Lyrics for

“Songs by a Scientist”

by Erik Winfree

1977-2025

Liner Notes

These 17 songs, including three versions of an instrumental piece, were mostly written 1995-2002 and recorded in 2000-2002, with me playing hesitantly on guitar and singing slightly off key. Now they've been performed and improved by Suno AI's robotic session musicians. Finally, it's listenable!

Sometime I shall see the world. At age 8, I was trying to write a rock song. Gregorian chant works better, it turns out.

Follow Your Heart. For my mom, obviously.

Crazy in the Eye. Reflects my experience as a graduate student in Caltech's Computation and Neural Systems program

Sensations. Umwelt, synesthesia, metaphor. Apologies to Thomas Nagel.

Ode to a Mosquito. Mr. Mosquito's been there, done that. Respect.

Hyakutake. Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is a beautiful place to go with friends.

Tennis Shoe Len. Back in the day, Len Adleman held brainstorming meetings on weekends in his house in the hills above Northridge.

The Love of It All. The path to becoming a scientist is seldom easy, and often not the obvious choice.

Sometimes (II). It's hard to know what you feel, but you do.

The Time Has Come. Are you still a caterpillar? That was the question of "Hope for the Flowers" by Trina Paulus.

Young Tom Sawyer. Apologies to Mark Twain: this "Tom" is a blend of Tom and Huck… and me.

Joy and Sorrow. Inspired by Kahlil Gibran's "The Prophet".

Atoms Cells and Souls. Written after learning of my father's diagnosis with an aggressive brain tumor. Cancer is driven, in an uncontrolled wildness, by the same forces of cell proliferation that, when controlled by developmental programs, build your body and thus your self.

Rubaiyat of Meaning. A collection of 11 short poems circling a single concept. Like bees buzzing around the hive. Or leaves swirling in a gust of wind.

The “Princeton Instrumental” was recorded by my brother as I improvised on guitar during a family gathering at my sister’s house in… Princeton. It was a very shaky and ill-thought-out performance, but Suno took those bones and ran with it, from a better performance with a few embellishments, to new piano and violin accompaniment, to a wildly creative jazz cover.

For the songs themselves, Suno started with a recording of me playing and singing, and with some guidance made a new arrangement with additional instruments and fewer glitches. The exceptions are “Sometime I shall see the world” and “Rubaiyat of Meaning”, for which Suno created the music from whole cloth based on the style of my preference and some other similarly vague guidance, and “Crazy in the Eye,” for which I didn't have an audio recording of my own performance, just the chords – I think Suno AI didn't pay too much attention, but still it sounds pretty much how I remember it, in spirit. Maybe better.

Erik Winfree, Pasadena, California, May 8, 2026

Sometime I Shall See the World

Sometime I shall be as strong as a hurricane.
Sometime I shall be as brave as a knight.
But sometime I shall be as sad as a lily in the rain.

Sometime I shall see the world as a foggy mystery.
Sometime I shall see the world as a shining clue.
But sometime I shall sit down and think about the past.

Sometime I shall stand face to face with a lion.
And sometime I shall be chased out of town by a mouse.

— Words by Erik Winfree, 1977
— Music and performance by Suno AI, 2025

Follow Your Heart

Hey, you said it momma, you said I can't give up.
Yeah, you said it momma, you said I can't lose heart
  -- you know it's all I've got.
Yeah, you said I can't lose heart.

Yeah, you said it momma, you said the thing to do
is listen to it beat. It's talking momma, it's saying I love you
  -- you know I really do.
Yeah, you know I really love you.

Yeah, you said it momma, you said that when I'm lost
Don't compromise my faith. Don't deny my love, yeah,
  -- listen to my heart.
Hey, how can I thank you?

She said "Follow your heart
  -- the rest will follow you."
And now I know it's true.

— Words and music by Erik Winfree, 1995
— Arrangement and performance by Suno AI, 2025

Crazy in the Eye

People round here are going crazy in the eye
Even crazier than I
I don't know how or why they do it.

People round here look at locusts and they say
"What a pretty beast
It will be a data feast
when I glue it down and poke through it."

People round here talk transistors in their sleep
Quote equations when they meet
Some guy or gal they want to impress.

People round here see a rabbit and they ponder
"Is it conscious? Does it wonder?
Can I look inside its mind
And see what's there?"

