

Leader of the Band

Words and music by Dan Fogelberg



The late Dan Fogelberg (1951–2007) was already a major star when "Leader of the Band" was released in 1981. He had previously worked and recorded with a cadre of successful artists in the folk-rock scene, including Van Morrison, Joe Walsh, Emmylou Harris, Jackson Browne, Roger McGuinn, Graham Nash, Don Henley, and Glenn Frey.

His winning songwriting formula combined catchy soft-rock and pop hooks with deeply sincere lyrics about issues ranging from complex and troubled romantic relationships to social consciousness. Fogelberg released "Leader of the Band" after a slew of successful folk- and soft-rock hits, including "Longer," "Hard to Say," and "Same Old Lang Syne." This time out, he eschewed the polished production values adorning so much of his (and his contemporaries') music, featuring instead the stripped-down treatment of a fingerpicked guitar and a plaintive solo vocal.

The intro passage (bars 1–11) uses straightforward alternate picking, which serves as the texture for the whole song. These opening 11 bars are reprised verbatim in the interlude, and the first eight are used as the outro. As a general approach, work for a flowing, uninterrupted style, where all notes ring out as long as possible.

and where the thumb and fingers are evenly balanced to each other.

Bars 8–11 include a double-stop hammer-on that produces a G to C/G progression. Fogelberg uses this as a fill at the end of each verse (except the ones immediately preceding the chorus) and at the end of the interlude. This lick involves a tricky move where the hammered-on notes sound simultaneously with a plucked bass note—in this case the low G, struck by the thumb on beat three. Both notes of the double-stop should ring through the thumb-struck low G on beat three, even though, for clarity's sake, the ringing E in the middle voice is not indicated in the notation. The chord progression is all diatonic fare, except for the nice F chord on the word *soul* in the chorus. In fact, Fogelberg imbues this note with a special emphasis in a double way: by introducing the only nondiatonic chord in the song and by singing a melody note that itself is not a chord tone (a B placed against the notes of the F triad: F, A, and C).

—JON CHAPPELL

Intro Flowing Capo 1

Intro

Flowing
Capo 1

with fingers

Am C G7

Em D G C/G G C/G G C/G G C/G

1. An on-ly child a-lone and wild, a cab-'net mak - er's son. His hands were meant for diff -

2-4. See additional lyrics.

Em Am C D C G C/G G

front work and his heart was known to none. He left his home and went his lone and

Verse

17

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D.S. al Coda I

41
band.

47

G C/G G C/G G C/G G C/G G C/G G C/G

To Coda II

at-tempt — to im-i-tate the man. — I'm just a liv - ing leg - a - cy — to the lead - er of — the

41

Bm C G Am Em C Am

blood runs through my — in - stru-ment — and his song is in my soul. — My life has been a poor —

36

Am Em Am F D C

Chorus

The lead - er of the band — is tired — and — his eyes are grow - ing old. — But his

32

C Bm C G

stand - nough.

pay.

27

1. G C/G G C/G G C/G G C/G 2. G

To Coda I

sol - i - tar - y way. And he gave to me — a gift — I know — I nev - er can re -

22

Bm C Am Em D7 Am

Leader of the Band

⊕ Coda I

G C/G G C/G G7 C

well.

D.S. (take 2nd ending) al Coda II

Am Em D G C/G G C/G G C/G G

⊕ Coda II

G Am Em Am C D

64 band. I am a liv - ing leg - a - cy to the lead - er of the

G C/G G C/G G C/G G G7

band.

C Am Em D G

1. **G C/G G Bm C**
 An only child alone and wild, a cab'net maker's son
Am Em Am C D
 His hands were meant for diff'rent work and his heart was known to none
G C/G G Bm C
 He left his home and went his lone and solitary way
Am Em Am D7 G
 And he gave to me a gift I know I never can repay

2. **G C/G G Bm C**
 A quiet man of music denied a simpler fate
Am Em Am C D
 He tried to be a soldier once, but his music wouldn't wait
G C/G G Bm C
 He earned his love through discipline, a thundering velvet hand
Am Em Am D7 G
 His gentle means of sculpting souls took me years to understand

Chorus

C Bm C G
 The leader of the band is tired and his eyes are growing old
Am Em Am F D
 But his blood runs through my instrument and his song is in my soul
C Bm C G
 My life has been a poor attempt to imitate the man
Am Em Am C G C/G G C/G (etc.)
 I'm just a living legacy to the leader of the band

3. **G C/G G Bm C**
 My brothers' lives were different for they heard another call
Am Em Am C D
 One went to Chicago and the other to St. Paul
G C/G G Bm C
 And I'm in Colorado when I'm not in some hotel
Am Em Am D7 G
 Living out this life I've chose and come to know so well

4. **G C/G G Bm C**
 I thank you for the music and your stories of the road
Am Em Am C D
 I thank you for the freedom when it came my time to go
G C/G G Bm C
 I thank you for the kindness and the times when you got tough
Am Em Am D7 G
 And, Papa, I don't think I said "I love you" near enough

Repeat Chorus, play Coda II, and end

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