

## Happy New Year

*If there's any song that encapsulates whatever spirit resides in me to write songs, this may be the one. It has nearly every emotion I feel about living in America--a bewildering nation of grace, invention, and hope but too often acts as an empire without regard to these virtues. This is a jazz inflection of the Black roots of American music and a lyric that is a prayer for redemption and renewal.*

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America is a young nation by historical standards. Its youth and age seems defined by the status of those who have settled here as older immigrants and those who arrive here as new immigrants. It has always been a strange coupling, with each new emigrating group trying to fit in while those who have found place establish territory and practice many forms of exclusion. From this dynamic, cultures either assert their traditions or are assimilated into the whole fabric of the larger cloth of America. As it so often defines our unique kind of democracy, the tension is part of the dream anxiety, and the birth of freedom for new Americans is difficult. The greater tragedy of not settling our differences within our own borders is how we export these tensions in the form of war and economic hegemony. This is the great tragedy of America, I believe. We are drunk. The inebriates are our national arrogance and assumed exceptionalism, which inform our worldview and delude us into thinking the world is ours. This stubborn conceit is the ugly side of our destiny.

I'm not clever enough to write a song reflecting the above, so I have to ground it somehow. "Happy New Year" tries to locate some of this within a love song regarding a torn relationship, brutalized by a shared stubbornness, but borrowing hope from the way we often look to the calendar for change and new resolutions. Just as aging should bring more maturity for a person, a country has to age well and see the wrinkles of her endeavors, repair what's broken, and set free the burden of what keeps her from her promise.

Happy New Year

As the year begins to fade  
All the promises we made  
Let's not keep them waiting.  
As the hours tick-tock away  
There are things that we should say  
And stop debating.

So now it's time to say that that's enough,  
It's all for love 'cause war is just too tough.  
What an occasion to stop the invasion—  
It's the New Year, Happy New Year.

And as time plays out its tune,  
And the sun plays with the moon—  
The tide is waiting.  
As the universe expands,  
I kiss the lines upon your hand—celebrating.  
So now it's time for me to settle up  
And pour my heart into your broken cup  
Make your acquaintance with my impatience—  
It's the New Year, Happy New Year.

Balloons may drop and songs begin anew;  
This time I'll stop because I'm here with you.  
Let us assemble, and though we may tremble—  
It's the New Year,  
Happy New Year,  
Happy New Year.