

**Song Exploder**  
**Paul McCartney - Ripples in a Pond**  
**Episode 315**

Hrishikesh: You're listening to Song Exploder, where musicians take apart their songs and piece by piece tell the story of how they were made. I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

Paul: Hi Hrishi!

Hrishikesh: Hi! So nice to meet you.

Paul: And is it pronounced Hrishi?

Hrishikesh: Hrishi, yes.

Paul: Hrishi.

Hrishikesh: Yes.

Paul: The H is just there to fool people.

Hrishikesh: (chuckles) exactly.

*("Ripples in a Pond" by PAUL MCCARTNEY - instrumental)*

Could you introduce yourself?

Paul: Hi, this is Paul McCartney, and I'm on Song Exploder.

HH: Paul McCartney is a singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and producer whose career spans more than six decades. As a member of The Beatles and later Wings and then his own solo albums, he's simply one of the most influential artists of all time. He has more accolades than I have time to list in this intro. But if you're listening to this, you already know all that. In May 2026, he released his twentieth solo album, *The Boys of Dungeon Lane*. He co-produced it with Andrew Watt, who won the 2021 Grammy for Producer of the Year, and whose credits include working with Lady Gaga, The Rolling Stones, Justin Bieber, and Elton John. For this episode, I spoke to Paul McCartney about his new song "Ripples in a Pond."

*("Ripples in a Pond" by PAUL MCCARTNEY)*

*(Vocals: "I love you more than I ever did before, the feeling grows and grows / Let's carry on making ripples in a pond, and we'll see how far it goes")*

Where were you when the first bit of this idea for this song came to you?

Paul: I was in East Sussex, England, on uh, my farm where I live. Just sitting around, enjoying a day off. And that's normally when I write songs, if I'm lucky enough to know that I've got the next three or four hours and nobody's gonna interrupt me.

And I was actually thinking about my missus, Nancy. And thinking, you know, how lucky I am to know and love someone like her. We've known each other quite a long time and it's a very interesting relationship. We're nothing like each other.

Hrishikesh: How so?

Paul: I mean, I'm English, she's American. She's very practical. Get things done. I'm much more sort of whimsical. I will get things done, but in... maybe not as practical a way. But we know each other and we know how to be with each other.

So I was just thinking about how blessed I am. You know, anyone who's in a good relationship with someone is inevitably really blessed. And it's nice, when you're thinking that, to introduce that idea into a song.

And, I'm often just sitting around with a guitar. If I find a couple of nice chords,

*(demo chords)*

Then I'll strum them and see if it leads me anywhere. That's the process for me, is doing the chords.

But then, like, almost immediately I will try and block it out with words. Even if it's nonsense, it at least shows you where you want the song to go. I mean, for instance, years and years ago with the Beatles, I had dreamed the melody to "Yesterday," and I didn't have any words to it, so I, I blocked it out by singing "scrambled eggs, oh my baby, how I love your legs."

So we had scrambled eggs and legs, but at least it helped me remember it. So you sometimes do that. And so, after I'd sort of found some chords on the guitar, I often then will see what happens when I put it on the piano. And this actually worked better on the piano.

*(demo piano)*

The way the chords seemed to me to, uh, sing a bit more.

*(demo piano & vocals: "Sometimes I get the feeling that you're good for me, sometimes I'm stressed / My mind says, although it's sometimes hard to see, I know that it's for the best")*

That was a very early, early version. I didn't have the lyrics ironed out, but I had the feeling.

*(cont. demo piano & vocals: "You tell me that you like to know what's going on, I thought you'd guessed / Before you think that something's going wrong, I'd like to get it off my chest / I love you more than I ever did before / A feeling grows and grows / And I explain that I'd do it all again / ...")*

So, that was what it was. I was now fishing around. I call it fishing. You know, just fishing around, see what might come. Because I don't know. I don't know this song. Nobody knows this song till I've written it. So it's nice. It's a sort of quest. Uh, it's like following a trail of breadcrumbs in the woods. You're not quite sure where it's gonna lead, but it's fun just to see if it reaches a good place.

*(cont. demo piano & vocals: "Reaching out to the universe, reaching out to the universe / Reaching out to the sky, hey, hey, yeah, babe")*

So that's the process, really. I, you know, do the little demo and then if I'm at the studio, I will then say to Steve, my engineer, "I've got this song, you know. Let's try and put it down."

