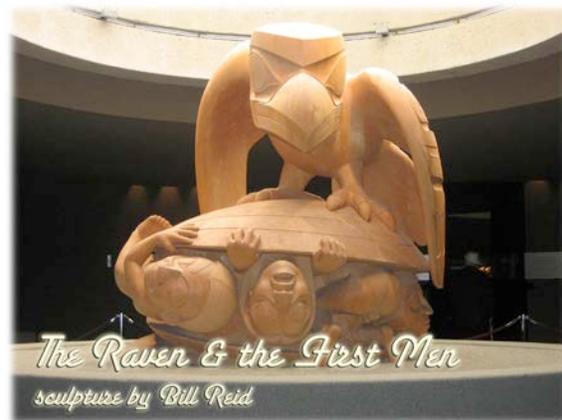
The main gate finally came into view and I was extremely relieved. Suddenly, the Big Voice (call it what you will... The Muse, Inner Conscience, God, whatever...), the Voice spoke to me, as loud and as clear as any songbird or human voice -

'You have the way out... I want a song. Fair trade.'

At that very moment, I looked down at the ground where I stood, and at my feet was a black raven feather.

Even though I *really* wanted to get out of that cemetery, I sat down underneath a tree, broke out the guitar, and played *Too Late to Stop Now*, with the original lyrics, for the last and final time in the key of E.

Fair trade.



When I got to the lakefront to practice that day, I transposed *Too Late to Stop Now* down another whole step into the key of D. I also re-wrote some of the lyrics to reflect this transcendent, life-affirming experience in Graceland Cemetery.

The song now comes across with more of a folk/roots rock sound, than as a gospel song. It is also much easier to play on acoustic guitar in the key of D, and better suits my innate vocal range and expressiveness. And the new lyrics give the song a more universal overall message.

After my presentation at the HUIC Conference in August of 2012, my co-presenter and I had one of those deep, philosophical conversations that lasted late into the evening on the veranda at the Waikiki Marriott.

At one point in our discussion, the reflection arose, that it makes little sense to define a person's belief system by an ultimate destination for mind, body, soul or spirit.

The Ride Of Life allows us constant reminders that, at some point we should be far enough along in our respective journeys that it is too late to stop now.



So without hesitation, I broke out my guitar and played *Too Late To Stop Now*.

Just as I started the song, a young African girl with beautiful braids walked by. She stopped, turned her ear toward us and then stayed there throughout, listening intently to the entire song. She couldn't have been more than 6 or 8 years old.

Her attention span was most impressive.

On our way to the elevator, she ran up to us, tugged on my shirt, and said, 'I love your music!' Then she disappeared with her family.

In that moment I wish that I had a CD to give her.



D) *Sally from Beijing - reprise*

I did have a copy of my Acoustic Kitchen CD at the Magic Moment on Magic Island, and gave it to Sally from Beijing when we parted ways. She took the CD, but said she didn't know if she was allowed to take such gifts, or to keep them.

I said, 'Sally, if anyone in China asks you about me giving you that CD, just tell them that John Denver said it was OK.'

> The Capstone of this Paper Presentation will be a live performance of Too Late to Stop Now, with lyric translations into Hawaiian and Chinese. If possible, I would like to arrange for local Hawaiian vocal accompaniment, musical accompaniment, and/or Hula dance interpretation to be performed with the song, as a cross-cultural group ensemble.

TOO LATE TO STOP NOW

From the CD *Last Dance* - © Lee C. Payton 1993 & 2013

Verse 1 (Partial translations into Hawaiian)

Too tired to climb the mountain, too drunk to swim the sea
Wings are tired of trying to fly too high
I've seen a thousand faces, looked behind their eyes
Lived some lifetimes that they left behind
Once upon a time I tried to end it all to soon
But a Voice inside my head sang out to me

Chorus (English, then translation into Chinese)

Too late baby, too late now - Life is what you make of it
It's too late to stop now

Verse 2 (Partial translations into Hawaiian)

Too blind to see the future - Running from the past
Buried beneath feelings deep inside
There's no second chance to do it all again
There's no time to swim in tears I've cried
Once again she came to me and set my head on fire
And the flames dried the tears from my eyes

Chorus (English, then translation into Chinese)

Too late baby, too late now - Life is what you make of it
It's too late to stop now

Verse 3 (Partial translations into Hawaiian)

I once tried to justify pollution in my soul
But the Truth will be the answer in the end
When it comes the time and you look back on the Ride
We got to leave this world without regret
Can't take nothing with when you go - It's all right here
Until the Universe decides to call you Home

Repeat Chorus (Participant's Native Languages Simultaneously...)

