

GEOFF WILKINS' SIXTH BLOG – RANDY NEWMAN

And now for something completely different. First, the now obligatory Wikipedia quote:

Randall Stuart "Randy" Newman (born November 28, 1943) is an American singer-songwriter, arranger, composer, and pianist who is known for his distinctive voice, mordant (and often satirical) pop songs, and for film scores.

So he has had two separate musical careers. The film scores were the “family business” – he had three uncles who were noted Hollywood film-score composers, and three cousins in the same trade. He won two film-score Oscars - for *Monsters, Inc.*, and *Toy Story 3* – and was nominated 20 times.

I am more a fan of his “mordant (and often satirical) pop songs”. A crucial third adjective should be added – “ironic”. Hardly any of these songs should be taken at face-value. For a starter, try ‘Rednecks’, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nGw_vAnqPI. Newman adopts the persona of a racist Southern redneck, and we hope and presume that’s not really him. But the final verse declares that “the North has set the nigger free”, and then briefly considers what this “freedom” really consists of.

Or take ‘Sail Away’, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chaP4MCXp4w>. The irony here is that at first hearing it’s not immediately apparent what this gently lyrical song is about – the Slave Trade.

And try ‘Political Science’, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGO42gvCSPI>, on “American foreign policy” (“Let’s drop the big one now”).

Or ‘Short People’, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NvgLkuEtkA>.

Enjoy!



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