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## **PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS: THE MUSIC OF MARK KNOPFLER**

**Script for generic radio documentary, March 2013**

**MUSIC: Dire Straits, 'Private Investigations'; Mark Knopfler, 'Boom, Like That'**

**HELLO, I'M MARK GOODIER...WITH A SPECIAL SHOW ON ONE OF THE MOST DISTINGUISHED ARTISTS ON THE WORLDWIDE STAGE OF THE LAST 35 YEARS...THIS IS 'PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS: THE MUSIC OF MARK KNOPFLER'...**

**WE'RE SPENDING THE NEXT HOUR IN THE COMPANY OF A MAN WHO USUALLY LETS HIS MUSIC DO THE TALKING FOR HIM...AND WHAT A CATALOGUE IT IS: MARK KNOPFLER HAS SOLD MORE THAN 200 MILLION RECORDS, FIRSTLY WITH DIRE STRAITS AND THEN, OVER THE LAST COUPLE OF DECADES, IN A SOLO CAREER THAT JUST GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH...**

**MARK'S ON THE ROAD AGAIN TO SUPPORT ANOTHER HUGELY SUCCESSFUL ALBUM, 'PRIVATEERING', AND WE'LL BE HEARING MUSIC FROM THAT, LOTS OF HIS PREVIOUS SOLO WORK, SOME OF HIS FAMOUS COLLABORATIONS, AND SOME DIRE STRAITS CLASSICS TOO... PLUS, THE STORIES BEHIND THE SONGBOOK - LIKE THE WAY MARK COMBINES ROCK, BLUES AND FOLK INFLUENCES...**

*"It all gets blurry round the edges, it's as if you've dropped a cup of water on a painting"*

**HOW HE WRITES...**

*"I don't like really being in charge of the song, or I don't like really being in charge of the thematics of an album"*

**AND THE EFFECT HIS MUSIC HAS HAD ON PEOPLE...**

*"I remember a guy coming up to me and he said, you know, 'I just want you to know I was literally suicidal today. Then he made a fist, you know, with his arm, and he just said 'I'm going to go on'"*

**AND HE'S GOT A VINTAGE 1938 GIBSON ACOUSTIC IN THE STUDIO, SO LATER WE'LL BE GETTING A BIT OF A GUITAR LESSON TOO...**

## **AND FIRST OF ALL, MARK SETS THE SCENE...**

*"Yes, we're in British Grove Studios, in Chiswick, and the studio was built out of what was once some cottages, a little row of cottages, that used to make accordions in the old days in here. When I got of it, it was a warehouse for books, children's books. It's very exciting to have it, it's like a big paintbox for me"*

**MUSIC: Mark Knopfler, 'Privateering'**  
**AND BRITISH GROVE IS INDEED THE STUDIO WHERE MARK KNOPFLER MADE THE NEW ALBUM 'PRIVATEERING', ALL 20 SONGS AND TWO COMPACT DISCS OF IT...**

*"Yeah, it was all recorded here, that was a really fun period, because I was doing all sorts of different things there, I was combining different kinds of recording, where I would have all the band in, and everybody would be playing, and also I was doing some recordings with Kim Wilson, coming in on some blues recordings, and then I had some folk artists here as well, joining in, so I was making quite a wide span of music. And then I was also adding to some other recordings that I'd done just on my own, really, one or two of us doing, myself and Guy Fletcher had been working on. So it was all three, if you like, different kinds of recordings were going on pretty much one after the other"*

*"I started suspecting that it was going to happen, that a double, a double-wide was going to evolve from this, because I wasn't really keen on just making a blues record, which I've always been threatening to do all my life, really. But it was better, I thought, just to incorporate it. Also, I like to do something different in the sense, from the way the orthodoxy would say that you shouldn't make a double record, and I'm sure that that's right. But it always makes me want to make a double record"*

**MUSIC: Mark Knopfler, 'Used To Could'**

*"I am surprised by how much stuff I seem to be able to produce these days. I don't know whether it's just becoming more ancient that I'm not so distracted, and when I'm on the road, for instance, I find if I just take the songs along and I have a guitar in the room, I can keep looking at the stuff as I tour, as well. Somehow I just seem to find a little bit more time to look at the stuff. Because I suppose with a laptop as well, I'm not wasting huge amounts of paper that I used to, tearing things up and crossing things out. It's easier, isn't it, on an Apple"*