Too late baby, too late now - Life is what you make of it
It's too late to stop now

**ENGLISH to HAWAIIAN Translation for Lyrics in
TOO LATE TO STOP NOW - © Lee C. Payton 1993, 2013**

LYRICS - Verse 01	ENGLISH WORD	HAWAIIAN WORD
<i>Too tired to climb the mountain</i>	Too	Loa
	tired	Luhi
	climb	Pi'i
	the	ka
	mountain	mauna
<i>Too drunk to swim the sea</i>	Too	Loa
	drunk	Ona
	swim	Au
	the	ka
	sea	moana
<i>Wings are tired of trying to fly too high</i>	Wing	Eheu
	tired	Luhi
	try	Ho'a'o
	fly	nalo
	too	Loa
	high	Ki'eki'e
	(highest)	Ki'eki'e loa
<i>I've seen a thousand faces looked inside their eyes</i>	Seen	kumaka
	thousand	kaukani
	face	maka
	look	nana
	inside	Loko, i
	their	o lau
	(eyesight)	'Ike maka
<i>Lived some lifetimes that they left behind</i>	Live	noho (dwell)
	some	Kekahi, wahi
	lifetime	ka wa e ola ana
	they	Laua, lakou
	left	ha'alele (departed)
	behind	ma ke kua
<i>Once upon a time I tried to end it all too soon</i>	Once	ho'okahi wa, kekahi wa
	date (time)	Manawa, la, makahiki
	try	Ho'a'o
	end	Pau 'ana, panina, hope
	(ending)	Hopena
	it	la, 'oia, kela
	all	Apau, pauloa, pau
	too - soon	Loa, nui loa - Koke, auane'i, koe

**ENGLISH to HAWAIIAN Translation for Lyrics in
TOO LATE TO STOP NOW - © Lee C. Payton 1993, 2013**

LYRICS - Verse 01, contd.	ENGLISH WORD	HAWAIIAN WORD
<i>But a Voice inside my head</i>	But	Aka, na'e, aia na'e
<i>sang out to me</i>	Voice	leo
	inside	Loko, i
	head	po'o
	sing	Mele, himeni, kani
	to me	i o'u
LYRICS -	ENGLISH	HAWAIIAN
Verse 02	WORD	WORD
<i>Too blind to see the future</i>	Too	Loa
	blind	makapo
	see	Ike, nana
	the	ka
	future	Mua, ka wa mahope
<i>Running from the past</i>	(Run)	hoholo
	from	Mai, mai...mai
	past	hala, ka'a i hope
<i>Buried beneath feelings</i>	(Burial)	kanu, kanu 'ana
<i>deep inside</i>	beneath	lalo
	feelings	na'au
	deep	hohonu, kuhohonu
	inside	Loko, i
<i>There's no second chance</i>	(Therefore)	No laila, no ia mea
<i>to do it all again</i>	no	'a'ole, 'a'ohe
	second	lua, kualua
	chance	manawa
	act (to do)	hana
	it	la, 'oia, kela
	all	Apau, pauloa, pau
	again	hou, hana hou
<i>Once again she came to me</i>	Once	ho'okahi wa, kekahi wa
<i>and set my head on fire</i>	again	hou, hana hou
	she (or he)	'Oia, ia, 'oia nei, 'oia ala
	(come)	hele mai, mai
	to me	i o'u
	set	Kau, ho'onoho
	my	ko'u, ka'u, ku'u (singular possessed object)
	head - fire	po'o - ahi

**ENGLISH to HAWAIIAN Translation for Lyrics in
TOO LATE TO STOP NOW - © Lee C. Payton 1993, 2013**

LYRICS - Verse 02, contd.	ENGLISH WORD	HAWAIIAN WORD
<i>And the flames dried</i>	And	A (preceeds verbs)
<i>the tears from my eyes</i>	And	a me (preceeds nouns)
	(fire)	ahi
	dried	malo'o
	tear	weeping: waimaka
	from	Mai, mai...mai
	my	ko'u, ka'u, ku'u (singular possessed object)
	eye	maka
LYRICS - Verse 03	ENGLISH WORD	HAWAIIAN WORD
<i>I once tried to justify</i>	Once	ho'okahi wa, kekahi wa
<i>pollution in my soul</i>	try	Ho'a'o
	my	ko'u, ka'u, ku'u (singular possessed object)
	soul	uhane
	(spirit)	Uhane, wailua
<i>But the Truth will be the</i>	But	Aka, na'e, aia na'e
<i>Answer in the End</i>	Truth	Oia'l'o
	Answer	Pane, ha'ina
	End	Pau 'ana, panina, hope
<i>When it comes the time and</i>	When	Declarative future:
<i>you look back on the ride</i>		I ka manawa...e,i ka wa..e
	it	la, 'oia, kela
	(come)	hele mai, mai
	the	Ka, ke (singular); na (plural)
	date (time)	Manawa, la, makahiki
	you	'oe (singular); 'olua (dual),
	you	'oukou (plural)
	look	nana
	(backward)	I hope
	on	i, ma, ma luna o
	the	Ka, ke (singular); na (plural)
	ride	Holo, holoholo, kau
<i>We got to leave this World</i>	We	Kaua (dual, inclusive), kakou (plural, inclusive),
<i>without regret</i>	leave	ha'alele, ho'i
	this	Keia, ia, 'oia nei
	World	Ao, houna
	without - regret	Nele, 'ole - mihi

