

Walking on, pointing at someone... Why are you **here**?

Why am I here?... the script tells me nothing!
I guess, after 40 years and untold thousands of shows... what else would I be doing?
... you? Here to worship me?

pointing at someone else I know why you're here, **you're** here for It's Only the Beginning

Songs are powerful - remember this..*sings in MOR voice* 'gonna write a classic, gonna write in it an attic' - in 1989 that was on high rotation at the gym I joined.... I quit gym! ...Songs **can** be powerful ... though, mostly, they're slight.

But books!

Well, books, books, the world is full of books, the bookshops are full of them!
And they're definitely not all great either but what a thing to write one.

I recently decided that I needed to write it all down. My memoir. I thought that might give me a chance of lasting a bit longer - at least on paper.

40 years in this business and I keep writing, justifying myself in song, now in a - *gesturing at the screen* - book.

I don't take this for granted, every time I write a song it's a little miracle. Powerful song! I sit on that feeling..... for minutes before the wretched reentry to reality- nah - slight song. Bugger.

glancing skyward

How do you write the perfect song? The perfect book? *gesturing at the screen*

How do you live the perfect life without coming up wanting? Everybody's begging for the answer to that question.

Well,

WZ starts playing DC's guitar behind the screen

... according to my people, the Jews, the Almighty, as judge and king, reviews our deeds every Rosh Hashanah, Jewish New Year, in the Book of Life. A book with many pages, as many pages as there are people in the world. And each page about each person is written in our own handwriting. And the Almighty will consider each page and ten days later on Yom Kippur, the Day Of Atonement, He'll pass judgement.

Every year. Who lives and who shall not? Who by fire ...who by water...who knows?

WZ comes onto stage still playing

So, apparently, my writings, written by me, *DC picks up a string from the front of the stage & reads it like a ticker tape* are also written into the Book of Life (in very small handwriting). And does it justify my continued existence? Maybe that's why you're here, hopefully you'll tell me.

DC runs across the back curtain, flipping her hand across it I want to claim another 4 seasons, another 12 months, another 365 days. But maybe tonight is the night I die on stage - hey, it's happened before. Who knows? Who by fire? Who by faulty theatrical wiring? *WZ stops playing*

I'm not Leonard Cohen, because in case you hadn't figured that out, funnily enough my father actually changed his name from Cohen! but no -... I'm trying to be Deborah Conway tonight.

Deborah begins to pace Deborah Conway raving and rambling ... I'm not even singing, I'm starting with a monologue, I'm barely an actor, hey, I'm breaking the fourth wall already and it's only the beginning! It must look like I haven't got a clue, pacing the stage, but I've scripted this... *WZ hands DC her guitar* scripted this... Where was I?

I used to pace the stage a lot in my second band Do.Re.Mi. I wasn't much of a dancer and I thought the pacing made me look purposeful, hopefully it still does. *WZ brings mic to centre stage*

We all want to justify ourselves, don't we? And keep going, don't we? Be written into the Book of Life for one more year, don't we? ...isn't everybody begging for that? To be around long enough to solve the great mystery of **why** are we here?

Why am I here?

.....whips around surprised, to point at Willy who has suddenly appeared RH side of stage rear Why are **you** here?

SONG 1: EVERYBODY'S BEGGING

WZ starts playing, DC joins in, they both walk toward the mic and start the song when they get there

beggar man keeps company
with soldiers, sailors, spies and thieves
everybody's got a scheme
beggar man wears his on his sleeve
the priest is begging for a soul
the rabbi's begging for the scroll
the ferryman begs for his toll
the jelly's begging for the roll

Oh oh everybody's begging

you have a lot of everything
you have someone to do your every bidding
and I see you living like a king
but you know there's still something missing
the dog is begging for a bone
the heir is begging for the throne
the poor man's begging for a loan
the unknown are begging to be known

Oh oh everybody's begging

*2nd solo WZ moves straight forward & peels
back for singing*

nothing like an earthly hell
to bring out all the-self styled angels
but the ones who spell it out can't spell
you give them something and they want
something else
there's writers begging to be read
there's voices begging in your head
there's blood that's begging to be shed
there's hungry begging for some bread
there's hookers begging to be paid
you think it's fun just getting laid
there's junkies begging for a fix
that's not enough until it is

Oh oh everybody's begging

WZ plays behind DC

we are the miserable mammals
every day's so hard to handle
the path to salvation's one long battle
the darkness lit by one lone candle
there's secrets begging to be hidden
the future's begging to be written
there's fuel begging for ignition
i'm a soldier begging for a mission
in the dark begging for some light
in the dark begging for a fight
you can just point me at the action
everyone's begging for distraction

Oh oh everybody's begging

*face each other moving around mic WZ
backwards, then swap direction*

everything you've ever owned
every place that you've called home
every piece you thought would fit
the physical and the spirit
what we are is less than what we're not
and what we're not is less than what we want
and what we want is where we're always
heading
and all i see is everybody begging

Oh oh everybody's begging

DC to left front of stage, WZ to right

At song end both move diagonally across stage

WZ hangs up both guitars

DC collects banana lounge from OP offstage & starts talking while unfolding it

why **am** I here ?... because **there was nothing** else I could do.