**AND THERE'LL BE MORE FROM 'PRIVATEERING' AS WE GO ALONG...  
A NEW ALBUM MEANS A NEW TOUR, A HUGE ITINERARY STRETCHING  
ALL ACROSS EUROPE OVER THREE MONTHS...AND MARK'S READY!**

*"Yeah, it's all a big balancing act, the whole thing. There's a lot of pretty seasoned hands that are involved in the whole thing as well, the whole operation. Playing live has always been an important thing to me, it's an important side of*

*the circle, really, an important slice of it, and people know, I think, when they come to see a performance, or come to be a part of it, they know that I'm there because I want to be there. I haven't disappeared off to somewhere else to do something else, that I'm still interested in that side of it. I think that's important, that the motivation is still there to play for people. It's a fantastic side to it all, and you have to do away with a lot of 'Well, it would be better if...', you have to do away with a lot of 'Well, if only we had a...' It's not like that, you've got this amount of time, and you've got to play all this music, and you just have to go with what's going on, and try to organise yourself reasonably, and you have to find ways of making it fresh. You have to find ways of having some spontaneity in there as well, otherwise you would just become too repetitive. So that's part of the fun of it as well, and when I say fun, I really mean, a lot of the time your ribs will be sore from laughing, because the people that are involved, it's important to have that right kind of chemistry going on, where everybody is pretty much on the same wavelength, that's important too. That doesn't just apply to the band, but it's a crew vibe as well"*

#### **MUSIC: Dire Straits, 'Walk Of Life' (live)**

*"For me, it's an important slice of life, but at the same time, I love just to be able to be at home, when I am home, and just to be able to turn around and look at the songs. So I'm trying to keep all the balls in the air, you know, I try to tour around the school holidays, I try to keep up with my lads, who are 25 years old now"*

**DIRE STRAITS AND 'WALK OF LIFE', FROM THE DAYS WHEN MARK KNOPFLER'S SONGS SOMETIMES HAD A MORE OBVIOUS ROCK 'N' ROLL FLAVOUR - BUT EVEN THEN, HIS WORK CONTAINED A CELTIC INFLUENCE THAT WENT BACK TO HIS EARLY CHILDHOOD...BEFORE HIS FAMILY MOVED TO NEWCASTLE, HE SPENT THE FIRST EIGHT YEARS LIVING IN GLASGOW...**

*"I think Celtic music seems to come easily to me, that style of thing just seems as natural as anything, and I suppose it's because a lot of the early music that I'll have heard in Glasgow will have been that, Jimmy Shand and Scottish country dance music. Also in Newcastle, because there are so many connections with Geordies and the Scots, is largely made up, you know a lot of Geordies went north to work and a lot of Scots came to work in the shipyards. So there's always been this connection, really. In fact my mother's family, they're Geordies, but they're Scottish as well, so, Borders people as well, you know, it goes back there. So I think when you hear the Tyne melodies, or the Northumbrian melodies, as well, something must go in, little melodies you sing, you know, 'The Waters of Tyne' at school and things like that. I think they all make an impression. But also I think the radio was a big deal for toddlers and little ones growing up, so even before then, I think when I was two or three years old, well actually one a half when I started singing songs, eighteen months, there was a radio programme*

*every day and it would just play children's favourites, and I think that a lot of it was fired up then"*

**MUSIC: Mark Knopfler, 'Dream Of The Drowned Submariner'**

**ONE OF THE NEW SONGS ON 'PRIVATEERING', THAT'S 'DREAM OF THE DROWNED SUBMARINER'...**

**YOU WON'T BE SURPRISED TO KNOW THAT MARK IS A HUGE GUITAR ENTHUSIAST...HE'S GOING TO PLAY A BIT FOR US SOON, AND REVEAL A FEW SECRETS OF HIS STYLE...IT'S A PASSION THAT GOES BACK TO HIS BOYHOOD...**

