

# *Flicker Of An Eye*

Words & Music: Pat Drummond

For an unknown Australian

dateline: Ballarat, Victoria 1/2/87

There has been an great deal said about immigration in Australia in the last few years. The issue has cost two of our National Opposition leaders dearly; and remains a divisive and ongoing topic for all of us in this country, as we try to come to grips with both our legitimate and our irrational concerns. Most of the debate, however, seems to stem from our evaluation of 'their' impact on 'us'. I have long wanted to write a song from the other point of view.

One thing that this man's story slammed home to me was this; that it is often our immigrants that appreciate this country, and the things it's supposed to stand for, most of all. Listening to him speak, it was almost as if I was seeing my own country for the first time through his eyes. Given the fact that Australia is almost entirely an immigrant nation, it is somewhat strange that our literary tradition, through people like Henry Lawson, has been so racist. I'm glad that recent Australian writers have begun to address this problem; because it may only be through a more sympathetic attitude to our contemporary immigrants that we may begin to understand, and forgive, our own history.

He jumped the border out of Rumania

into Yugoslavia, headed for Australia.

His life at risk and his home abandoned;

running for the freedom we take for granted.

Chorus; You and me; maybe it's time we realised.

You and me; we've lived lucky all our lives.

We are free but even Freedom has a price.

He said to me "Look Mate, open up your eyes.

Freedom's precious and you can lose it just like that...in the flicker of an eye.

He got to Budapest; he was looking for a pipeline West

but they got him in a border check

and clapped him under close arrest.

Threw him in a holding cell

in the town where they picked him up.

He still had the scar to tell where they hit him with the rifle butt.

**Chorus:**

**They took him down to the railway station  
loaded with a warrant to send him home;  
got out of the car to stamp the papers;  
left him for a minute all on his own.**

**That was all he required;  
he got the car hot-wired and he was gone.**

**I met him six years later out here in Australia.  
He was building up a business; he was living in a trailer.  
Still dreaming of the rifle crack; still waiting for the bullet in the back;  
he travelled halfway round this planet just to live in Ballarat.**

**Chorus:**

**With a tax file number now, gone in the flicker of an eye.  
With a photo on your license plate; lost in the flicker of an eye**

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