The first hurdle came as a child, confronting the moment of truth that I was not the centre of the universe and wouldn't be living forever; shocked; usefully, the school distracted my existential crisis by bringing in a company that assists young people with career advice. They would realise our potential using a scientifically proven, multi-page questionnaire. According to the boxes I'd ticked I was destined to find job fulfilment as...

DC sits on the banana lounge, WZ rolls chair out
...a travel agent.

I imagined this involved **caring** about where people you didn't know went on their holidays. Hmm...

Doctor, at 14, my father took me to court *affronted*.

No, no... to inspire me to follow him into the law. He picked a salacious case featuring drug heists and petty crims and prostitution and I couldn't stay awake. At 15 I tried waitressing, at 16 retail, at 17, I was dressing up in a Snoopy suit and handing out chocolate bars to children in supermarket car parks. All disastrous. Who knew Snoopy couldn't say "fuck off"? I realised with complete clarity, I was unemployable.

I'd avoided music at school; my mother says the most musical thing I did was wait til everyone was in class... and drop a cymbal down a set of metal stairs. I'm almost sure I didn't do it deliberately. Doctor, do you think a cymbal crashing down metal stairs is a symbol of my life in music, or maybe my life..?

At 18 I wanted to be an actor. I delivered my best Shakespeare to those NIDA auditioners and belted out a Streisand number. And I didn't get a callback. I realised with complete clarity - it was their loss.

Undeterred, at 20 I put an ad in the paper, "singer wants band" - they charged by the word - I got a call. It seemed that this band had only ever had fat, hairy men out front.... Guess what, I became lead singer of The Benders.

And so it began.

My father's response was I needed to see a psychiatrist. He was convinced being in a band would lead to sex and drugs; and fair enough, that **is** rock n' roll's byline and it **was** a questionable career path for a nice Jewish girl from a middle class family. I

saw the psychiatrist... and we concluded with complete clarity, *both stand* it was my father's problem. WZ, "*your father's problem*"

WZ gets both guitars

So do you think I'm sane? I know nothing is perfect - *WZ hands DC her guitar*
thank you Doctor - but at least I can make an art form out of imperfection. Just listen to this:

SONG 2: IMPERFECT WORDS

I might have been a teacher
A rabbi or a preacher then
But as the path got narrow
I understood I wasn't one of them

Not for me
A shepherd for a flock of lost souls
I sing I sing I sing
Imperfect words
They roll off my tongue
I got something for everyone

And as I've gotten older
I don't have the steady shoulder I would like
My framework is more fragile
It's true I'm less agile in a fight

Not for me
A pugilist scrapping on the kerbs
I sing I sing I sing
Imperfect words
They roll off my tongue
I got something for everyone

And when I was a dealer
I met people who were meaner than me
They stole my pot my cash
You could say they let me down reliably

Not again
A merchant of magical herbs
I sing I sing I sing
Imperfect words
They roll off my tongue
I got something for everyone
They roll off my tongue
You know I got something for everyone

DC moves to front centre

So gather round friends
Come listen to me
You cunts who thought
I lived the life of a devotee
Well I'm a big bad wolf
Breathing at your door
You let me in with these words I sing
You let me in once more

WZ moves to mic centre for solo DC circles the perimeter returns to mic to sing

In a life that's full of choice
I got to use my voice, fate smiled
In my strange chosen profession
I got permission to stay a child

Not for me, responsibility
I'd rather be off with the birds
I sing I sing I sing
Imperfect words
They roll off my tongue
I got something for everyone
They roll off my tongue
You know I got something for everyone
They roll off my tongue
You know I got something for everyone

WZ moves mic offstage

Deborah is “interviewed” by interviewers long gone. Dialogue is divided between live action Deborah of the present & pre-recorded Deborah of the past as seen via projections on part of the screen.

CLIP Sounds Unlimited Donny Sutherland: *Let’s have a look at Bruce Springsteen, sorry, DRM are in now? OK, let’s, well we won’t have a look at Bruce at the moment but we do have a new local group that’s rocketed into the charts.*

CLIP Roy & HG: *Later at this very card table perched as it is on the artistic and sporting precipice, we’ll be joined by a mystery guest, if I said two words Deborah Conway I’d be saying far too much*

CLIP Jonno & Danno: *It’s my great pleasure to introduce Deborah Conway & Helen Carter from DoReMi, ladies and gentlemen.*

CLIP Rex: *Morning & welcome I’m joined by Helen & Deborah from Do Re Mi. Is it fair to say that Man Overboard introduced Do Re Mi to the music buying public of Australia?*

CLIP Past DC: *Morning Rex, Good morning Helen, it’s fair to say Man Overboard makes Do.Re.Mi. famously infamous. We’re sticking it to the man, we write pubic hair, penis envy and anal humour into a song with no chorus and get a top 5 hit; we are half men, half women, and we are living the dream!*

I’ve gone from an awkward teen with frizzy hair, in acrylic knit jumpers, to pacing the stage out front of an uber hip Sydney rock band. I’m considered a spunk.