*"Well, it becomes a collection, I suppose you could call it that, but that makes you into a collector, which I'm not. I never started out to collect 'em. It's just that, first of all, you need a few to do everything that you need to get a set of music played, or record different songs in the studios. Then people give you them, and then you get spares, and then you want to chase a better one of what you have, in order to just get a better sound out of it. So yeah, you turn around and there are 70 of the things [laughs], and you realise it's a collection"*

**MUSIC: Mark Knopfler, 'Stretching Out' instrumental ('Wag The Dog' OST)**

*"I think everybody knows now that I'm just that way, that I was the boy with his nose pressed up against the window of the guitar shop, and I can still remember taking down the first guitar that I had the nerve to take down off the wall of the guitar shop in Newcastle. It was a Spanish guitar, actually, and I didn't even know how to hold a guitar properly, but I just desperately wanted one, and as I was taking this guitar carefully down, the bloke in the shop said 'If you drop that, I'll drop you.' The first guitar had to be a red electric, you know, after Hank and the Shads and all of that, but of course my dad couldn't afford a Fender Stratocaster, so it was a little Hoffner guitar that cost 50 quid, which was a lot of money for dad back then. So as I walked out of the shop, the old guy in the shop said 'Stick at it.' I always remember that"*

**MUSIC: The Shadows, 'Man Of Mystery'**

*"I never really had a record player, but if something really struck me, I would binge on it, like kids do, so a friend of mine up the road had 'Because They're Young' by Duane Eddy, and it was long before I had a guitar, I must have only been about 12, or 10 or 11, I can't remember how old I was, but I just made him play it again and again, and I think that's a sign of that unhealthy fixation coming on, way back then"*

**MUSIC: Duane Eddy, 'Because They're Young'**

*"I think it's important, very important, to keep the child in you alive. I think the*

*innocence is very important. And in fact I was talking to, I don't mean to namedrop, but I was talking to a very fine writer called Edna O'Brien, and I was just rabbiting on about that a bit, and she's said it's more important than anything else. It's more important than learning what you're doing, more important, it's vital, she sees that, and I tend to agree, I think the things that stimulate, that gave you the energy, energised you in the first place are so important, to try to keep those alive. So when you say 'The kid looking in the guitar shop window,' I try to keep that alive, I do it now. Say if I'm meeting a mate in a caff, down in Soho or something, breakfast, which I do quite often, so I just take the bike in, but I tend to park opposite a music shop there, and I always, before I go to the caff, I still walk across the road and look in there, and it's almost like a nod to my own past. I still can't walk past a music shop without wanting to just look at the guitars. Old habits like that die pretty hard"*

**MUSIC: Mark Knopfler, 'Redbud Tree'**

**YOU'RE LISTENING TO 'PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS: THE MUSIC OF MARK KNOPFLER'....COMING UP SOON, HOW HE TRAVELLED SOUTH TO MAKE IT...**

*"I had this love affair with London, which began when I was about 14, and has never died"*

**HOW HIS SONGS DEVELOP THEIR OWN LIFE...**

*"I think the song is the master, it becomes its own...you just do your best thing by it"*

**AND WHAT HE LEARNED FROM ONE OF HIS OWN GUITAR HEROES...**

*"I got a call from Chet Atkins...I think it's just that he kind of took pity on me"*

**BUT FIRST...**

*"Shall I play a little bit for you? [Engineer: 'Yeah, please'...Mark plays] Ok. You've got to really want to know how to play, it's not a...I've taught a lot of people how to play over the years and it's not an easy thing to learn. I remember really having to force my fingers to do things. You know, not just to learn the chords with the left hand, but things to do with the right hand, because once I'd started learning how to fingerpick with my right hand, you begin going [plays], or whatever you're doing, you know, but then as you go on, you're doing four beats to the bar with your thumb and [plays], and then your fingers are starting to, this is all right hand picking, and your fingers are starting to play the notes in between, around that bassline, and you're starting to, you're seeing guitar in a different way than just hitting it with a plectrum and playing single notes, or strumming chords just like [plays], like that. You're actually picking the chord [plays]*

