



A LOOK AT A TIMELESS
CLASSIC: **LITTLE RIVER BAND'S**
"REMINISCING," WRITTEN BY
GUITARIST **GRAEHAM GOBLE**.
BY **JOE MATERA**

Graeham Goble, founding member of Little River Band, playing with BSG (Birtles Shorrocks Goble); in concert for a live recording of a DVD and CD at the Forum Theatre in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

REMINISCING

As a founding member of Australia's legendary Little River Band, Graeham Goble is one of the greatest songwriters to come out of that country. Goble wrote two of Little River Band's most popular and biggest selling singles, "Reminiscing" and "Lady." "Reminiscing" has been Goble's calling card ever since with the song having become part of American culture and psyche. It has even earned Goble a BMI Special Citation of Achievement Award for having accumulated a whopping five million plays on U.S. commercial radio. Four of his other songs, "Lady," "Take It Easy on Me," "The Other Guy" and "The Night Owls," also earned him similar BMI awards. Goble has been a dedicated archivist during his illustrious career and has kept a record of all the dates when his songs were written.

REGIS MARTIN/GETTY IMAGES

"I wrote 'Reminiscing' on April 9, 1977," remembers Goble when asked about how he came to write the song. As he answers my question, he looks through his diary entry to confirm the details. "We had just done *Countdown* (Australian 1970s television music show) on that day and while we were sitting backstage, we were just playing our guitars and our lead guitarist David Briggs showed me this chord shape, a jazz-sounding C9 chord. I hadn't previously known that shape at the time, and so I learned the chord as it was a new chord for me, and I really liked the sound of it. Afterwards when I went home later that afternoon, I got my guitar out again and I just put my hands on that C9 chord shape and within half an hour, I had written the whole of 'Reminiscing.' When it comes to my songwriting, I normally write out of

hearing a melody, and back in those days the lyrics would always be attached to it, too. Playing that chord triggered me hearing the song. I could hear that melody of 'Reminiscing' playing in my head."

Lyrical inspiration for the song came from Goble's love of American popular culture of the 1940s and 1950s, when black-and-white movie musicals and the sounds of jazz reigned supreme. "When I was growing up, the fantasy world I inhabited, was the fantasy world of the black-and-white movies from 1940s and 1950s such as the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers movies and even the earlier movies of Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy, and of course, all the musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein. And the big-band era, too, like the Glenn Miller Orchestra, and the jazz guys like Count Basie. That was what I loved, and to me, it

is still the best music ever written. I just love all of that."

With the song now written, Goble took it to the rest of the band, who were in the middle of recording their fourth studio album, *Sleeper Catcher*, at Armstrong Audio Visual in Melbourne with American producer John Boylan helming the recording sessions. Upon hearing the newly written song, Boylan suggested a change in its structure, and the advice proved to be invaluable.

"We did our first two albums (1975's *Little River Band* and 1976's *After Hours*), which were self-produced, and then Capitol Records brought John Boylan in for the third album *Diamantina Cocktail*," explains Goble today. "John was really good at being the team leader. He would often come up with these very nice kinds of creative ideas, but ultimately we were



Little River Band's "Reminiscing" era (L-R): George McArdle, Graeham Goble, Beeb Birtles, Glenn Shorrock, Derek Pellicci and David Briggs.

MICHAEL LOCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



Little River Band perform at the Opera House on February 12, 1978. Graeham Goble on guitar, far right.

still the creative forces. His input into 'Reminiscing' was valuable, as when I wrote the song I'd written it with two verses and then a middle eight, the 'hurry don't be late' part. I also had a third verse and then the ending section. But John suggested that the middle eight that I had was not really a middle eight, it was more a chorus: 'Hurry don't be late/I can hardly wait/I said to myself when we're old/we'll go dancing in the dark/walking through the park/and reminiscing.' So I had that part as the middle eight and only the one time in the song, too. And so when he suggested the change to me, I didn't really feel it at the time, especially having two middle eights, but he insisted to me that I think of it as a chorus instead. And that really was a huge input to what made it such a magical and memorable song, by having that hook twice in the song."