Live: *nostalgic oh I remember..... those acrylic knit jumpers.*

CLIP Roy & HG: *Do Re Mi the band.... What was the band angry about?*

Past DC: *C’mon Roy, don’t be naive, we’re a rock band at the dawn of the 80’s - there’s currency in conviction, we’re having a passionate conversation about the doomsday clock and gender politics!*

Live: Yes, BUT, all those film clips and photo shoots, where we were being styled in oversized shoulder pads and even more oversized hair! Maybe we were angry about that.

CLIP *You were happy to be angry?*

Past DC: *yes!*

Live: We **were** angry but not angry enough to reject 80’s peak rock n roll decadence, the decadence made us happy. The anger made us relevant and the relevance made us happier; it was easy to be happy to be angry.

CLIP Donny: *Did you enjoy that sort of work?*

Past DC: Yes Donny! I love it, I travel the country, see the world & play music.

Live: But some of those publicity stunts, we really did some dumb stuff. A serious post-Punk band posing with a Dreamworld actor in a koala suit? Ahh, it's all part of the fame game. But regrets, we had a few...

CLIP photo of DC & Helen posing with a giant Koala Bear. DC throwing cream cake on to an interviewer.

Live: and what regrets have you had since I last put a cream pie on your head Rex? I don't even know his last name or if he's still alive. I do know that hairstyle four decades on is back in fashion. Wherever you are Rex I wish you well. It's weird me being here listening to the same questions.

CLIP Roy & HG : Did it boost the career?

Past DC: I don't know, but it didn't hurt, we are darlings in the post punk scene, we can't do a thing wrong; not cream cakes, nor koala bears, not the petty power blocks we've formed - Helen, Dorland & Stephen aka the band, against me; nothing can touch us...

Live: She has no idea... *pushes chair away*

...after 8 years of being inseparable, just like that, Do.Re.Mi was over. Virgin Records, who'd paid for us to relocate to England, didn't think we'd written a hit. Their solution, shaft the band, get the singer to make a solo record - the music business is brutal. But the joke was on them, they wanted me to make a dance album, hadn't they seen me pace?

CLIP Roy & HG: Did it put you over the top megabucks wise?

Past DC: well HG I am certainly excited about the POTENTIAL for over the top megabucks to be made from a solo career!

Live: But you know what they say about POTENTIAL, it's the last thing you want written on your gravestone. Virgin spent a lot of money in the pursuit of chasing a lot more money, a tactic used repeatedly in the music business but one almost always destined to fail. Virgin's open cheque book bought a year's rent in a flat off the Portobello Rd plus unlimited phone bills for a homesick me, three producers on two continents plus the flights, a photo shoot in exotic Barcelona, one more single expressly to get me on Top of the Pops along with the two 12 inch remixes. The completed album cost north of a hundred thousand pounds at least. But what it couldn't buy was a decent record.

Past DC: Sounds good to me! I love living abroad, I'm getting gigs with Michael Nyman & Pete Townshend, singing on albums with Nina Simone and John Lee Hooker, having love affairs....

Live: yep, that was all fun but what a squandered opportunity, what a colossal waste of money.

***Past DC:** it wasn't my money*

Live: yeah but imagine if you hadn't been sucked into the "let's make a dance album" bullshit and given Virgin String Of Pearls; put it out just before Cheryl Crow had her big hit, just saying...

***Past DC:** sings All I wanna do is have some fun - yeah I really like that song...*

Live: Yeah me too but it's not that much fun for me. I'm waiting, I'm waiting to get dumped..I get dumped. Out with Branson's Virgin, ... in with Gudinski's Mushroom - and here I am...back in Melbourne... my String Of Pearls/Bitch Epic period - I'm famous...all...over...again! Fun. That Gudinski had a good nose...*sniffs*....for a hit!

***Past DC:** It's great, even though the band has split, Dorland & I are still writing, there's no hard feelings.*

Live: It didn't last. Dorland Bray, my mentor, my best friend through so many adventures, who sat behind me carving the beat in The Benders, who ran away with me to Sydney to form Do.Ré.Mi., who asked me to be best man at his wedding - by the time Bitch Epic is released, Dorland is no longer my friend. Resentment? Bitterness? I stopped trying to understand why but we are over, kaput, he hates me... to this day. The music business is brutal.

***Past DC:** Still, I wouldn't be here without him*

***CLIP Rex:** Deborah's being nice to someone, my goodness*

Live: Hmmm,won't last

***CLIP Roy & HG:** In your songwriting Deborah I've noticed along a lot of the songs revolve around dud conversations you've had with people, ie, embarrassing moments on the top of ferris wheels and so on.*

WZ moves mic to front of stage DC watches screen

SONG 3: ALIVE & BRILLIANT

Way above
The clouds are black
They say it's gonna pour but I haven't been keeping track
So now we're here
In this cage
The Ferris wheel of love, my love what a charade
It's been a long time since anyone meant what they said

One step forward
Two steps backward
I won't wrestle, you won't talk back
Three deep breaths I'm still alive and brilliant

Turn around
And be polite
I'm so sick of I listening to your crap about the breasts you like
Look at me
I am restrained
I'm not screaming like some jealous adolescent here in vain
It's been a long time since anyone meant what they said

WZ & DC step in front of mic and start marching, DC behind WZ, clockwise around the stage perimeter to the beat for the double chorus. DC 'gets off the train' and WZ keeps circling through the solo.

