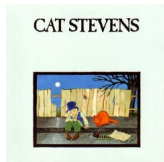


Cat Stevens - Teaser and the Firecat (1971)

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01. *The Wind* – 1:40
02. *Rubylove* – 2:34
03. *If I Laugh* – 3:17
04. *Changes IV* – 3:29
05. *How Can I Tell You* – 4:22
06. *Tuesday's Dead* – 3:34
07. *Morning Has Broken* (words Eleanor Farjeon) – 3:16
08. *Bitterblue* – 3:09
09. *Moonshadow* – 2:48
10. *Peace Train* – 4:00

Personnel:

- Cat Stevens – guitar, keyboards, vocals
- Alun Davies – guitar
- Larry Steele – bass, congas
- Gerry Conway – drums, voices
- Harvey Burns – drums
- Rick Wakeman – piano on "Morning Has Broken" (uncredited)
- Andreas Toumazis, Angelos Harzipavli – bouzouki
- Del Newman – string arrangements

Even as a serious-minded singer/songwriter, Cat Stevens never stopped being a pop singer at heart, and with *Teaser and the Firecat* he reconciled his philosophical interests with his pop instincts. Basically, *Teaser's* songs came in two modes: gentle ballads that usually found Stevens and second guitarist Alun Davies playing delicate lines over sensitive love lyrics, and up-tempo numbers on which the guitarists strummed away and thundering drums played in stop-start rhythms. There were also more exotic styles, such as the Greek-styled "Rubylove," with its twin bouzoukis and a verse sung in Greek, and "Tuesday's Dead," with its Caribbean

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feel. Stevens seemed to have worked out some of his big questions, to the point of wanting to proselytize on songs like "Changes IV" and "Peace Train," both stirring tunes in which he urged social and spiritual improvement. Meanwhile, his love songs had become simpler and more plaintive. And while there had always been a charming, childlike quality to some of his lyrics, there were songs here that worked as nursery rhymes, and these were among the album's most memorable tracks and its biggest hits: "Moonshadow" and "Morning Has Broken," the latter adapted from a hymn. The overall result was an album that was musically more interesting than ever, but lyrically dumbed-down. Stevens continued to look for satisfaction in romance, despite its disappointment, but he found more fulfillment in a still-unspecified religious pursuit that he was ready to tout to others. And they were at least nominally ready to listen: the album produced three hit singles and just missed topping the charts. Tea for the Tillerman may have been the more impressive effort, but Teaser and the Firecat was the Cat Stevens album that gave more surface pleasures to more people, which in pop music is the name of the game. ---William Ruhlmann, Rovi

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