

Song Information

What Are They Saying?

Song lyrics are more important to some people than others. Most often, I focus on how the sound makes me feel rather than on what the songwriter is trying to tell me. There are times, however, when I love a song enough to really want to know what the words say. That's when it's handy to track down lyrics. Lyrics are sometimes printed on the liner notes that come with a CD, but very often are not. Online music services haven't done much with lyrics either. This leaves us to hunt around on the Web, which is a distinctly hit or miss proposition. The more popular the artist, the greater the chances you'll find their lyrics online—either on an artist's Web site, a fan Web site, or on a general purpose lyrics Web site.

While numerous lyrics search engines exist, none of them provide access to as many lyrics as do the major, Internet-wide search engines, such as Google. So that's where I start, by doing a search using the following elements:

- The word *lyrics*
- The name of the song searched as a phrase (with quote marks around it)
- The name of the artist searched as a phrase (with quote marks around it)

For example, to search for the lyrics of the song “A Sailor’s Life”, performed by the band Fairport Convention, I would go to Google (<http://www.google.com>) and enter the following query into the search box:

lyrics “a sailor’s life” “fairport convention”

Then browse the search results and most of the time—assuming the artist is popular—you will find the lyrics. If you don't know the name of the song, but you know a unique bit of the lyrics (a phrase or a chorus) you could insert that in place of the song's name—also with quote marks around it. Alternately, if you are looking to find discussions about a song by fans or critics you might conduct exactly the same search but omit the word “lyrics.”

If this fails, another option is to try the available Lyrics search engines. A list of these can be found on Yahoo: <http://dir.yahoo.com/Entertainment/Music/Lyrics>.

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A word of caution: many of these lyrics sites will bombard you with pop-up ads and offers to install “useful” pieces of software that are little more than spyware. If you are prepared to swat these annoyances away, you will often find the lyrics you are looking for.

Another option is to try to locate a fan site for the artist. Even if it doesn't contain the lyrics you are looking for, it will probably provide the means for contacting other fans to see if they can supply the lyrics. Two services providing interesting information about songs are LAUNCHcast and MSN Music:

- **LAUNCHcast's “Search for Lyrics” Link**

LAUNCHcast is the only major service that attempts to help you find lyrics. Clicking on their SEARCH FOR LYRICS link (available on the player) launches a Yahoo search for the lyrics of the song you are listening to. This doesn't guarantee you'll find the lyrics, but does save you the effort of running a separate search. Also, by clicking on the song name, you will be taken to a song information page, where you can see a list of other LAUNCHcast users who are fans of that song, as well as links to their personal radio stations. [**Note:** this feature was recently discontinued for “legal reasons” - 10/1/2005]

- **MSN Radio Plus' SoundsLike Feature**

MSN Radio Plus also lets you click on a song name to get more information. In this case you get information on the album in question, as well as the option to VIEW SOUNDLIKE SONGS. By clicking on this option, MSN will return a list of songs that “sound like” the one in question. [**Note:** this feature was discontinued by MSN in 2005, as part of their scaling down of MSN Radio Plus.- 10/1/2005]

Songs Lost in the Translation: KissThisGuy.com

If you've ever butchered the lyrics to a popular song, or embarrassed yourself in public by singing the wrong lyrics out loud, take heart: you've got company. There's a Web site to prove it: <http://kissthisguy.com>. This site gets its name from a misheard Jimi Hendrix lyric, “excuse me while I kiss the sky” and tells a story of how Jimi used the “wrong” version for fun in some of his concerts. View misheard lyrics from over 1000 songs by artist and by song title. You have the option of adding your own, along with your story of how it happened and whether you were able to convince other people that your version was right.