

# Posts Tagged Kris Faatz

## The Undercover Soundtrack – Kris Faatz

Posted by [Roz Morris @Roz\\_Morris](#) in [Undercover Soundtrack](#) on October 11, 2017



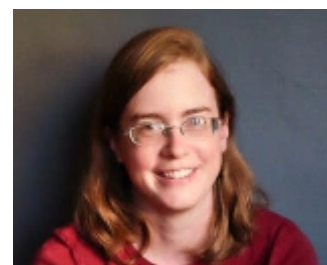
<https://mymemoriesofafuturelife.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/redpianoupdate-32.jpg>) The Undercover Soundtrack is a series where I host a writer who uses music as part of their creative environment – perhaps to connect with a character, populate a mysterious place, or hold a moment still to explore its depths. This week my guest is writing teacher, award-winning novelist and piano tutor Kris Faatz [@kfaatz925](#) (<http://www.twitter.com/kfaatz925>)

*Soundtrack by Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, Air Supply, John Mayer, Van Morrison*

The first seeds of my novel *To Love A Stranger* ([https://www.amazon.co.uk/Love-Stranger-Kris-Faatz-ebook/dp/B06XBC2TKO/ref=as\\_sl\\_pc\\_qf\\_sp\\_asin\\_til?tag=rozmoraut-21&linkCode=w00&linkId=ca2cada95b9935df06858c30d03cc41d&creativeASIN=B06XBC2TKO](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Love-Stranger-Kris-Faatz-ebook/dp/B06XBC2TKO/ref=as_sl_pc_qf_sp_asin_til?tag=rozmoraut-21&linkCode=w00&linkId=ca2cada95b9935df06858c30d03cc41d&creativeASIN=B06XBC2TKO)) came into my head in the fall of 2007. At the time, I had recently finished my grad studies in piano performance, gotten married, and started working professionally as a piano teacher. I'd written almost no fiction since high school, about 10 years earlier, and had never tried – or thought seriously about trying – to write a novel.

<https://mymemoriesofafuturelife.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/the-undercover-soundtrack-kris-faatz1-png.jpg>) *Stranger* came out of the backstage world of the classical symphony. My two main characters, Sam and Jeannette, are a conductor and a pianist, respectively. They and their story woke up in my imagination because I had fallen in love with that particular piece of the music world, where people come together to create huge living pieces of art. Some of my favorite classical music, for solo piano and for symphony, ended up in *Stranger*, because I wanted to share the experience of hearing and being part of those works with readers. During the first months of writing the novel, though, I listened to very different music.

When I started the project, I had a starry-eyed idea that writing a book would take a few months and then we'd be off to publication. Pretty soon, I realized I had let myself in for worlds of trouble. I was in love with Sam, my primary character. He was clear and alive in my mind, and his story – about love and loss, and isolation and condemnation because of the person he was – felt urgent and real. I wanted to get it onto the page, but quickly realised I didn't have the skills I needed. Frustration set in even as I tasted, for the first time, the exhilaration of a story that wanted to take root and climb for the sky.



'Songs about love, loss and missing someone helped me as I stumbled along'

The Undercover Soundtrack  
Kris Faatz

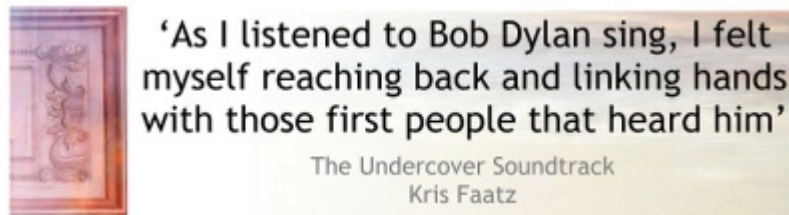
Pic: Dave Muir

Music pushed me along. First, I needed to anchor myself in Sam's time and place. He was born in the early 1960s, and *Stranger* was ultimately set in the late 1980s, while I was born in 1979 and needed some way to touch a past I hadn't experienced. One of the first tunes I listened to for inspiration was Bob Dylan's *Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeP4FFr88SQ>). I'm embarrassed to admit I'd never heard any Dylan before, but the tune quickly wrapped itself around my imagination. As I listened to Dylan sing, I felt myself reaching back and linking hands with people in the first crowds that thronged to hear him. I felt the energy of that time and understood why Dylan's audiences fell in love with his candid, wistful lyrics. For a heartbeat or two, I was part of the generation that had claimed him as its voice.

From that early tune, I moved to Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks* album, and did my best to wear out my husband's copy of it during the first year of working on *Stranger*. *You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Od4NNbEa44c>) wasn't just a time-anchor: it drew me a picture of a central relationship in Sam's life, a love he had held and then felt compelled to let go. I listened to the tune over and over, caught the mood, cried over it, and did my best to put what I saw and felt on the page, as imperfect as it had to be.

*"Gil," Sam said, "listen." He had to say something before it was too late, if only he could find the words... "I married her, but..." There it was, the simplest thing in the world. "I love you. Always. You know that, don't you?" I never stopped loving you. I never should have left. I'm so sorry, Gil.'*

I was disappointed not to be able to find a link to this tune as it's performed on the *Blood on the Tracks* album. If you've never listened to the album, do yourself a favor and check it out.



(<https://mymemoriesofafuturelife.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/the-undercover-soundtrack-kris-faatz2-png.jpg>) Songs like *Lonesome*, about love and loss and missing the one who was gone, kept me focused as I stumbled along, trying to write the story that felt more urgent to me every day. I went to the Rolling Stones's *High Tide and Green Grass* album and played *Tell Me You're Coming Back To Me* ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUa\\_gHbHmOE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUa_gHbHmOE)) over and over in my car as I drove to piano lessons. The song told me everything I needed to know about Gil, the man Sam had loved, and how Gil felt after the relationship ended. Air Supply's *Making Love Out of Nothing At All* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEd6QUbK2Mw>) filled the same function (as cheesy as the song sounds now to this 80s child's ears). The thread about Sam and Gil helped pull me back into the story every time I got frustrated again with my limitations as a writer.