*throughout] and then picking tunes, you're picking and you're keeping the bass, so you're getting [plays] and the bass is making a rhythm, and then you're playing single notes, but you're also doing some accompaniment with your thumb as well, and combining, so you're kind of playing it more like a piano, and building all that up, and you realise of course that you've only scratched the surface of the thing, all the time, it's quite a humbling thing. Actually, when I, I got a call from Chet Atkins, who really is a proper guitar picker, or really was, of course, now he's no longer with us. I think it's just that he kind of took pity on me, because I was a picker, what we call a picker, [plays], you know a thumb picker, you had a thumb going up and down on a guitar and fingers as well"*

**AND FROM 'NECK AND NECK', THE ALBUM MARK MADE WITH CHET ATKINS, LISTEN TO HOW CHET REFERS TO DIRE STRAITS' MULTI-MILLION-SELLING SUCCESS ON 'THERE'LL BE SOME CHANGES MADE'...**

**MUSIC: Mark Knopfler and Chet Atkins, 'There'll Be Some Changes Made'**

*"I only got into picking, really, was through not having an amplifier for my electric guitar, and I would borrow friends' acoustics, and then a little pal and I started playing together and his big sister wanted to sing in folk clubs. So I ended up playing in some folk clubs and learning how to fingerpick a little bit, but really wanted to play in a rock 'n' roll band with my electric guitar at the same time, so I had this kind of dual thing going on. Later on, when I started getting into the blues, and country-blues as well as Chicago blues and electric blues as well, I realised it was all slowly starting to merge into something approximating to a style. And a style is just something that just comes from, I think, imitating, and then playing so much that you slowly start to develop what is recognisable. A style is recognisable, but it's that thing where people say 'Oh, I always know when it's you playing.' That's a recognisable thing, but it's very hard to talk about it, because it's so hard to...it's so easy to recognise but so difficult to define"*

**MUSIC: Dire Straits, 'Lady Writer'**

**'LADY WRITER', FROM THE FIRST, SELF-TITLED DIRE STRAITS ALBUM RELEASED IN THE AUTUMN OF 1978...ANOTHER SONG ON THAT DEBUT RECORD HAD AN LYRICAL THEME THAT DEPICTED MARK'S LIFE THEN AND NOW - ABOUT HIS JOURNEYS SOUTH, BOTH IN THE UNITED STATES AND FROM NEWCASTLE TO LONDON...**

*"I just started to think of myself as maybe being a songwriter instead of just a guitar strummer. I'd started writing my first songs, and one of the first things that I wanted to do was, obviously I was very influenced by the blues and by American music, but I wanted to put my own geography into my own songs, so 'southbound' is a very important theme for me, because I was going up and down the...the A1, is where I was going up and down in the old days, and I was hitchhiking everywhere. But when I was starting to live in the south, so home was becoming...that was a different home, so when I was saying 'Southbound again, don't know if I'm going or leaving home,' it was true for me. I was talking about*

*crossing the Tyne, and you'll still feel that, when you cross the Tyne, I still feel it"*

**MUSIC: Dire Straits, 'Southbound Again'**

*"So it was just, that was it, and then I had this love affair with London, which began when I was about 14, the first time I went down there, and has never died. Again, it's a sort of a...obviously, I have a much more realistic view of the world now than I had when I was that age, or when I was a teenager, but I still have a romance with it, I still adore London and have a romance with it. So I was writing about it from that slightly wide-eyed perspective"*

*"There's a song on the 'Privateering' album called 'Go Love,' and it's really about that, it's about having to leave, and then enjoying going back to visit, but knowing that you have to leave again. I am like that about the north-east, where, and I've asked myself whether I enjoy going back so much because I know I can leave, or I have to get back to what's now my life. So it's a slightly strange feeling. I think a lot of people have that relationship with where they originally came from"*

**MUSIC: Mark Knopfler, 'Go Love'**

*"I don't like really being in charge of the song, or I don't really like being totally in charge of the thematics of an album per se, that would worry me, it would make me feel as though as I was imposing myself too much on what was happening, and taking away from the freedom and spontaneity that can occur. I think the song is the master, it becomes its own...you just do your best thing by it. It's a little bit like a child in the sense that you do your best and then they wander off down the road, and they go into life. The songs have their own life"*

