

## **Jazz In The Afternoon by Decker Miles**

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### **Four-Star Wish on a Two-Star Night**

*Life on the road drifting from one small town to another, staying in cheap hotels and playing in small bars and clubs. His audience seem to like his songs and his performances but what he really wants is to be discovered and play at Carnegie Hall or in Las Vegas.*

Sunrise in the rear-view, another town dissolved in the steam.  
Got a suitcase full of chords and a two-bit American dream.  
The Ford breathes heavy, the cheap hotel smells of dust and cologne.  
But the air in the empty bar holds a song of its own.  
I wipe down the keys, dust off the blues, waiting for the clock to chime.  
It's just me and the liquor shelves, killing a little more time.

They roll in around nine, the good folks from the cannery and the mill.  
They buy a drink, they settle down, asking me for that old "Stardust" fill.  
I play the notes they know, I give 'em the satin-smooth sound.  
They clap and they smile, they say, "That boy's the best damn player in town!"  
Their praise is a comfort, a warm, faded coat when the night gets too cold.  
But it don't pay the toll for the story I'm dying to be told.

Oh, I'm playing the honky-tonk circuit, on the trail of a sound.  
Another faded city where the big dreams are never found.  
But when the light hits the smoke, and the music starts to ascend,  
I trade this \$40 room for a stage that will never end.  
I see Carnegie Hall, baby, I see the Strip in the heat.  
A four-star wish, a Las Vegas gig, for these tired hands and feet.

The night ends with whispers and change in the old tin can.  
The bartender mops up the memories and says, "See you, man."  
Back in that room, the sirens scream a lullaby for the street.  
I practice my scales in the darkness, trying to make the rhythm complete.  
'Cause I know, down deep, these small-town crowds are just the warm-up band.  
One day, I'll play my heart out, and they'll finally understand.

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### **A Simple Chord and a Complex Man**

Guest singer: Joan Morey.

*What she really wants is to find the man of her dreams one night in the audience so she can quit this life on the road.*

The neon sign is broken, throwing shadows where the moonlight should fall.  
Another motel room, smelling of stale smoke and a phone call  
I never placed. My dress is getting tired, my shoes have known this floor  
In five different cities since I saw the ocean shore.  
I smooth the collar down, check the red lipstick stain  
And tell myself that tonight, this night, won't be just the same.

They listen close when I start to play that minor seventh sound.  
I see their heads start swaying, the finest audience in the worst part of town.  
They love the smoke and velvet, the way the melody floats and ascends.  
They call me "Sweetheart," they ask me to play "The End of a Beautiful Friend."  
I give them the glamour, the high-hat shimmer, the whole polished show.  
But it's not the applause that I'm needing, it's a place I can finally go.

Oh, I'm searching for that one gentleman in the dark,  
The one with the quiet smile that finally hits the mark.  
He won't be rich or famous, he'll just see the notes I leave unsung.  
He'll offer me a way out, before I'm too road-weary and too young.  
I'd trade this touring life and every solo I have mastered,  
For one slow dance, one small house, and a love that's built to last, sir.

The money's on the bar, I nod my thanks to the kind, tipsy faces.  
They tell me I belong in bigger, brighter places.  
But a big city means a bigger crowd of passing, empty eyes.  
I'm looking for the anchor, not the next bright, transient prize.  
I pack up my sheet music, pull the cover on the lonely keys.  
Wishing one of those faces tonight had brought me to my knees.

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## The Rhythm of the Real Town

*The singer loves this town where the folks are honest and friendly, work hard and play hard and how he cannot wait until he can grab some free time and hit the bars with his band buddies.*

We rolled in late Tuesday, the Soprano Sax was already on fire.  
Checked into the room that's got a window facing the church's tall spire.  
Walked down the main street, smelled the fresh-cut lumber and the lunchtime grease.  
These aren't the bright lights, man, this is where you find a little honest peace.  
The folks here look you straight in the eye, they don't have time for a fake smile.  
They just clock in, clock out, and then they're ready to stay up for a while.

The show starts early, they fill the tables with the day's hard-earned cash.  
They're laughing loud, they're ordering drinks, they ain't afraid to make a friendly splash.  
I hit the keys and they lean in close, they know the groove I'm selling.  
They're here to let loose, forget the bills, they just want the true story telling.  
It's a welcome change from the cities where the audience is cold and chic.  
Here, they don't pretend—they just dance until their tired working feet get weak.

Man, I love the rhythm of the real town, where the people are strong and true.  
They work like hell from Monday morning 'til the weekend shines through.  
Now the gig is almost finished, the last chord is about to land,  
But the night is still wide open for me and my band.  
Can't wait to hit the corner bar, swap the stage for a seat.  
Buy the Bass Man a round, watch the world spin from the street.

The drums are packed, the sax is cased, the crowd is slowly walking away.  
The waitress slides us a couple of cold ones and wishes us a good day.  
But for us, the night is young, man, the serious party's just begun.  
We're gonna talk music, talk life, until the coming of the sun.  
'Cause you gotta treat your partners right, your brothers in the beat and the blow.  
We earn our keep, we play our hearts out, and then we gotta let it go.

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## The Salt-Air State of Mind

*A night-club jazz singer sings about how he loves this town, especially the beach where he can relax during the day, sipping pina colada's, catch up with friends and family at home with long phone calls, read his favourite book and listen to the radio, and maybe meet a pretty girl to spend some time with. But most of all he loves his audience tonight.*

I rolled in on the morning tide, and the first thing I did was inhale deep.  
Checked into the room, left the worries in the pile while the world was still asleep.  
Found my spot on the sand, pulled the paperback out of the bag.  
Set the radio low, sipped the Piña Colada, letting the whole mind lag.  
No rush, no schedule, just the sun and the slow, breaking waves.  
This kind of downtime is what a man on the road truly craves.

The afternoon brought a breeze, and a couple of hours on the phone.  
Catching up with Mom and the old crew, letting them know I'm not alone.  
They asked about the charts, I told them, "Man, this town's the perfect gig."  
Then I saw her by the boardwalk, wearing that smile that's really big.  
Maybe tonight, maybe tomorrow, the universe will deal a kind hand.  
But right now, just the rhythm of the sea and the sun on the land.

Oh, I love this town, I love the way the day rolls to the night.  
The simple things that make the traveller's heavy load feel light.  
But when I step beneath that spotlight, and I look at every face,  
It's you, my audience, who makes this the very finest place.  
You're the sweetest melody on a quiet, summer street,  
And for you, baby, I'll pour my heart out on these keys and my two tired feet.

The tie is straight, the stage is set, I can feel the cool velvet air.  
The lights dim slow, I take my seat, running my hands through my hair.  
The bass starts walking, the brushes whisper, the whole room starts to hum.  
This is the moment I live for, the reason I always come.  
Forget the hotel bill, forget the miles, forget the girl I'm hoping to find.  
It's just the music and this crowd that focuses the whole of my mind.

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