(<https://mymemoriesofafuturelife.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/tlas-front-cover.jpg>) *Stranger* took far more than a few months to see through to completion. When the book was released in May, it had been almost a decade from start to finish. During those years, I realized that I wanted to be a writer even more than I wanted to be a musician, and I learned the writing craft pretty much from scratch. By the end of that journey, almost any music I heard anywhere was about *Stranger* in some way, or about the need for courage and persistence. As I wrap up these memories, I have to mention John Mayer's *Say (What You Need To Say)* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSS0wtjrm1U>) and Van Morrison's *Queen of the*



*Slipstream* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLIYiL-UOnA>), neither of which has to do with *Stranger's* story, but both of which kept me writing when I didn't want to.

Ultimately, *To Love A Stranger* ([https://www.amazon.co.uk/Love-Stranger-Kris-Faatz-ebook/dp/B06XBC2TKO/ref=as\\_sl\\_pc\\_qf\\_sp\\_asin\\_til?tag=rozmoraut-](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Love-Stranger-Kris-Faatz-ebook/dp/B06XBC2TKO/ref=as_sl_pc_qf_sp_asin_til?tag=rozmoraut-)

[21&linkCode=w00&linkId=ca2cada95b9935df06858c30d03cc41d&creativeASIN=B06XBC2TKO](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Love-Stranger-Kris-Faatz-ebook/dp/B06XBC2TKO/ref=as_sl_pc_qf_sp_asin_til?tag=rozmoraut-21&linkCode=w00&linkId=ca2cada95b9935df06858c30d03cc41d&creativeASIN=B06XBC2TKO)) exists because of music. The story could not have existed, or made it into the world, without the melodies that fill it and the tunes that carried me along when I needed them.

*Kris Faatz's short fiction has appeared or is forthcoming in Kenyon Review Online, Potomac Review, Reed, Digging Through the Fat, ([https://www.amazon.co.uk/Love-Stranger-Kris-Faatz-ebook/dp/B06XBC2TKO/ref=as\\_sl\\_pc\\_qf\\_sp\\_asin\\_til?tag=rozmoraut-21&linkCode=w00&linkId=ca2cada95b9935df06858c30d03cc41d&creativeASIN=B06XBC2TKO](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Love-Stranger-Kris-Faatz-ebook/dp/B06XBC2TKO/ref=as_sl_pc_qf_sp_asin_til?tag=rozmoraut-21&linkCode=w00&linkId=ca2cada95b9935df06858c30d03cc41d&creativeASIN=B06XBC2TKO)) and other journals. Her debut novel, *To Love A Stranger* ([https://www.amazon.co.uk/Love-Stranger-Kris-Faatz-ebook/dp/B06XBC2TKO/ref=as\\_sl\\_pc\\_qf\\_sp\\_asin\\_til?tag=rozmoraut-21&linkCode=w00&linkId=ca2cada95b9935df06858c30d03cc41d&creativeASIN=B06XBC2TKO](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Love-Stranger-Kris-Faatz-ebook/dp/B06XBC2TKO/ref=as_sl_pc_qf_sp_asin_til?tag=rozmoraut-21&linkCode=w00&linkId=ca2cada95b9935df06858c30d03cc41d&creativeASIN=B06XBC2TKO)), was a finalist for the 2016 Schaffner Press Music in Literature Award and was released May 2017 by Blue Moon Publishers (Toronto). She has been a contributor at the Sewanee Writers' Conference and a fellowship recipient at the Kenyon Review Writers Workshops, and is a pianist and a teacher of creative writing. Visit her online at her website (<https://krisfaatz.com>), on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/kristinfaatz/>), and on Twitter @kfaatz925 (<https://twitter.com/kfaatz925>)*

1980s, 2016 Schaffner Press Music in Literature Award, Air Supply, Blue Moon Publishers, Bob Dylan, classical music, Digging Through the Fat, John Mayer, Kenyon Review Online, Kenyon Review Writers Workshops, Kris Faatz, music for writing, musicians, piano, Potomac Review, Reed, Sewanee Writers' Conference, The Rolling Stones, To Love A Stranger, undercover soundtrack, Van Morrison

### 3 Comments

## Music: where people come together to create living pieces of art – Kris Faatz

Posted by [Roz Morris @Roz Morris](#) in [piano](#), [Undercover Soundtrack](#) on October 9, 2017



(<https://mymemoriesofafuturelife.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/redpianoupdate-32.jpg>) My guest this week had quite an epic journey to write her novel. It began with her experience of music as a graduate student, which made her want to write about the romantic and artistic relationship between a pianist and a conductor. She began to listen to more music to imagine the characters, imagining that within a few months she'd have it done, but the more she wrote, the more craft she realised she had to learn. This will be a familiar situation to all of us who've fallen for a story idea and then struggled to do it justice. Certain songs became talismans – Bob Dylan, Air Supply and the Rolling Stones – keeping her in contact with her original purpose and the characters who were so strong in her mind. Ten years on and her persistence has paid off: the novel is published by Blue Moon and has earned a prestigious award. She is Kris Faatz and she'll be here on Wednesday with her Undercover Soundtrack.

1980s , Air Supply , Blue Moon Publishers , Bob Dylan , contemporary fiction , Kris Faatz , love story , music for writing fiction , musicians , pianists , romance , The Rolling Stones , To Love A Stranger , writing with music

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