**MUSIC: Dire Straits, 'Private Investigations'**

*"When you make a song, it goes out into the world and becomes things, you know, and people use the songs to live with and do things with, and it just goes on happening, in really interesting ways, and people use the songs to live with, they use the songs to make things with, they use the music to celebrate with, or to grieve with, or whatever they do, they're using it, they'll comfort themselves with at the end of a hard day, and they tell me the most amazing things, and it makes you feel as though you're channeling something, and that you are making a contribution to people's lives. I mean, I remember even, god, a long time ago, a guy coming up to me at a, I think it was after a university gig or something, and he said 'I just want you to know, I was literally suicidal today, but you've just...' and then he made a fist, you know, with his arm, and he just said 'I'm going to go on. I'm going to go on now'"*

**FROM 1982'S 'LOVE OVER GOLD' ALBUM, THE CLASSIC SONG THAT OUR SHOW IS NAMED AFTER...IT'S 'PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS': THE MUSIC OF MARK KNOPFLER'...  
WHERE STILL TO COME, MARK TALKS US THROUGH MORE LANDMARKS**

**WITH DIRE STRAITS, EMMYLOU HARRIS AND JAMES TAYLOR...AND REVEALS THAT DESPITE HIS INCREDIBLE WORK RATE, HE RECKONS HE'S ACTUALLY A BIT LAZY!**

*"If you were to call me up and suggest we have lunch, I'll think that you're quite possibly a genius, whereas people who are a lot more mature than myself would say no, they have to go on and get some work done"*

**BUT FOR NOW, WE'RE BACK IN NORTHUMBERLAND...**

*"I could be at a Newcastle match, and when 'Local Hero' comes on, it's a fantastic moment, it's a tremendous...there's another example of a piece of music that's just gone out, marched out and had a life of its own, and just meant so much to so many people in the North-East. I mean, I was at a Sir Bobby Robson Foundation just the other day, the other night, in Newcastle and I was playing on that, and of course we played it with a band up there, and I was reminded of just what it means to so many people"*

**MUSIC: Mark Knopfler, 'Going Home (Theme From 'Local Hero')**

*"You feel very lucky to be able to reach people, and it's not just...at the end of a performance, you don't just want, you don't expect just the girls to be crying, I mean what's really fun is to see these big blokes built like bags of cement, and they're just, they've come and they've folded their arms, 'I don't know what this is about,' you know, they've been brought there, and they're going to have to be impressed to get a reaction out of them, and when you see them in tears at the end, you know you've done something"*

*"What is also quite interesting is that certain songs just seem to want to go on, no matter how much stuff you're, new stuff you're doing. And as long as I enjoy playing them, you know, I wrote 'em and I'll play 'em, but as long as it doesn't feel like cabaret, I'm in. 'Romeo & Juliet' for example, there you go, I mean there's one. It just seems to survive, and it seems to have stood the test of time. I've got an acoustic here, and the beginning [plays], for 'Romeo,' that deal, I'm in the wrong tuning but you get the picture, that is it, that becomes part of the architecture of the song, and there's no real getting away from it"*

**MUSIC: Dire Straits, 'Romeo & Juliet'**

*"There's one, 'Brothers' is another one...what's interesting about say those two songs is that, and with 'Sultans' as well, the first notes of them signal exactly what they are, and I've tried to do other things with them"*

**MUSIC: Dire Straits, 'Sultans Of Swing'**

*"In 'Sultans Of Swing' for instance, for playing it on stage, I'll start playing the first thing that comes into my head, as we're going along, but then I'll have a little*

*musical signal, you know, [plays], or whatever, it'll be some little thing that the band will hear and know that we're coming towards the turn, so we're doing 170 miles an hour and the corner is approaching, and that they will at least be ready, and then the thing is going to end. But in the bit before that, you've had time to maybe try a couple of different things"*

*"There's a bit at the end of 'Sultans' on the record [plays], you know that, [plays], and it's rocking along pretty quick at that point, and there's another example of something that went into the record, that again it wouldn't be it without that, I've tried doing it without that, and it's not the same thing"*

*"I even tried to play 'Money For Nothing' once like '16 Tons' or something [laughs], I don't know what I was thinking about at the time, but there are some songs that are signalled, really, by the start of them, and you can't really get too far away from that, it seems to me"*