One step forward
Two steps backward
I won't wrestle, you won't talk back
Three deep breaths I'm still alive and brilliant

WZ moves behind DC for percussion

So you got me
On this ride
What was it darling what exactly did you have in mind
Ferris wheel
Up and down
Is this some dumb metaphor to tell me you're not hanging round
It's been a long time since anyone meant what they said

One step forward
Two steps backward
I won't wrestle, you won't talk back
Three deep breaths I'm still alive and brilliant

WZ move backwards for playout, finishes at the curtain

CLIP Jonno & Danno: well thanks very much for coming on the show, big round of applause

DC moves mic to guitar stand

A low drone, rain and thunder fills the stage; DC stands mid stage back to audience. WZ uses torch behind screen then emerges, turns DC round then goes back behind the screen. Dance routine

In my dream there is a storm, it is night in the middle of a forest, maybe in Europe, in another time, like a Franz Kafka tale. I take shelter in an old, dark building. And then from somewhere, far away: Listen!?!...

The storm fades & the Kol Nidre begins emerging partially from the drone

The cantor singing.... The sound of eternity.

The Kol Nidre sinks back into the drone

I am in a tumbledown shul, a synagogue. It is Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, the Day of Atonement, the day to pray to be sealed in the Book of Life, the day to pray to be granted another year of life and the Kol Nidre is being sung. I am already hungry, but I will fast for 25 hours and I will pray that G-d will seal my name in the Book of Life. I want to live but I don't know where my prayers are going to or who they're going to. I don't know about G-d's existence but I fast on Yom Kippur and I want to be in synagogue to hear the Kol Nidre.

drone starts to fade

In the dream that is real life I grow up in an observant, though not religious house, my Jewish education is patchy. Jewish kindergarten, but not day school, Jewish Sunday school, Jewish Summer Camp. Jewish Dancing Class though I still ended up dating plenty of non-Jewish boys. (And every time my father would say "another nail in my coffin Deborah" - It was a well nailed coffin.) By my early 20's my Jewishness had been demoted to a background tint.

the drone stops

After a period of debauched years of indulgence, decadence, and putting nails in my father's coffin on many continents, sometime in my late 20's, I found myself yearning for this very fundamental element to be back in my life. I was living in Los Angeles at the time, it was Pesach, Passover, and everywhere there were Jews walking to synagogue and back home to share their seders (the Passover meal) with their families. The feeling of something missing was overwhelming. It needed to be addressed, it felt urgent.

The drone starts & the Kol Nidre rises and falls

It was not long after I met Willy, a guitarist and a Jew - and the connection was powerful, and I can't deny that power was bound up in a story, many thousands of

years old, a story with many facets, and a story which was being ignored at my peril. Slowly I was pulling out the nails from my father's coffin.

My future parents-in-law had survived the Holocaust, their family, their friends, their communities had all been murdered in the gas chambers; my father was regularly beaten up by the Christian boys on his daily trips to Cheder (Jewish religious school) in Leeds and before opening his law practice in Australia changed his identifiably Jewish name. But I'd never encountered anti semitism. Then September 11 happened, the World Trade Centre Towers were reduced to rubble and the world changed, immediately, irrevocably and in the long term in more insidious ways.

The woman who came to clean our house told me conspiratorially "there were no Jews in the towers that day, they were all told to stay home". Increasingly Jewish day schools and synagogues were flanked by security in response to threats, there was a spike in successful attacks on places where Jews gather, they haven't abated; support for Israel is demonised as support for a racist, far right, apartheid entity. You Zionists who rule the world - enough! Get out of Europe, get out of Palestine, get out of Israel, get out of our collective dreams.

DC starts pacing

The history of the Jew lurches through chapter and verse of persecution for multitudes of contradictory reasons. We are the wandering Jew, the rootless cosmopolitan, we are the outsider; we are the controllers of finance & industry, of Hollywood and the media, we are the insider; we are insular, infiltrators, untrustworthy, ready to break our vows, we're arrogant, G-d's chosen, pushy, weak, loud, stealthy, communist, capitalist, once too oriental, now too white. Antisemitism motivates its adherents to attribute to the Jew whatever their society deems its most detestable qualities. And throughout history Jews pay with blood. Maybe all a Jew can do is pace the stage & pray.

The Kol Nidre rises & continues DC delivers the following as a prayer to G-d

how many will pass from the earth/ and how many will be created; / who will live and who will die;/ who will die after a long life/
and who before his time; / who by water and who by fire?