People round here are going crazy in the eye
But it's a craziness I like
Though I can't say how or why I like it!

— Words and music by Erik Winfree, 1996
— Arrangement and performance by Suno AI, 2025

sensations

can you hear the
shape of the tallest
trees or hear the
path of the butter-
fly? what's your picture of this
world? how do you
dream? what is beauty in your
life?

what's it like to be a bat, we will never know
try to imagine that, let your senses grow!

say can you
see what i
hear or can you
smell what i
feel? taste the color of the
sky! see the rhythm of the
drums! hear the music of the
spheres!

synesthesia's mixing your senses
how's the world revealed by these jumbled perceptions?

say can you
see what i
mean when i
say "your mind is a mirror of the
world"? “your heart is a vessel to be
filled"? "friendship grows like a
vine"? "freedom sounds like the
wind"?

can you see the world through this labyrinth of lenses
that color how you think, how you feel and where your strength is

so, smile your ticklish
smile, blow me a
kiss, feel the warmth in my
voice, hear the laughter in my
eyes, share the music of your
love, taste the power of your
heart, see the depth of what you
are

— Words and music by Erik Winfree, 2002
— Arrangement and performance by Suno AI, 2025

ode to a mosquito

the sun goes down, shedding an amber light
that fills the sky and beckons on the night
  tonight my tears will freeze in flight

10 million years of boiling time
of life and death recording the fight the crime
  the fickle fate of this world of mine

    so if you see me on a chain round the neck
    of a fair young lady, don't you forget

i smelled the forest air in the shadow of giant ferns
i heard the lizards roar, i felt volcanos burn
  but now i watch the continents collide

i was there when the sky grew dark and the king of lizards fell
i was there when mammoths roamed 'neath the shadows of glaciers tall
  and still, these moments are trapped in time

    so if you see me on a chain round the neck
    of a fair young lady, don't you forget

the dirt you're standing on is the breath of the world
and the air you're breathing was once my own
  before the sunset became my home

— Words and music by Erik Winfree, 2001
— Arrangement and performance by Suno AI, 2025

Hyakutake

In the canyon, Coachwhip canyon
In the canyon, in the night sky
Starlit canyon, 'twas a time that's
never gonna come again.

I saw the night sky, and in the night sky
A heavenly stranger, silently rushing
Through frozen night sky, from the Oort cloud
comet Hyakutake.

Vast vast heavens pour their photons
Old as everything over all of us
come and celebrate our cosmic Christening
urging us to drink this life

so nature calls to me
so nature calls to me
so nature calls to you
now hear her

In the canyon, Coachwhip canyon
Sandstone cliffs rise, black as vacuum
Campfire burning, and in the midst of it
comet Hyakutake.

— Words and music by Erik Winfree, circa 1996
— Arrangement and performance by Suno AI, 2025

Tennis Shoe Len

Hey, here's tennis shoe Len
He's got a big smile on his face
Because youth is a state of mind
And discovery is a state of grace
Well, that's proved by tennis shoe Len

I saw him in lab today, with a test tube of DNA
He said the reaction was going to completion
He said the information required amplification
He said the equation showed logic was the solution

Hey, here's tennis shoe Len
Who thinks a molecule is data
And an enzyme's a Turing Machine
By God, what could he mean?

Well, do you think prime numbers are energy that power the world?
Do you think, do you think, what do you think?

Hey, here's tennis shoe Len
He's got some paper and a pen
He wants to change the world
Improve our lot, have dreams fulfilled
He's done it twice, third time's the charm

That's why we're here today, to give wild thoughts some sway
To look at a seashell and see patterns pell-mell
To look at a virus and see tiles around us
To look at a sunset and see chemistry hell-bent
To look at a blood clot and see an exquisite circuit

Hey, here's tennis shoe Len
He's got a big smile on his face
He's got his friends, his kids, his wife
Here with him in this lovely place
And time for math -- not a bad life
Yeah, here's tennis shoe Len

— Words and music by Erik Winfree, 2001
— Arrangement and performance by Suno AI, 2025

The Love of It All

Don't say you're never coming back
I would have a heart attack

Don't say the funding's drying out
That's not what it's all about

Don't say the spirit isn't there
Don't you love the truth the way I do, oh...