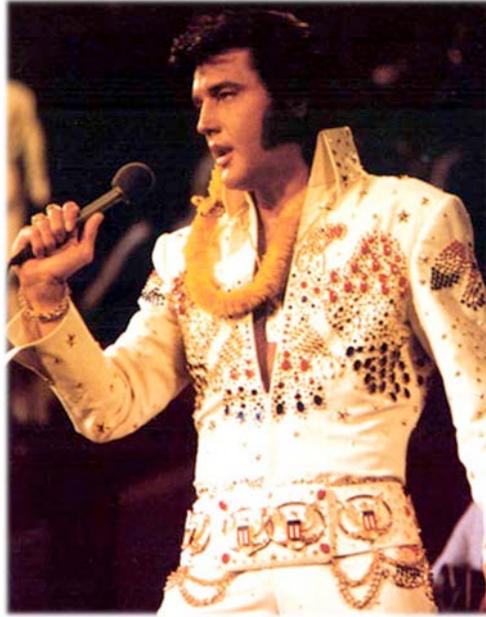
**ENGLISH to HAWAIIAN Translation for Lyrics in
TOO LATE TO STOP NOW - © Lee C. Payton 1993, 2013**

LYRICS - Verse 03, contd.	ENGLISH WORD	HAWAIIAN WORD
<i>Can't take nothing with you when</i>	Can't (cannot)	'A'ole hiki, hiki 'ole
<i>you go - it's all right here</i>	take	lawe, lawe aku
	nothing	'ole, mea 'ole, 'a'ohē mea
	with	me
	you	'oe (singular); 'olua (dual),
	you	'oukou (plural)
	when	Declarative future:
		I ka manawa...e,i ka wa..e
	you	'oe (singular); 'olua (dual),
	you	'oukou (plural)
	go	Hele, hele aku, haele
	it	la, 'oia, kela
	all	Apau, pauloa, pau
	right	Direction, 'Akau
	right	Privilege. Kulenana
	(righteous)	pono
<i>Until the Universe decides</i>	Until	A, a hiki i
<i>to call you Home</i>	Universe	Ao holo'oko'a
	(choose)	koho, ho'okoho
	call	hea, kahea
	call (name)	kapa
	you	'oukou (plural)
	Home	Home, kauhale
	(homeland)	one hanau
<i>Chorus in English</i>		
		<i>Chorus in Chinese</i>

Too late baby
Too late now
Life is what you make of it
It's too late to stop now

宝宝太晚了
现在太晚了
生活是你自己的
现在为时已晚停止

Bǎobǎo tài wǎnle
Xiànzài tài wǎnle
Shēnghuó shì nǐ zìjǐ de
Xiànzài wéi shí yǐ wǎn tíngzhǐ



E) *GROOVY SUMMATION - Elvis is Everywhere!*

- I met Sally from Beijing on January 8th - January 8th is Elvis Presley's birthday.
- The original inspiration for Elvis' 1973 Aloha from Hawaii via Satellite Concert came from a visit by U.S. President Richard Nixon to... China.
- The last day of my second visit to Hawaii was on January 13th. I spent the day on Magic Island playing music under the sentient eyes of Diamond Head. Elvis' Aloha from Hawaii Concert took place on the night of January 13th.
- I had one of those 'life-affirming moments' with my song *Too Late to Stop Now* at Graceland Cemetery in Chicago. Elvis' home in Memphis, Tennessee is a former church named Graceland.
- After my presentation at the HUIC Conference in August of 2012, I took my guitar to the top of Diamond Head Crater and played a music offering to the god of peace. The song I played was Elvis' #1 hit from 1969, *Suspicious Minds*.
- John Denver performed *Take Me Home, Country Roads* during his 1995 Wildlife Concert, with James Burton playing the dobro. James Burton was the lead guitarist for the duration of Elvis Presley's TCB Band.
- Sally and I met at Magic Island in 2013, and she knew *Take Me Home, Country Roads*, which was released in 1971 - that's a difference of 42 years. Elvis was 42 years old when he returned to his Celestial Home.

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