I'd like to wake up but I'm at the bottom of a dark well and I can't.

the drone fades into:

SONG 4: BOOK OF LIFE

WZ opening solo begins behind screen moving left to right, emerge at right back corner circle perimeter for whole solo. DC brings mic on & faces WZ til-

Blow the horn blow the horn
Give a voice to all the mournful souls who search to be reborn tonight
Forgiveness like the sharpest knife
Oh G-d inscribe me in The Book of Life
I've been hungry since before the dawn

Everybody's empty but it's not for food
Everybody's praying here to be rescued
Examining our sins it's hard not to conclude
We're screwed

The world's in flames these maddened days of back and white
No shades of grey to keep at bay the darkest night
There's never been a song that could save a life

WZ DC turn in to each other before snapping face forward for chorus.

Blow the horn blow the horn
Give a voice to all the mournful souls who search to be reborn tonight
Forgiveness like the sharpest knife
Oh G-d inscribe me in The Book of Life
I've been hungry since before the dawn

WZ moves away from mic, DC turns to face him.

Tired and full of uncried tears I still can't shed
Stored up with the unsaid things we never said
You wanted forgiveness I wasn't ready yet
Now you're dead

For all the souls who lost themselves I sing for you
Apart from that there's nothing more that I can do
And though I know it's useless it kind of helps me through

Both face front for chorus.

Blow the horn blow the horn
Give a voice to all the mournful souls who search to be reborn tonight
Forgiveness like the sharpest knife
Oh G-d inscribe me in The Book of Life
I've been hungry since before the dawn

Solo at front of stage moving right to left, circle back

This verse both face right

I want to see my children out in the world
Grown into women from little girls
Why wouldn't you want that too?
The older you get the more friends you lose

This verse both face left

Next year I won't disappear in fire or flood
Next year I'll still be here to do you some good
I won't be taken by pills or thrills or wine
I should be doing fine

Both face front

Blow the horn blow the horn
Give a voice to all the mournful souls who search to be reborn tonight
Forgiveness like the sharpest knife
Oh G-d inscribe me in The Book of Life
I've been hungry since before the dawn
I've been hungry since before the dawn

Screen shows award montage while old style newsreader voice intones the following:

1984 ABC & Festival Records for the Outstanding Achievement of Attaining an Australian Platinum Award for the Album Sweet & Sour - The Takeaways

1985 Countdown Music & Video Awards to Do.Re.Mi for Best Debut Single

1985 Virgin Australia present Deborah Conway with Gold Album & Tape Sales for Domestic Harmony

Don't you forget me **Position 7**

voice continues:

1991 ARIA Award Nominations - Best Australian Debut Single, Best Australian Single, Song Of The Year, Album of The Year, Breakthrough Artist - Album, Breakthrough Artist - Single, Best Cover Art, Best Engineer, Best Producer

1991 ARIA Award - Best Australian Female Artist

1993 Mushroom Records for the Outstanding Achievement of Attaining Platinum Award for Album String of Pearls

Don't you forget me **Position 3**

voice continues:

1994 ARIA Award Nomination - Best Australian Female Artist (8th Annual ARIA AWARDS)

1994 ARIA Award Best Cover Art - Bitch Epic

1994 Mushroom Records Australian Gold Award Bitch Epic

Don't you forget me **Position 8** *DC and WZ begin moving out Both in dunce hats*

voice continues:

2019 National Live Music Awards - Live Legend Inductee

2020 Australia Council Don Banks Music Award

Deborah is down on one knee being knighted by Willy brandishing mandolin

2020 AM Member of the Order of Australia Award

When I was young, older people would ask 'when will you get a proper job?'

Now I'm old, people ask me 'are you still a musician?'

And I say, I think I am, but you're only as good as your last gig.

SONG 5: DON'T YOU FORGET ME

What can an old lady tell you
That you might want to know
What can an old lady sing
If it's not only the beginning
I give you a piece of my heart
What else to impart
On this well worn path

Don't you forget me
You won't regret me
I'll still sing if you let me
Lets drink to getting old

It's easy to be seduced
By those sirens' calls
You gladly hand them your cock
But they want your balls
All I've got is my fading soul
And rock 'n roll
That takes it's toll

Don't you forget me
You won't regret me
I'll still sing if you let me
Lets drink to getting old

Both turn to look up at screen for solo

The old and the withered
Were once the young and the strong
Make way make way
For the new youth to sing their song
I've moved off centre stage
Traded all that for wisdom or rage
Or a little of both

Don't you forget me
You won't regret me
I'll still sing if you let me
Lets drink to getting old

*Na-na's to front of stage on opposite sides
WZ stays*

Let's make some heaven
In this place that feels like hell
Get over here baby *WZ peels back*
You know how to ring my bell
So it's you and me
Got our grandchildren on my knee
That's distinctly sexy

Don't you forget me
You won't regret me
I'll still sing if you let me
Lets drink to getting old

Na-na

*Both to front of stage
Lets drink to getting old 3x*

*Last chord both move backwards rapidly &
through back curtain. DC hands WZ guitar &
goes back onstage quickly.*

WZ starts cleaning up the stage

What can an old lady sing if it's not only the beginning...? That's why you're here - am I right?