Can't you hear neurons cough and call as your
brain makes sense of it all?

Aren't you impressed by DNA,
digital in every way?

Can't you feel blood flow through and through
bringing life and breath to every cell in your body....

Have you ever seen lightning strike
transforming sand to fulgurite?

Or watched the magnetic field rise,
even as the voltage dies?

Look at the layers in that chip!
It's geology that makes it tick, neat trick, hey?

Dig that derivatives once known
tell you everyplace the function goes?

Is the mental thrill still the same
when you prove Pythagoras's claim?

Take then the Penrose kite and dart:
tile the plane with no symmetric parts! jammin!

So what's this talk of leaving town
when it's this community you've found?

Stay a while!
Stay here with me!

Stay a while!
Talk, yes, with me!

Stay a while,
cause I want to share this common love now!

Don't say you're never coming back
I would have a heart attack

— Words and music by Erik Winfree, 1996
— Arrangement and performance by Suno AI, 2025

Sometimes (II)

Sometimes I can't see the light that I hold.
Sometimes I can't see the rays that come forth from the
sun and the moon and the sky.

Sometimes I can't see the strength that resides in a
lake poised miles o’er the sea, then waters come
rushing unstoppably by me.

Sometimes I can't see the truth in your eyes.
Sometimes I can't feel the soul at my side or the
depth of your warmth beside me.

But I know it's there; I know it's glowing like an ember,
and when the wind blows, it will flare up.
Yes, when the wind blows.

Sometimes I can't hear the voices that cry.
Sometimes I can't grasp the logic that strives to bring
ashes to being to ashes again.

Sometimes I can't hear the quiet of the morn as the
waves crash and rocks clash and earth stays fast like it
ever and ever will do.

Sometimes I can't see the love that you hide.
Sometimes I can't see the light that I hold in my
heart waiting ready to guide me.

Yes, I know it's there; I know it's glowing like an ember.
Yes, I feel the breeze blowing through my hair now.
Yes, I feel the breeze touch upon my brow.

— Words and music by Erik Winfree, 1995
— Arrangement and performance by Suno AI, 2025

The Time Has Come

Look now you see the time has come
you know the time has come
to see yourself more
clearly truly lovingly

Listen I say the time has come
you know the time has come
to hear your heart more
openly honestly lovingly

So now you know the time has come
to shed a tear or two
to shed your worn out
skin so you can begin some things again

Yes for sure the time has come
you know the time has come
to see yourself more
clearly freely lovingly

— Words and music by Erik Winfree, 1996
— Arrangement and performance by Suno AI, 2025

Young Tom Sawyer

When I was young, my life flowed with the river
Born a mountain stream, dancing down the hills
Skipping on the rocks, I frolicked as a child
As the years built up, that stream became a river
Slow, deep, and wide, it wandered through the land
I built myself a raft of logs and let the current carry me

But don't you know, young Tom Sawyer
Basking in the sun, but don't you know, Tom Sawyer
Head bowed to the rain, don't you know that water flows
Downhill and that rivers love the valleys

So when the hills roll by and I wonder what it's like
To stand on the ridge where the winds howl through your hair
And you look down to the valley where you see the river snaking
Yeah, so I wonder just how far you can see

But don't you know, young Tom Sawyer
Basking in the sun, but don't you know, Tom Sawyer
Head bowed to the rain, don't you know that water flows
Downhill and that rivers love the valleys

So now the time has come for me to bring this raft ashore
To set out on my wobbly legs and let the current go
To climb the nearest mountain and see the land spread before me
And then I'll know my legs can bring me anywhere
And then I'll know my eyes can see anything
And then I'll know my dreams are in the making

So now you see, young Tom Sawyer
Climbing on the rocks again, now you see Tom Sawyer
Running through the mountain meadows, you've learned that water flows
Downhill and that rivers love the valleys

— Words and music by Erik Winfree, 2000
— Arrangement and performance by Suno AI, 2025

Joy and Sorrow

The rain falls upon my head
The rain falls upon my head
I see clouds black as night
I see clouds black as night
My clothes are cold and wet
My clothes are cold and wet
I see clouds black as night
I see clouds black as night
My knees are bloodied and sore
My knees are bloodied and sore
And yet my heart is singing
And yet my heart is singing

