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Lukas Graham - 7 Years

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The Guardian

March 2016

Lukas Graham and ‘7 Years’

Just when we thought we didn’t have any more space in our life for 21st century Denmarkia, along comes another slice of Danish. This time, it’s a singer: Lukas Graham.

The single by his eponymous band, “7 Years”, released in the UK in March has already been a hit all around. Across Scandinavia, it’s been a number one. In the Benelux region, it went top 10. It’s the kind of song that gets crowds waving hands in the air, swaying and singing along.

The lyrics are by the singer himself, under his full name, Lukas Graham Forchhammer. It’s a highly emotive song. The singer recalls his childhood, his hopes and his dreams. He looks forward to turning 60. It’s personal. “I couldn’t go any further than 60 because my father died at 61,” Graham, who is 27, has said.

It’s already had more than 50 million YouTube hits with two official videos. One is a montage of family photos; the other was filmed partly in Los Angeles – where the singer was signed by Warner Bros in 2013 – and partly in Christiania, a part of Copenhagen where Graham was born and brought up and is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the whole story.

A woody enclave by a lake, Christiania is the closest the modern world has to an autonomous village-size utopian community, a place where dogs run wild and dreamers – Graham’s parents, for example – dream new ways of life. No guns, no cars, no fireworks; lots of street murals; and a house made entirely out of windows.

Its mission statement was written by Jacob Ludvigsen, one of its many founders. For him, it was “a self-governing society whereby each and every individual holds themselves responsible over the wellbeing of the entire community”.

It’s been that way since 26 September 1971, when Ludvigsen helped to lead squatters into an abandoned military barracks that had been built on the city’s 17th century ramparts.

Christiania is a tiny place, with a tiny population. One count yielded 600 adults, 200 children, 200 cats, 200 dogs, 17 horses and two parrots. Of the adults, more than 150 have been there since the start.

The community has its own anthem, with the opening line “People get filled with shit about us”. It has a slogan: “Lev livet kunstnerisk! Kun dode fisk flyder med strommen” (Live life artistically! Only dead fish follow the current). And it has a flag: three yellow dots on a red background. It’s said the dots represent the Os in “love love love”.

It also has what is perhaps the world’s biggest open-air hash, weed and drug paraphernalia market, which is one of the main reasons that the district is one of Copenhagen’s most visited tourist attractions. The
market is in what the Christiania council calls the “green light district” – but everyone else knows as Pusher Street.

The market has had its ups and downs, sometimes tolerated by the authorities, sometimes subject to regular police patrols.

Over the years, there have been days of riots, a machine-gunning (one death) and a grenade attack.

Drugs are big business in Christiania. Ten years ago, each dealer was estimated to be earning €325 (£246) an hour. Both the government and independent academics give an annual figure of $170m, which would give Christiana a GDP per capita of about $2m.

But the drug money doesn’t stay in town. As everywhere, the trade is controlled by criminals – in Christiania, by biker gangs.

The area’s free spirits and its dealers live in an uneasy truce.

But that kind of money is perhaps what the anarchists of Christiania need more than anything else right now. As with all modern city stories, whether idealistic or hard-nosed, this one ends up in the estate agent’s window. With its location, Christiania is a super-prime piece of property.

A few years ago, a deal was struck with the authorities whereby Christiania’s residents would buy the land for $12.5m (£8.75m) – way below market value. The deal was supported by a loan from those very authorities – with no set payback date. The idea was to sell shares to residents. They didn’t seem that interested, as might be expected of the anarchically inclined. Little more than $1m has been raised.

Traditionally, a pop star would celebrate newfound success by buying their mum a house. When “7 Days” has made its millions, perhaps Lukas Graham could go one better and buy his mother shares in her whole home town.

Summarise in your own words what the song is about and describe Lukas Graham’s home town.

Before listening to the song again, complete the gaps in the lyrics below. Then listen to the song a second time and check your ideas.