I'd just like to point out I have a peculiar love/hate relationship with It's Only the Beginning - I get grumpy when it's always "the hit" that is my musical calling card and that to only acknowledge "the hit", is maddening. But I no longer own "the hit".. "the hit" owns me. And there are definitely worse things. Like maybe never having a hit? So sure, I might rail about being commanded to play "the hit" for the audience that has come to hear only "the hit" I still know how fortunate I am to be able to resent it.

It's Only The Beginning remains my most recognisable song, my most played song, the song most identified with me. And I'm grateful, incredibly grateful that I contributed a song to that rarefied number of pop songs that endure past their release date to remain amongst a few much beloved classics, that three decades on people haven't appeared to tire of. It's Only The Beginning, written into the Book of Life for 30 years and counting... so ladies and gentlemen....

*Willy starts playing the introduction but is interrupted by...
...the sound of a long, loud BUZZ - Both shake vigorously*

When we're young our parents rule the world. My dad, Carl Conway, was larger than life; emotionally swept up everything in his path with his deep need to be spoilt, to be doted on, to be the centre of attention, demonically self indulgent, predictably unpredictable and difficult ...but never, ever, ever boring. He was also bipolar.

BUZZ - WZ LIZ!!!

That intercom was the sound of my childhood, that and waking up to my mum & dad fighting every morning, hurling the d i v o r c e word around til I was sobbing "please stop it". At seven I had no idea what they were fighting about. As far as I could tell Liz was bending over backwards but it made no difference, Carl was either high as a kite or flat as a tack. Putting my key in the front door after school, I'd be full of anxiety, **which** Dad would be waiting? Both equally terrifying for if he was up, down was coming.

BUZZ - WZ LIIIIIZZZZZ

For all my childhood he self medicated. That time at our family friend's pool when dad popped one too many Valium and was struggling to stand up or talk coherently, he was in a filthy mood, full of sneer and snarl. I was nine, but fuck me, I realised I was in charge of not letting him drown. Reasons to be traumatised. Or tough. I picked tough.

As a lawyer he was a formidable opponent but early retirement left him with too much time and energy searching for an outlet. He expended it in strange ways. The phrase -“get the man in” (referring to a tradesman) was bandied about often. When ‘the man’ came in Carl recorded all conversations on one of his strategically placed hidden microphones and delighted in playing the recording back to “the man” if the job wasn’t up to scratch (it was rarely up to scratch). Dad also listened in on my phone calls. For the entire duration of my teenage years, I would hear the spacious telltale sound of someone on the other end. All conversations with my friends were punctuated with “dad, can you please get off the phone please”. Carl got himself a stage name, Carl Carmichael - and a few roles, but even making that boyhood dream a reality couldn’t sooth his savage mood swings. Take pity on the beast.

BUZZ - WZ LIZ, MAKE ME A CUP OF TEA

He wore Liberace jewellery, a toupee on weekends, smoked cigars constantly, ate boxes of chocolates gloatingly in front of me & my little sister and never shared any. He was selfish, narcissistic with a cruel streak, he once hurled my mother’s typewriter across the room, ripped up all her dresses and put his pen through her car radio because the station she was listening to was annoying him. He put our cat in the drying machine & turned it on because it scratched him. He’d come into our bedroom of a night and instead of reading us a story would talk about death. When his mother died, my 46 year old father locked himself in his bedroom and wailed for weeks either utterly oblivious or fully cognisant of his two distraught daughters on the other side of the door. There were yearly suicide attempts, always performative with props - candles, photos - of his mother, not us. He needed our horrified response. My father was the epitome of extreme undiagnosed mental illness.

BUZZ - WZ LIZ, WHERE ARE YOU? !!!!

That buzzer was a warning to get out. One time we all ran away from home including mum. We came back. My poor mother soldiered on and they forged a truce. But she thought covering for his terrible behaviour was helping, trying to convince us it wasn’t as bad as it was. It made no difference to me, I couldn’t live with him; as soon as I was able, I fled. Liz & Carl stayed married, sharing their deepest secrets with strangers on passenger liners sailing for months in foreign waters, strangers they would never meet again.

Carl’s favourite toast

WZ Here’s to a quick death. *WZ takes mic off*

My dad died suddenly on the 20th of the 11th, 2011. Theatrical to the last. Maybe not surprisingly he is in the category of “too big to miss”. Always with me, and in me. Formed by him but not a victim to him. He’d love me telling you all this!

BUZZZZZZZZZZ

The story of my father is brutal and it's the story I take with me but in reality it's unexceptional except for the fact **I** had to live it. I adored my mother in equal parts to the fear I felt from my father, I told her everything and I soaked up her wisdom like a sponge.

Sings:

A long time ago
when my mother's hands were all my world
she taught me everything there was to know about
holding and being held

I didn't act out teenage rebellion until I was 18 but when I walked out of my last HSC exam I kicked my parents to the curb and I kept kicking. My teenage rebellion has lasted way too long, sometimes I have to check myself, a quick reminder when I am fuming at something my 89-year-old mother has said to me, her 64-year-old daughter, hang on, deep breath, I am not a teenager. We react & bounce & careen. For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.
And when I was ready I balanced the early chaos by having my own family.

