



Listening to Sugar Man

Folk music of Sixto Rodriguez

Lyrics

SUGAR MAN (1970)

Sugar man, won't you hurry
'Cos I'm tired of these scenes
For a blue coin won't you bring back
All those colors to my dreams

Silver magic ships you carry
Jumpers, coke, sweet Mary Jane
Sugar man met a false friend
On a lonely dusty road
Lost my heart when I found it
It had turned to dead black coal

Silver magic ships you carry
Jumpers, coke, sweet Mary Jane
Sugar man you're the answer
That makes my questions disappear
Sugar man 'cos I'm weary
Of those double games I hear
Sugar man, Sugar man, Sugar man, Sugar man,
Sugar man, Sugar man, Sugar man
Sugar man, won't you hurry
'Cos I'm tired of these scenes
For the blue coin won't you bring back
All those colors to my dreams

Silver magic ships you carry
Jumpers, coke, sweet Mary Jane
Sugar man met a false friend
On a lonely dusty road
Lost my heart when I found it
It had turned to dead black coal

Silver magic ships you carry
Jumpers, coke, sweet Mary Jane
Sugar man you're the answer
That makes my questions disappear

CAUSE (1971)

Cause I lost my job two weeks before Christmas
And I talked to Jesus at the sewer
And the Pope said it was none of his God-damned business
While the rain drank champagne

My Estonian Archangel came and got me wasted
Cause the sweetest kiss I ever got is the one I've never tasted
Oh but they'll take their bonus pay to Molly McDonald,
Neon ladies, beauty is that which obeys, is bought or borrowed

Cause my heart's become a crooked hotel full of rumours
But it's I who pays the rent for these fingered-face out-of-tuners
and I make 16 solid half hour friendships every evening

Cause your queen of hearts who is half a stone
And likes to laugh alone is always threatening you with leaving
Oh but they play those token games on Willy Thompson
And give a medal to replace the son of Mrs. Annie Johnson

Cause they told me everybody's got to pay their dues
And I explained that I had overpaid them
So overdue I went to the company store
and the clerk there said that they had just been invaded
So I set sail in a teardrop and escaped beneath the doorsill

Cause the smell of her perfume echoes in my head still
Cause I see my people trying to drown the sun
In weekends of whiskey sours
Cause how many times can you wake up in this comic book
and plant flowers?

Musical notation for the first system of 'Sugar Man'. It includes a vocal line with lyrics: 'Sug - ar Man, _____ won't you met a false friend you're the'. Above the vocal line are chord symbols: S Am and Am(maj7). Below the vocal line is a piano accompaniment with a bass line.

Musical notation for the second system of 'Sugar Man'. It includes a vocal line with lyrics: 'bur - ry? 'Cause I'm ti - red of these scenes. For a blue false friend on a lone - ly, dust - y road. Lost my heart, an - swer that makes my ques - tions dis - ap - pear. Sug - ar Man,'. Above the vocal line are chord symbols: Dm7, E7, Dm7, E7, Am. Below the vocal line is a piano accompaniment with a bass line.

Historical and cultural context

Folk musician Sixto Rodriguez (aka Rodriguez, Jesus Rodriguez, and Sugar Man) is the sixth son of Mexican immigrants who moved to the American midwest for work in the 1920s. Many of Rodriguez's songs, including "Cause" (the last song he ever recorded before being dropped from his record label in December 1971), reflect the struggles of the marginalized inner-city poor who often used alcohol and other drugs to cope with harsh conditions.

Until recently Rodriguez was largely unknown, except in South Africa and a few neighbouring nations where people were inspired by his lyrics. Even Rodriguez himself was unaware of his fans and the sale of more than 500,000 of his records. He worked for decades for low wages as a labourer and advocate for the poor in Detroit, Michigan, raising a family in a run-down house he bought for \$50 in a government auction in the 1970s, and graduating from university with a degree in philosophy in the 1980s.

Rodriguez learned of his overseas fame and influence in the late 1990s, after his daughter stumbled upon an online request from South African fans for information about the thought-to-be-dead singer. (A rumor had been swirling that Rodriguez had set himself on fire on stage.) The fans' quest for answers about Rodriguez led to the creation of the 2012 award-winning film "Searching for Sugar Man" and, ultimately, the reintroduction of a musical poet to the world.

These days Rodriguez tours the world, playing his music and making money from his work. But he gives most of his money away to his family, and others who need it. And he still lives in the house he bought for \$50. Why? Perhaps his song "Rich Folks Hoax" offers a clue:

*The poor create the rich hoax
And only late breast-fed fools believe it
So don't tell me about your success
Nor your recipes for my happiness
Smoke in bed
I never could digest
Those illusions you claim to have*