**Lukas Graham - 7 Years**

Once I was seven years old my momma told me
Go make yourself some ____________ or you’ll be lonely
Once I was seven years old

It was a big, big world, but we thought we were bigger
Pushing each other to the ___________, we were learning quicker
By eleven smoking herb and drinking burning liquor

Never ____________ so we were out to make that steady figure

Once I was eleven years old my daddy told me
Go get yourself a ____________ or you’ll be lonely
Once I was eleven years old

I always had that dream like my daddy before me
So I started ____________ songs, I
Lukas Graham - 7 Years

started writing stories
Something about that glory just always seemed to bore me
Cause only those I really love will ever really ____________ me

Once I was 20 years old, my story got told
Before the morning ____, when life was lonely
Once I was 20 years old

I only see my goals, I don’t believe in ____________
Cause I know the smallest voices, they can make it major
I got my boys with me at least those in favour
And if we don’t meet before I leave, I hope I’ll see you later

Once I was 20 years old, my story got told
I was writing about everything I saw before me
Once I was 20 years old

Soon we’ll be 30 years old, our songs have been sold
We’ve travelled around the ____________ and we’re still roaming
Soon we’ll be 30 years old

I’m still learning about life
My woman brought children for me
So I can sing them all my ____________
And I can tell them stories
Most of my boys are with me
Some are still out ____________ glory
And some I had to leave behind
My brother I’m still sorry

Soon I’ll be 60 years old, my daddy got 61
Remember life and then your life becomes a better one
I made a man so happy when I wrote a letter once
I hope my children come and ____________ once or twice a month

Soon I’ll be 60 years old, will I think the world is cold
Or will I have a lot of children who can warm me
Soon I’ll be 60 years old
Soon I’ll be 60 years old, will I think the world is cold
Or will I have a lot of children who can ____________ me
Soon I’ll be 60 years old

Once I was seven years old, my momma told me
Go make yourself some ____________ or you’ll be lonely
Once I was seven years old
Once I was seven years old

Do you like the song? Would you like to live somewhere like Christiania?

Make words from the letters in the columns and match them to the definitions. They were all in the article.
Lukas Graham - 7 Years

rel guing causing strong feelings
cro being the satisfactory state that someone or something should be in, that involves such things as being happy, healthy, and safe
emo wd someone who lives in a place without permission and without paying the owner
intr ter make a record, film, book, etc. available for people to see or buy
well gan a large number of people in the same place
squat found a short phrase that is easy to remember and is used to advertise something or to express the beliefs of a political party or other group
slo tive recently gained
new ease very interesting, especially because of being strange or mysterious

Complete these sentences with the correct form of the words above:

1. A ________________ gathered outside the theatre waiting for the actors to leave.
2. Reality TV shows try to present contestants in the most ________________ way possible.
3. Adele ________________ her album 25 last year.
4. As the head of the school, my main concern is the ________________ of the students.
5. ________________ have many rights in the UK and it is not easy to remove them if they start living in a property.
6. After his promotion, Keith promised to use his ________________ powers to improve working conditions for everyone.
7. I’m Lovin’ It is McDonald’s’ ________________.
8. This year’s US presidential election is ________________. It’s difficult to know who are going to be the candidates let alone who will become president.

What does the highlighted expression in this extract from the article mean?

The Guardian March 2016

The market had its ups and downs...

There are a number of expressions with words joined by ‘and’. The order of the words cannot be changed. Complete the gaps to make the expressions defined here.

1. black and __________ clear, obvious
2. __________ and outs all the details (of a procedure, etc.)
3. __________ and parcel (usually followed by of) an essential part
4. odds and __________ a variety of different items
5. __________ and take concessions on both sides
6. this and __________ various unspecified things (especially trivial)
7. __________ and __________ advantages and disadvantages
8. facts and __________ precise details

Write sentences with the expressions that show their meanings.
Once I was seven years old my momma told me
Go make yourself some friends or you’ll be lonely
Once I was seven years old
It was a big, big world, but we thought we were bigger
Pushing each other to the limits, we were learning quicker
By eleven smoking herb and drinking burning liquor
Never rich so we were out to make that steady figure
Once I was eleven years old my daddy told me
Go get yourself a wife or you’ll be lonely
Once I was eleven years old
I always had that dream like my daddy before me
So I started writing songs, I started writing stories
Something about that glory just always seemed to bore me
Cause only those I really love will ever really know me
Once I was 20 years old, my story got told
Before the morning sun, when life was lonely
Once I was 20 years old
I only see my goals, I don’t believe in failure
Cause I know the smallest voices, they can make it major
I got my boys with me at least those in favour
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