I am alone and exhausted
I am alone and exhausted
The trail before me is long
The trail before me is long
My clothes are ragged and tattered
My clothes are ragged and tattered
The trail before me is long
The trail before me is long
I miss my friends and my loved ones
I miss my friends and my loved ones
And yet my heart is singing
And yet my heart is singing

The rain falls upon my head
It feeds the fields and the streams
The green green grass and the meadows
The rushing river and the ocean
My clothes are cold and wet
The rain embraces my body
Am I not like the meadows?
Am I not like the ocean?
My knees are bloodied and sore
They've climbed this mountain path
They've shown me oak groves and forests
They've shown me rainbows and sunsets
That's why my heart is singing
That's why my heart is singing

I am alone and exhausted
I've tried hard to make my own path
It's shown me places of beauty
I will share these places with you
My clothes are ragged and tattered
They carry my memories in their threads
The times I've lost, the times I've won
The joy in your eyes, your loving touch
I miss my friends and my loved ones
Their love is like the gentle rain
It feeds my heart and helps me grow
Embraces my body and my soul
That's why my heart is singing
That's why my heart is singing

I see clouds black as night
Full of rain, full of life
Let it drench me to the bone
Let it drench me to the bone
The trail before me is long
Full of hardship, full of thorns
Full of roses, how I treasure them
Full of roses, how I treasure them
The rain falls upon my head
I welcome it into my heart
That's why my heart is singing
That's why my heart is singing

— Words and music by Erik Winfree, 2000
— Arrangement and performance by Suno AI, 2025

Atoms Cells and Souls

atoms cells and souls weave into a whole
forces of nature's fount flood the world with growth
look what it's doing to me
whisper -- we're here!

sun on the leaves power a maple tree
earth through the roots feed a steady growth
look what it's doing to me
whisper -- we're here!

blood in my bones breathe and groan
flesh, intricate flesh, heal my wounds
look what it's doing to me
whisper -- we're here!

soul in my self live and feel
love in my heart embrace your love
look what it's doing to me
whisper -- we're here!

atoms cells and souls weave into a whole
forces of nature's fount flood the world with growth
look what it's doing to me
whisper -- we're here!

— Words and music by Erik Winfree, 2002
— Arrangement and performance by Suno AI, 2025

Rubaiyat of Meaning

1.
Leaves lifted by restless wind around me
Swirl and spin my mind to dizzy clarity
Air like ice, permeant light, freezing time
The longing in my heart spans eternity

2.
What am I? You laugh at my presumption
But your answers of sand trickle to oblivion
Muscle and skin, hunger and desire, past and future
The boundaries of my life offer no solution

3.
A billion years of emptiness to earth's shore
A billion moments from electron to atomic core
The impulses of my mind — a billion more
All nothing: I am a ghost of vibration and vapor

4.
Fling, then, your wisps of meaning!
Into the void, into yourself, into the whirlwind
Of algorithm, yes, the roiling soul of transformation
And calm yourself in the consistency of pattern!

5.
The first heartbeat fills a dark ocean
The first thought mingles sound and motion
The first memory links the lattice of mind
'Tis water in a geode, with crystalline devotion

6.
Come, pour atomic thoughts into the vessel
Where wine-dissolved they with each other wrestle
Meanings clash and thrash apart and then together
To find a form with which they neatly nestle

7.
Chaos lives in me, sweet creative storm
Random jostling ideas keep me warm
The balance of sense and senselessness
Exothermic: the jigsaw puzzle forms

8.
Look! Look! This microscopic realm of cells
And smaller yet, membranes and polymer swells
Life's tangles and turns, a miracle of molecules
Where the anxious seed in order and entropy dwells

9.
Seed of an idea: follow fast where it blows
Then a rain of recognition, the torrent now flows
And mingled with matter a strong clay you create
That molded by mind clear conviction bestows

10.
Smell the fresh breeze, sit with me on the grass
Drink my fine wine and lift your bright glass
Hear muses of randomness sing of cells and of souls
All dancing to poetry of solid liquid gas

11.
Graphite sheafs slip into white cellulose
Thinking of you, my heart holds you close
Your phases, your wildness, your dreams
Algorithm divine: of your body and soul I boast

— Words by Erik Winfree, 2025
— Music and performance by Suno AI, 2025