*(studio demo vocals: "Reaching out to the universe, skimming across the sky / If you say that I've been through worse, I'd have to say that's something that I couldn't deny / Couldn't deny")*

So we'll try and make something a bit more of it, but it's still not concentrating on making the record.

Hrishikesh: In this version, it sounded like it might be a live recording with other musicians. Is that right, or is this you playing everything?

Paul: No, that was me. A lot of stuff on this album is me, you know, piano, vocal, and drums. I'm putting the bass in and enjoying myself.

Hrishikesh: This is from 2015, and you've had albums come out since then. How come this song didn't appear on those earlier records? Did it feel like it wasn't finished yet?

Paul: Yeah. I think that's the thing. You know, you, you sometimes will write a thing and be not entirely convinced. So you kind of put it a little bit on the back shelf. You know, songs can just lay around and I'm meaning to finish them, but I just-- I'm on tour somewhere, you know, so I don't really have the time to get to grips with it.

But yeah, this one languished around a little bit.

*(cont. studio demo vocals: "Sometimes I get the feeling she's so good for me / I must be blessed")*

Hrishikesh: I can see that, in these versions, you kind of go back and forth between whether you're singing "to you" or whether you're singing "about her." Was that something you debated for a while?

Paul: I debated it for a little while, because you do. Doing anything creative, you're always thinking, "Should I do that or do this or this?" But, I had to make the decision, am I gonna tell this song directly to Nancy or am I gonna tell this to a friend? And say, you know, "sometimes I think of *her*." But pretty soon afterwards, I thought, it's not direct enough. I think I'd rather have it coming directly from me to her.

So, I changed all the "she's" and "her's" to "you" and "yours".

*(piano & vocals: "I love you more than I ever did before, the feeling grows and grows / Let's carry on making ripples in a pond, and we'll see how far it goes")*

Hrishikesh: I was wondering where the phrase "ripples in a pond" came from, how that came to you, and what that means to you?

Paul: I like the "ripples in a pond" idea because it's a good image for me. For instance, if people pray, the idea is that you pray and it creates ripples, and it goes and it reaches the deity you're praying to.

I like the idea of saying something and it ripples out into the universe.

And, I like the idea in a romance of saying, let's see how far it goes. 'Cause you can't plan it. You can hope it's going to work, and you can hope it's going to work out well, but there is an element of guesswork where you're just saying, you know, "Fingers crossed."

Hey, Hrishi, I'll tell you one thing. You're making me think more about this song than I've ever thought about any song ever.

Hrishikesh: (laughs)

Paul: My gosh. (chuckles) But anyway, it's fun.

Hrishikesh: My conversation with Paul McCartney continues after this.

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Hrishikesh: So, the next version of the song that I have is a recording from 2022, seven years later.

Paul: This is quite a stretched-out affair.

Hrishikesh: Mm-hmm.

Paul: I must say, I never realized that it's been that long between, you know, attempts.

But, you know, one of the nice things about this kind of recording, as opposed to in the old days, where we pretty much had to just write the song, learn it, record it, thank you, good night.

But this way you can mess around and you can try various things.

So, I know there was a trumpet solo.

*(trumpet solo)*

But, I think we just decided to leave that off the record and just replace it with guitar.

*(guitar part)*

Hrishikesh: How did you first meet Andrew Watt, your co-producer on the album, before you started working together?

Paul: Well, I met him in LA. My manager said to me, "Would-- there's this guy called Andrew Watt."

And I said, "Yeah, I, I've heard of him." I liked some of the music he'd done, but I didn't know him. He said, "Would you like to meet him?" I said, "Oh yeah, sure." You know. I said, "I'll just go and have a cup of tea or something," but I didn't particularly think we'll work together. I thought, "Let's just see if we like each other."

Hrishikesh: Hmm.

Paul: So I went over to his studio, which was in the basement of Charlie Chaplin's old house, and we're sitting around chatting. I started to show a couple of ideas and

just general conversation. He followed on. And so, we just were sitting there, throwing ideas around, and we were writing the first song on the album. That was it. We just met, cup of tea, and a song appeared. It was kind of lucky, really.