With the song's structure now fully molded into place, it was time to begin recording it. The sessions for "Reminiscing," however, were fraught with difficulties. "We were in the studio for about five months recording the *Sleeper Catcher* album," Goble points out. "And so when it came time to record 'Reminiscing,' the

keyboard player I wanted to use was the wonderful Peter Jones. Peter also later played on 'Cool Change' and would also go on to play on a lot of our recordings. He was a wonderful jazz musician, and I always knew he had the right feel and the sensibilities and abilities to play the song. But he was out of town at the time. So we initially cut it with a different keyboard player. But it didn't work out very well and it just didn't feel right. So at that point the song was going to get rejected and not get recorded. We just couldn't get the right groove going, so we left it there. Then I pushed a bit and asked to try it again with another keyboard player, but once again, it wasn't great, so we left it again and moved on. Then about a week before we were due to finish recording the album, I was told that Peter Jones was back in town. Hearing the news, I went back to the band and producer and said I wanted to have a third go at doing 'Reminiscing.' But I got a lot of opposition, particularly from Glenn Shorrock, who said that we had already wasted enough time on the song and that he was not interested in having the band try it a third time. There were varying degrees of push back against me, but I really felt strongly about it. And as it turned out,

it was a destiny change for the band and for me as a writer. It put us onto a whole another level. So eventually I got my way and we tried it again with Peter, and as soon as he played that beautiful Rhodes piano, which is just the highlight of the song, everyone got behind it. And at that moment we knew we had it. We had captured something magical, and we could feel it as we were playing it."

Goble stresses that while the previous attempts did not yield any results, those sessions though did play an integral part in how the song's arrangement finally came to be solidified. "We actually learned a lot from our first couple of attempts at recording the track," reveals Goble. "For example, on the first recording session, what we did was, we filled the bass part up with a rhythmic kind of thing. But by the time we got to the third recording, the bass (played by George McArdle) was simplified to being played in a one note per bar approach. And if you listen to it, it's so sparse yet it does its job perfectly. And we also allowed the conga to just take the groove, too."

With the song and the album now in the can, the music was finally sent to the band's record label Capitol Records to prepare it for release. "It had gone to Capitol Records and we waited for five weeks with no response from the record

company,” says Goble. “And then they eventually came back to us and said, ‘We like the album, but there are no singles!’ Now mind you, we also had ‘Lady’ on this same album, too. And that song had already been rejected for the first four albums, too, but eventually I got it onto *Sleeper Catcher* along with ‘Reminiscing,’ which are two of our biggest songs ever. Anyway, then an older guy in the New York branch of Capitol Records said to the Los Angeles Capitol Records office, ‘You guys are crazy, ‘Reminiscing’ is a smash and that’s the track you should be going with.’ And the A&R at the L.A. office then told us, ‘We’re not sure about this song, but will put it out and see how it goes.’ That’s all we got. Well, it went ballistic! It went to No. 1 in New York. It was the first and only time we ever went to No. 1 in New York.”

While most of the territories outside of North America saw “Reminiscing” issued on the EMI label, for the United States and Canada, the 7-inch single was issued via the Harvest Record label.

“The record came out on Harvest Records in the States because we were actually signed to EMI Australia,” explains Goble. “But when it got to *First Under the Wire* (1979), the album that came after *Sleeper Catcher*, we signed directly to Capitol Records in February of 1979. But all the albums prior to that album, including *Sleeper Catcher* in 1978, they were released on EMI in Australia, and they’re what we call EMI Australia product; they’re owned by EMI Australia. But for *First Under the Wire*, then *Time Exposure* (1981), *The Net* (1983), *Playing to Win* (1985) and *No Reins* (1986), they are all Capitol Records released albums which they license back to EMI Australia. And that’s why it came out on Harvest because it was licensed by EMI Australia to Capitol Records.”

