

The Cable And The Wheel

Words and music: Pat Drummond.

Dateline- Wiseman's Ferry, New South Wales.

Since 1991, I have spent a great part of my life travelling; a Voss-like journey, some might argue, through the homes and hearts of Australians in search of the values that define my homeland. With the birth of our much loved new daughter Josie (some 13 years after we thought our family was complete) I have come to realise, with some sadness, that these rather romantic periods of rambling, and the wonderful songs they have brought to me, are coming to an end. Driving home, one evening along the northern side of the mighty Hawkesbury River, I came at dusk to the historic settlement of Wiseman's Ferry and to an unexpected conversation with a young ferry driver. This song, about the nature of reality and perception, is for those of us who will work in one place all our lives. It is a reminder of the human heart's capacity to transcend the limitations of our circumstance.

Tim crosses the river a hundred times a day.

It is a life spent travelling nowhere for a ferrymaster's pay.

I said, "Every now and then, as you watch the river bend,

don't you wish that you were sailing away?"

And he gazed up at the mountain, as if searching for a sign,

and said " I'll answer you your question if you'll answer one of mine."

Chorus: I am sailing a river that is rolling to the sea.

I am watching the light upon the mountain change.

When the river turns to fire at the dusk of every day,

I am sailing away, I am sailing away, across the river, cross the river to the range.

Then he pointed to the water off the ferry's starboard side.

"Is it the cable or the wheel that is in motion through the tide?"

Though vision chose the cable and reason cried 'the wheel'

My spirit said 'The river on the steel!'

Then he looked up at the mountain with a gesture of his hand.

As the sunlight moved across it I began to understand.

**We are sailing on a river that is flowing to an ocean;
that is moving round a planet; that is constantly in motion.**

**It rolls across the universe and spins around the sun
and, at the end of every day, we are a million miles away
from the place we were when the day was first begun.**

**It is the fire on the water and the light upon the range
which speaks to me of all the distance we have done.**

**As we pulled into St. Albans and the gates swung open wide,
I parked my car and rode the ferry to the other side;
while every worker in an office; every prisoner in a cell;
rode beside me as a voyager as well.**

**While a stream of day commuters cross that river in their cars,
the captain of the wheelhouse sails his ferry through the stars.**

Chorus: I am sailing a river that is rolling to the sea.

I am watching the light upon the mountain change.

When the river turns to fire at the dusk of every day,

I am sailing away, I am sailing away, across the river, 'cross the river to the range.