Hrishikesh: I, I can't imagine just the sheer number of people who want to collaborate with you in some kind of way and have wanted to collaborate with you over the years. Is it complicated for you at all to let someone else into your music?

Paul: Yeah, I think so. Because, you know, working with John Lennon was something that happened when we were kids. Neither of us really knew how to write songs, so it just grew organically.

And because John and I had such a natural relationship that had matured together, I'm inevitably comparing whoever the next person is I'm writing with. And as time went on and the Beatles broke up and I was no longer writing with John, I did try working with a couple of other people.

But yeah, you're right that, that having worked with John, now for someone to just come into the room and we don't necessarily know much about each other, that does make it a bit harder, I must admit.

Hrishikesh: So, was it hard to then go from that casual conversation with Andrew and working on music with him, to formally ask him to work on the production of the album?

Paul: I don't think I ever did. I'd enjoyed the experience of writing the first track, so I think it was just like, "Yeah, okay. Well, what, what are you doing next Thursday?"

Hrishikesh: Huh.

Paul: We just kept on. Got our diaries out and found the next date, and picked it up.

*(drums)*

I brought this song over and I said, "Let's finish it up, 'cause I think this could work on the album."

But on this track, I said to him in the studio, I said, I said, "Andrew, look, one of the reasons I got with you is 'cause you're, you're a pop producer, and I'm waiting for you to, to pop these songs up. What are you gonna do with them? You know, are you gonna..." And he said, "Well, no, I'm, I'm just letting you lead the song."

I said, "Well, you shouldn't."

*(drums cut out)*

“On this one particularly, I think that you should just do your thing on it.” And he said, “Are you sure?” I said, “Yeah, really.” You know, I, I thought the song could take that kinda treatment. Produced so as it was right in your face. “Do what you would do with this song. And don't even think about what I would want from it.”

So he just started cooking.

*(bass)*

His engineer was called Paul. And of course, 'cause I was called Paul, we had to call the other Paul, Billy. So (chuckles) he ended up as Billy. But Andrew just started sort of shouting at him, “Yeah, do that. Do this. Take that out. You know, lose that. Put that up.” And gave it, I think, a little bit more of a pop sensibility, which is kind of what I was looking for.

We just put a couple of other little things on it. There's, like, nice little harmony, “I should have guessed,” which I think really helped.

*(vocals with background vocals: “Well, sometimes I get the feeling you're so good for me, I must be blessed (I must be blessed) / My mind says, although I sometimes don't agree, I know that it's for the best (for the best, for the best)”)*

We put those on in LA.

*(cont. vocals with background vocals: “I should have guessed (I should have guessed)”)*

*(“piano knife” stem)*

I would take a knife, just an ordinary kitchen knife, and play, like it's a drumstick, a note on one of the strings on the piano. I'd never done that before, so for this, it was new. And you get a different sound.

*(more “piano knife”)*

I like that. I like it. I think the textures, it adds to it.

Mrishikesh: In the intro of the song, there's a little thing that happens at the end of the lead guitar part, that I wanted to ask you about.

*(intro guitar part with flourish)*

Paul: Ah-ha. Yeah.



You know, I'm glad that I haven't reached the point where I'm so blasé that I just wanna just get on, write a song, record it, go home. I like the process of discovering new sounds and new ideas. And sometimes you don't hardly hear them 'til you've heard the song 20 times. And you go, "What is that little noise?" You know. But I think that's the fun, that's the fascination of it.

We made this sound and had fun making it. That's all I want in life.

Hrishikesh: And now, here's "Ripples in a Pond," by Paul McCartney, in its entirety.

*("Ripples in a Pond" by PAUL MCCARTNEY)*

To learn more, visit [songexploder.net](http://songexploder.net). Paul McCartney's new album, *The Boys of Dungeon Lane*, is out now.

This episode was produced by me, Craig Eley, Kathleen Smith, Mary Dolan, and Tiger Biskup. The episode artwork is by Carlos Lerma, and I made the show's theme music and logo.

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I'm Hrishikesh Hirway. Thanks for listening.

Paul: Oh, your name's Hrishikesh?

Hrishikesh: It is, yeah. Hrishikesh. Yeah, that's my full name.

Paul: Ahh. I know your village! (chuckles)