#### **MUSIC: Dire Straits, 'Money For Nothing'**

*"'Brothers in Arms' is a good example of a song that goes out and does things that you wouldn't have thought it would, it becomes a source of comfort to a lot of people. I mean, I still remember, I was on the radio one morning and a guy from a tank regiment called up and said that after the Gulf battle, they had a big tank battle one night, and in the morning they linked all the tanks up with their sound systems and they played it, and you know, that was their anthem, if you like. But I think it was a comfort as much as a, it wasn't a rallying cry to arms or anything like that, it wasn't meant that way, certainly. 'Brothers' starts something like this [plays], right, 1-2-3-4, now if you went [plays], alright, if I did that, then, I don't know, it just wouldn't be the thing, and I could just see some people's faces going 'What's that?' Now, so I try and get some improvisation done in the song, but I wait for that thing to start, so then that would follow, I think on the record it's something [plays], well I wouldn't do that then, I'd start [plays], and then [plays], so I could do anything, I could change it, once the thing had started"*

#### **MUSIC: Dire Straits, 'Brothers In Arms'**

**MARK STILL PLAYS LOTS OF DIRE STRAITS MATERIAL LIKE THAT IN HIS LIVE SET, AND HE'LL BE DOING THAT AGAIN ON HIS MASSIVE 2013 EUROPEAN TOUR, WHICH RUNS FROM APRIL TO THE END OF JULY AND GOES EVERYWHERE FROM BUCHAREST TO BIRMINGHAM, LUXEMBOURG TO LIVERPOOL...**

**BUT WHETHER MARK KNOPFLER IS PLAYING ROCK OR BLUES OR FOLK OR WHATEVER, TO HIM, IT'S ALL PART OF THE SAME CANVAS...**

*"It all gets blurry round the edges, it's as if you've dropped a cup of water on a painting. Sometimes you're not even aware of what it is you're bringing to bear on it. But I think you are bringing stuff in that goes back to when you were tiny"*

*"With Emmylou, for instance, I'd started to write a few songs that had the male-female shape to them, and I just thought, as well, it just seemed refreshing to...because sometimes I'll write from the female point of view, quite often I do, and that shouldn't hold back a writer at all. So it just seemed a great idea, I knew Emmy anyway, and I would have liked to have had a good stretch in the studio and done it all with a proper recording session, as it was we had a few little sessions here and there, because of the timetables and stuff. But it was still a real joy to do it, in fact that's why we went out on tour afterwards, because we were having a lot of fun doing the whole thing, which should always be a reason to go out live, and it's always good"*

**MUSIC: Mark Knopfler & Emmylou Harris, 'This Is Us'**

*"Where James Taylor was concerned, James, I just heard his voice, playing, in this character. I'd written a song called 'Sailing To Philadelphia,' and it must have been back around 2000 or something, I can't remember, and it involved the two guys, two British guys who were out doing the Mason-Dixon line, and it was these two guys, Mason and Dixon, and I could relate to Dixon because he was from the north-east and he was quite a positive character. But I needed a voice for Charlie Mason, and as soon as the song was written, as soon as it was written I heard James singing that. And in fact I'd written it too low for James, it was low for him, but he did amazingly well, he was fabulous. As soon as I heard him sing the first line, it was like 'Whoa, yes, this is exactly what it should be'"*

**MUSIC: Mark Knopfler & James Taylor, 'Sailing To Philadelphia'**

*"I am inherently, as the teacher said at school, inherently pretty lazy, I mean if you were to call me up and suggest we have lunch, I'll think that you're quite possibly a genius, and leap out in a very good mood indeed, whereas people who are a lot more mature than myself would say no, they have to go on and get some work done"*

*"You're trying to please yourself, just like a good poet would, or a good novelist or a good painter would, you're trying to please yourself, because I think if you can't do that then you can't please anybody"*

*"I never forget how lucky I am, to be able to do this at this level, with this calibre of band and crew, is a fantastic privilege"*

**I'M MARK GOODIER... 'PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS: THE MUSIC OF MARK KNOPFLER' WAS WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY PAUL SEXTON AND MIXED BY NIGEL APPLETON...**