*Deborah turns the banana lounge into a hospital bed, flat on her back,
her legs wide apart ready to give birth, making labour groans & cries*

Comedy Theatre, February 1995, two weeks before my due date. I danced like a crazy banshee at that show my enormous belly protruding from under my guitar. The next night I ran into an old friend nursing her new baby. I felt so far from that, so devoid of maternal instinct. Hours later **my** waters broke. At 2am we were in the hospital with the obstetrician telling us

WZ: Your baby is breech, you have to choose, a caesarean section or another
DC: (o-o-o)obstetrician. They cut her out.

She sits up pain free

And there it was, love, love like a runaway freight train blasting any doubt away. I wanted six, I settled for three. Three more names written into the Book of Life.

Love like a train. But parenting 3 teenage daughters is not straightforward. When my babies were good, they were very, very good but when they were bad they were furious, depressed, anxious with a full menu of eating disorders. The unconditional love is laced with grief, anger and despair; and I've stopped asking why, just another unexceptional story except for the fact **I** have to live it. Order & chaos continually careening.

DC sits on chair

Shakespeare's King Lear is a chilling portrait of daughter/parent relations with the best line in literature cutting through to the heart of the emotional agony that these teenage years can plunge us into. "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child".

WZ brings mic on

We are the children of our parents - maybe one day, one of them or two, or maybe all of them will be doing a show just like this... and I'll be in the front row.

SONG 6: SERPENT'S TOOTH

Leave your armies at the border
I surrender
You won't need your slings and arrows
I surrender

Take down your hair my lovely
All the pins that hurt my hands
The sharpness of your judgments wound
You leave me dumb
Please still your tongue

Leave your weapons at the entrance
I surrender
You won't need your guns or bullets
I surrender

All my heart is yours to keep
The tenderest of all my parts
Be careful of your brutal feet
Don't trample me
Beneath this love

Leave your armour on the doorstep
I surrender
You won't need your wall of silence
I surrender

All the sleepless nights we spent
In the comfort of my arms
Your tangled legs your warm sweet scent
My pillows dent
In remembrance

Leave your tempest in the hallway
I surrender
You won't need thunder you won't need lightning
I surrender

And you won't need that moat around you
I surrender

WZ takes mic off

I got a life, I guess it suits me pretty well. I've been lucky. I've lived in prosperous times, I was attractive enough to get paid to be a model.

Screen shows modelling montage

And smart enough to know that career wasn't for me

Nor to be in movies, still, I had a crack.

Screen shows clip from Running On Empty

But music took me places, thank g-d, possibly the slight songs more than the powerful ones. But hey, that's showbiz.

My twenties were intense, all the sex & drugs my father predicted & a whole lot of other anti-social activity he didn't, but I also learnt how to write a song. And how to be a performer. I sang in smoky bars, beer barns, concert halls & stadiums; by my 30's I'd accumulated a lot of firepower.

I was 29 when I wrote It's Only The Beginning in Hollywood with Scott Cutler, after he told me about a date he'd been on the night before. Scott had pedigree, he was the grand nephew of the great songwriter Irving Berlin. I wrapped a kernel of lyrical truth in a confection of fiction and then freaked myself out because the demo was so bloody happy. So I rewrote the lyric, made it a depressing, nihilistic piece about a self-destructive young woman who couldn't face the idea that a happy lyric might make her a star. I was tilting at windmills, the quest of being the real Deborah Conway. Un-compromised. Easy for you, you might say. I say not as easy as you might imagine.

WZ underscore onstage

I stopped seeking out trouble when I met Willy. It was the love of a lifetime, even if it lasts 1664 weeks - 32 years in case you're not looking at your calculator. We were crazy kids... in our 30's. We got married 17 years after we met, you can't rush these things. Children, house renovations, my midlife crisis, we booked holidays with people who **wanted** to be travel agents! That's a lot of water under the bridge by the time we said 'I do'.

And now I find myself, *gasp*, a senior, but I still harbour the agitator in my soul, I'm still angry, these days there's so much to be angry about. Who isn't angry? Bullying, strange polarisations, cancelling, malevolent motivations, intolerance, dishonest actors. Ooh I hope I'm not one of those. I write about this stuff - anger fuels creativity

- (maybe that was the answer to Rampaging Roy Slavin's question all those scenes ago, "what are you angry about Deborah, what are you angry about? I'm Angry About Everything Roy!) ... still It's Only The Beginning remains my most played song. And that's because by the time Virgin dumped me, I realised the depressing lyric was a mistake and embraced the sunny optimism of the original. And that's the version you all know. Sliding door possibilities. I've written many songs since, some I think are powerful, but It's Only The Beginning is a pop survivor. I know that song will outlive me. It's the brazen joy, it's the love of a lifetime, it's a chance that anything could happen, 4 more seasons, 12 more months, 365 more days.

