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Roddy Frame, the Prophets and Brexit.

I was a remainer. The night after the vote, I was out at an open mic night on Mutley Plain. I drank Old Rosie cider and struggled to remember my words. Walking home, my sadness was that Brexit felt like divorce.

I had my headphones with me, so I found 'Over My Head' by Aztec Camera on YouTube. You probably won't know this song. It's from an album called *Stray* that came out in October 1990. I may be making this up, but I think I bought that album on a French exchange trip. I definitely remember hearing the lead single 'Good Morning Britain' on the video jukebox they had on the ferry. I put 'Epic' by Faith No More on the video jukebox. I was very rock at the time and heroically hopeless at talking to girls.

But 'Over My Head' is not very rock. It's Roddy Frame's attempt at a jazz standard ballad. It's the wrong song on the wrong album; the follow up album that didn't sell as well; the album that in hindsight, comes nowhere close to *Hats* by The Blue Nile which came out a year before. Yet, it is a part of the soundtrack of my life, a song that in my head signifies divorce.

When my mum and dad separated finally the following summer of 1991, my mum said that we should have one more family meal before my dad left home, an orderly retreat. I remember one thing about this meal, I managed to convince my mum to let me choose a tape to play while we had the meal and the tape I chose was *Stray* and the song I remember is 'Over My Head', all smoke getting in the eyes. As we ate together, Roddy Frame sang 'When your heart is broken / Mine's in two / and I'm in over my head in blue / over the love of you.' And then that was that.

At the same time that *Stray* came out, Aztec Camera also appeared on a compilation for World Aids Day called *Red, Hot and Blue*. The album is a collection of reworked Cole Porter songs and of course the results are patchy but the highlights are great. There's the other time Kirsty McColl and The Pogues got together, Debbie Harry and Iggy Pop blasting through 'Well Did You Evah', U2 dropping big hints about what *Achtung Baby* would sound like, David Byrne, The Thompson Twins and Tom Waits all making strong contributions.

To accompany the album, a feature length TV special was made from videos of the songs. I recorded this on VHS and rewound and rewatched. My favourite track was Aztec Camera's take on 'Do I love you?' While 'Over My Head' drips with jazz

authenticity, this version of 'Do I love you?' is of its time. It has the same kind of synthesizer sound as *The Big Blue* soundtrack. It's a very gentle, sincere version of a very beautiful song.

Objectively, the two songs, 'Over My Head' and 'Do I love you?' are connected. They are Roddy Frame's acknowledgement of the American Songbook and his attempt to in some way add to it. Subjectively, for me, the two songs are connected too by events and times but I don't think I was really aware of that connection.

I definitely wasn't aware of that connection six years later when I visited a girl from university who had become my best friend. Her mum and dad had gone out for a meal, but we stayed in and listened to their collection of vinyl. My friend picked out Ella Fitzgerald sings Cole Porter. She got up and stood by the fireplace. She stretched out her arms to get them warm and smiled her shy smile. Ella sang 'Do I love you?' and for the first time in my life, I knew that the terrifying honest truth was yes.

It would be another 3 months before she kissed me. I tossed a coin and on a score of 3-2 decided to do nothing about it. I was heroically hopeless at anything to do with girls.

For me, the soundtrack to divorce laid the foundation of the soundtrack for falling in love. In some ways, accidentally, Roddy Frame was like a prophet to me. Read the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea and the like, and it's the soundtrack of divorce and it's your own fault and there is nothing good and nothing to be done. And yet, out of that, they all still find a way to bring a message of hope of the good to come.

I have very little expectation of Brexit. To me, it feels like divorce and although divorce is sometimes necessary, it's never fun. But I believe that the soundtrack to divorce can lay the foundations of the soundtrack to falling in love; that, as unlikely as it seems, hope does remain when everything else has exited; that somewhere in this country, for all I know, this kind of thing could be happening right now.