With “Reminiscing” becoming a commercial smash, it also led to a demand for the band to record and issue a Spanish version retitled as “Recordando” — and depending on the territory also retitled as “Reminiscencias” — for the South American market. “The record label was going to release the song in South America and asked for a Spanish version” says Goble. “But because we were very busy being out on the road, all we did was get Glenn Shorrock to be taught phonetically the verses in Spanish. He then went back into

the studio and put down a Spanish vocal on our already existing record. We had to keep the ‘hurry don’t be late’ part though because it was all harmonized and very complex, so we decided we’d keep that in English as we didn’t have the time to actually re-sing it all in Spanish.”

“Reminiscing” peaked at No. 3 on the American Top 100 chart in October 1978, giving the band not only their biggest hit but also the band and Goble’s signature song. “It is by far and away our biggest hit and one of the most iconic songs ever recorded,” affirms Goble. “And I think it will definitely be around for another 500 years or more. It is one of the great recordings leaving aside the song, but it really hasn’t been covered like The Beatles’ ‘Yesterday’ has, which is a shame because I think it should be. There have been a few good cover versions... I really like k.d. Lang’s version.” [Note: Lang’s version appeared as a bonus track on her Australian pressing of her 2011 *Sing It Loud* album.]

Since its release “Reminiscing” has clocked up a staggering 5.7 million radio airplays to date just in the U.S. alone. And together with “Lady,” which has clocked up four million air plays to date, too, the two are the most played Australian songs on American radio in history.

Asked why he thinks “Reminiscing” resonated more with American audiences than it did in his native Australia (it peaked at No. 35 on the Australian Top 40 Chart), Goble takes a moment to reflect on the question before offering up his answer. “I think I depicted in that song the world that was my internal world, the world I wished I was living in even though it had passed, by that time,” he says. “And that was very much forefront in the mind of the Americans, particularly because a lot of them were kids that were brought up in that era with their parents going to those sorts of things and the very early rock and roll concerts. *The Jolson Story* (1946) is still my favorite movie of all time, along with its sequel *Jolson Sings Again* (1949). It’s unbelievable. No musical film compares to it, even today.”

Looking back today, Goble firmly believes “Reminiscing” was an act of providence. “The song had pretty much the hand of God all over it,” he affirms. “There were so many incredible things that happened. It could’ve been stopped on 20 different occasions. So many things could have gone wrong, but in the end it



REMINISCING SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

“Reminiscing” was issued in many territories globally as a 7-inch single in 1978. Here is a small selection of the most noteworthy.

- Reminiscing ■ EMI 5C 006-82492/Netherlands/1978
- Recordando (Spanish Version) ■ EMI 4450/Guatemala/1978
- Reminiscing ■ EMI C006-82 492/Germany/1978
- Reminiscing ■ Harvest 4605/U.S./1978
- Reminiscing ■ EMI 3C 006 82492/Italy/1978
- Reminiscing ■ Harvest 4605/Canada/1978
- Reminiscing ■ EMI 11738/Australia/1978
- Reminiscing ■ EMI 1043/New Zealand/1978
- Reminiscing ■ EMI 2839/U.K./1978
- Reminiscing ■ EMI 2C 008-82492/France/1978
- Reminiscing ■ Harvest P-4605/U.S./1978
- Reminiscing ■ Harvest pro 8880/Canada/1978
- Reminiscencias (Spanish version) ■ EMI 1672/Argentina/1978
- Reminiscing ■ EMI EMR-20462/Japan/1978

was just magical how all the components fell into place. Everything from John Boylan saying, ‘Let’s make this a chorus and not a middle eight,’ to everybody’s magical parts to the awesome sound and tempo of the song.”

Goble, who earlier this year was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his service to the performing arts as a singer, songwriter and producer, is proud of his enduring legacy and continues to remain musically active. “I’ve co-written a musical with my son Joshua,” he reveals exclusively to *Goldmine*. “It will be a musical about my life incorporating the Little River Band years.” ●