DC runs anticlockwise along the back curtain.

WZ stops playing and leaves the stage

And is any of this enough? These songs... books, these shows, the work we do?

We want to live meaningful lives, we want to be loved, we want to be remembered.
Don't you forget me. Implicit on every gravestone.
Don't you forget **us**. A prayer, a prayer to be sealed in the Book of Life.

40 years in this business, untold thousands of shows & we're so close to the end of this one, I think I'm gonna survive tonight. But tomorrow? Who knows? - there's no script really, we're all just endlessly improvising 'til the last page.

So if you leave the theatre tonight and you find yourself humming some half-remembered **old** tune that you can't quite place, it's ok, let it take you home and in the dark let it sing you quietly to sleep.

lights go to black: audience applause (encore):

In the dark audience hears -

*Sotto voce Hey Willy, Willy, WILLY **are** you still here?*

WZ is in back left hand corner with both guitars and hums the song gives DC guitar

SONG 7: IT'S ONLY THE BEGINNING

I like the way that you took advantage
Stayed at my party 'til everyone went home
A perfect stranger
Need a place to lay your hat
The lone ranger couldn't saddle me with that
But you were right on track

It's only the beginning
But I've already gone and lost my mind
I feel like making daisy chains
And playing hide'n' seek
When it's only the beginning
The fairy dust is still in flight
And this could be the love of a lifetime even if it lasts a week
Or maybe just a daydream

Back to back

When we go walking along the river
Watch the old men fishing the sunny side of the pier
It's like a movie and you're my leading man
The way you woo me just like Cary Grant
You wanna hold my hand

Face front

It's only the beginning
But I've already gone and lost my mind
I feel like breaking windowpanes all up and down my street
When it's only the beginning
We can bring the house down every night
And this could be the love of a lifetime even if it lasts a week
Or just the sweetest daydream

WZ moves back DC moves to front of stage

And do you ever feel the passion
To jump from a speeding train
I'd like to be the wheels beneath you
I'd like to be the rain
That could wash away your pain
It's only

Guitar solo across stage while DC round the perimeter & ends at downstage right

So hold me closer
Let me feel you sigh
My Spanish butterfly

It's only the beginning
But I've already gone and lost my mind
I feel like breaking windowpanes all up and down my street

DC & WZ cross back to “their” side of stage

Any day now I will hear you call
And this could be the love of a lifetime even if it lasts a week

It's only, it's only, it's only

Back to mid stage centre for last guitar line

house lights come on as if the show is over, bows etc....

Hang on... all this talk of books, before you go, I think a little audience participation is called for; let's do a quick reading altogether... here's some slides we prepared earlier. Spectacles on. Are you ready?

a series of slides follows (DC makes sure everyone reads loudly by repeating the first slide):

Audience: We grew up with you

Audience: Your old songs remind us of when we were young

Audience: You were my role model

Audience: We don't know what those words mean, or what those notes mean but they tickle the pleasure centres in our brain. We guess it's a developmental stage that's somehow connected to the "mating" years and when they're over it's difficult to get excited about new musical patterns. (Its evolutionary significance remains unknown.)

Audience: We are loyal. We keep giving you our attention.....

Audience: ... and we keep giving you our money

Audience: We are getting old

Audience: If you outlive us and are still compos mentis, what will you do?

Audience: You have already performed It's Only the Beginning, is there anything else for us to look forward to?

SONG 8: MAN OVERBOARD

I try not to stand too close to myself
I try not to listen to the things I say
They say there's no such thing as self-abuse
But you wonder how I can be trusted
If I'm finely tuned or well adjusted
Oh, pity about you
Oh, pity about me
More's the pity about her
Every time she comes inside
You – had to run
You had to run
You wish that crush would go away
You're not the only one

Squinting at broad daylight
Drumming up a conversation
Parson's brass is peeling / appealing
Hands reaching for a glass of water
Dry socks and razor rash
Your shoes under my bed
Dandruff, doona, cigarette ash

I've tried to play it open-handed
I've tried to make a fist of this
Even when the questions are candid
My arrows miss
I've heard about your fragile ego
Your shield, your sword
What am I expected to do?
Shout man overboard?

Come around when I'm asleep
Roll around and try to wake me
That's alright you've got to go now
Words overtake me
Your pubic hairs are on my pillow
Your stubble rings the sink
Your words under my skin
Your table manners stink

I paddle in the things I love
You wallow in a swamp of trivia
In a vase with insincere I love you's
Next-door's camellias
I'm sick and tired of this position
Hatched underneath your arm
Your crutch under stress
Your rudder when it's calm
I'm bored – staring at the ceiling
While you point out my flaws
I've watched the wallpaper peeling
From slamming doors
You talk about penis envy
Your friends applaud
What am I expected to do?
Shout man overboard?

DC WZ dance routine

(Come across to other girls
Look around and start a rumour
Jealous wife scenes raise a smile at parties
Like anal humour
Are you addicted to attention?
Do you do it for effect?
Your wit, out of control, misunderstood and
hen-pecked)

THE END