

## Roy Harper - Sophisticated Beggar (1966)

Written by bluelover

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01. *China Girl* - 3:32 02. *Goldfish* - 2:45 03. *Sophisticated Beggar* - 5:04 04. *My Friend* - 4:04 05. *Big Fat Silver Aeroplane* - 3:37 06. *Blackpool* - 5:07 07. *Legend* - 3:43 08. *Girlie* - 2:59 09. *October 12th* - 5:48 10. *Black Clouds* - 4:29 11. *Mr. Stationmaster* - 3:01 12. *Forever* - 3:26 13. *Committed* - 3:13 Personnel: - Roy Harper - guitar, vocals + - Bert Jansch - guitar - John Renbourn - guitar - Lon Goddard - guitar (02,09) - Peter Richard – producer

Recorded under primitive circumstances and not distributed well on initial release, Harper's debut proves that the definitive cult folk-rock singer's idiosyncratic weirdness was firmly in place from the start. Mostly but not wholly acoustic, there are lingering similarities to Donovan and Bert Jansch, as well as a light similarity to Al Stewart on occasion. But Harper's scrambled lyricism is already his own, as is his peculiar melismatic phrasing. Those two traits combine to give the impression of a singer-songwriting dyslexic, not able or willing to write words that are easily digested and apparently unsequenced in any linear fashion. That isn't the most appetizing recipe, but it's leavened by fairly attractive British folk melodies and very accomplished guitar work (the liner notes infer that John Renbourn and Ritchie Blackmore helped out). Although this is largely acoustic, electric guitar and backing are used from time to time, as well as reverb and backwards effects that give it a dated charm. Certainly the most uncharacteristic arrangement is "Committed," a crunching, ominous rock tune whose first-person account of madness recalls Syd Barrett's most distraught work (and is if anything more distraught than Barrett's loony tunes). And speaking of Pink Floyd, "October 12th" makes you wonder if Harper's influence didn't find its way into the post-Syd Floyd on tunes like "Grantchester Meadows." --- Richie Unterberger

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