

W a t e r l o o S u n s e t - T h e K i n k s

Words and music by [Raymond Douglas Davies](#). Released as a single in 1967. Also released on the LP [Something Else](#) aka [Something Else by the Kinks](#), 1968.

In **D**, though recorded at, roughly, **Eb**. Play in **D**, or as if in **D**, capo-ed up one fret to **Eb**, or two to **E**.

Intro: descending diatonic bassline: **a g f# e d c# b a**, then opening licks, over **D A G**

D **A** **G**
1. Dirty old river... must you keep rolling... flowing into the night?
D **A** **G**
People so busy... make me feel dizzy... taxi lights shine so bright...
Em Em-maj7 Em7 A [prominent bass line: **e eb d c#**]
But I don't... need no friend...
D **A** **G**
As long as I gaze on... Waterloo sunset... I am in paradise.

G/g D/f# E/e E7/e D/d A/c# E7 A D D
(Sha la la...) Every day.... I look at the world from my window...
G/g D/f# E/e E7 D A E7 A7 [prominent bass line: **a to a**]
(Sha la la...) But chilly, chilly is evening time... Waterloo sunset's fine.

2. Terry meets Julie... Waterloo Station... every Friday night.
But I am so lazy... don't want to wander... I stay at home at night.
But I don't... feel afraid...
As long as I gaze on... Waterloo sunset... I am in paradise.

(Sha la la...) Every day.... I look at the world from my window...
(Sha la la...) But chilly, chilly is evening time... Waterloo sunset's fine.

3. Millions of people... swarming like flies round... Waterloo underground...
But Terry and Julie... cross over the river... where they feel safe and sound.
And they don't... need no friends...
As long as they gaze on... Waterloo sunset... they are in paradise.

opening licks, over **D A G**

A5 [5022xx] **A5** **A5**
Waterloo sunset's fine... Waterloo sunset's fine... Waterloo sunset's fine...

Editor's notes: [To view the Waterloo sunset map in the background, right click it, choose Format Picture, Picture, Color, Automatic. To hide it again, set it back to Watermark.]

I've been familiar with this song forever, but I never realized what a great song it was until hearing Jon Brion sing it at Café Largo, in West Hollywood, recently. Other, smarter, people figured it out long ago:

"It's obvious from the first few bars that I've borrowed a few touches from Ray Davies. I mean, I think the definitive London song is 'Waterloo Sunset' and it can never be beaten..."
- [Elvis Costello](#), in recorded notes to his song *London's Brilliant Parade*.

Transcribed by various OLGA songsters. Verified against the recording and adjusted accordingly.

This song comes our way in **Eb**, more or less. Playing along with my Eb pennywhistle (great fun) indicates that it is just a bit flat of Eb, making it closer to D than to E.

Two transcribers claim that Ray, at least, plays the chords as if in **D**, capoed up two to **E**, one having seen a TV performance in which Ray was playing with a capo, which he's pretty sure was at fret two.

If so... are their guitars just tuned low so that they sounds in Eb? This could happen accidentally, since there are no keyboards or other fixed-pitch instruments in the song. In that case, brother Dave on electric (Rickenbacker?) could be playing 'natively' in E while Ray plays in D up two frets to E. They would have to be tuned a bit more than a half step low to wind up a little shy of Eb. Some people intentionally tune their guitars low, of course...

Another possibility is that their guitars are tuned about a half-step high, and then are both simply playing in the key of D, natively, sounding in Eb. This would allow Dave to play the progression in the refrain with the more likely chords E7/e D/d A/c# E7/b A/a, rather than with F#7/f# E/e B/eb F#7/c# B/b, but he is, or at least was, probably quite capable of doing it either way.

Consider playing it straight in D, if you can comfortably sing the low b and a notes that turn up at the end of each line of the verses; otherwise, capo up some. Up two to E works well for me, and Jon Brion plays it in E (but natively, I think, having seem him play it live, without a capo), at least on one Largo bootleg recording, and Elliot Smith goes all the way to F, in a live performance, though he may be playing natively in E, capoed-up one (or natively in F, I suppose). On the other hand, there is a findable .mpg with Ray Davies & Damon Albam of Blur singing it together – right down in D. That's a very strong indication that Ray plays it as if in D, regardless of whatever key he winds up in after capo-ing and de- or mis-tuning.

LYRICS:

Most transcriptions have: 1. Dirty old river... must you keep rolling... **rolling** into the night?

But Ray, not one to repeat himself unnecessarily, clearly sings:

1. Dirty old river... must you keep rolling... **flowing** into the night?

Most transcriptions offer, for the refrain, the verb-less: The chilly-chilliest evening time...

But Ray clearly sings, for which I am grateful : But chilly, chilly is evening time...

Terry and Julie? Rock historian Terry Rawlings claims (without substantiating it) that "...the kinks Waterloo Sunset refers to [Terry Stamp](#) and [Julie Christie](#)." He goes on to refer to Terry Stamp as a "sixties film icon", as well as the brother of Chris Stamp, onetime co-manager (with Kit Lambert) of The Who.

– [Mod, a Very British Phenomena](#) --Terry Rawlings, 2000 (Found at Tower Records, Picadilly Circus, June, 2001)

CHORDS: [assuming the key of D, but see notes above]

The opening bass line is **a g f# e d c# b a**. It appears to sound against a continuously strummed A chord. On guitar, I'm inclined to play this line as follows:

502xxx 302xxx 202xxx 002xxx x522xx x422xx x222xx x022xx [first riff *overlaps* last chord]
a g f# e d c# b a

There are two guitars plainly audible in the recording: an acoustic, probably played by brother Ray, and an electric, surely played by brother Dave. Additionally the bass guitar plays some very prominent lines, for example the opening descending diatonic run. I'm trying to capture as much of the overall sound of the song as is reasonably to play on one guitar, by incorporating bits from each of these different parts.

Chords over "But I don't... need no friend..."

Em Em-maj7 Em7 [prominent bass line: **e eb d c#**]
But I don't... need no friend...

Play either: **Em:** 02200x **Em-maj7:** 02100x **Em7:** 02000x **A7/a:** x02020
...or: **Em/e:** 07540x **Em-maj7/eb:** 06540x **Em7/d:** 05540x **A7/c#:** (5)4222x

Chords over "Every day I look at the world..."

The first position chords in other transcriptions sound OK, but here's how I'm inclined to play it, in order to emulate the bass line, and to approach the crashing chords that brother Dave plays, though I can't tell if they are the exact inversions he's using.

[Try to 'pull out' the descending bass line.]

G/g D/f# E E7/e D/d A/c# E7/b A/a D
(Sha la la...) Every day I look at the world from my window...

G/g D/f# E E7/e D/d A/c# E7/b A7 [x02020] [descending bass line]
(Sha la la...) Chilly chilly is evening time... Waterloo Sunset's fine

Here's the way I play each of those chords, in order...

[2002xx]
G:[3200xx] **D/f#:**[200xxx] **E:**[0221xx]
(Sha la la...)

[x7675x] [x5777x] [x4222x] [x221xx] [x0222x]
E7/e:[07675x] **D/d:**[05777x] **A/c#:**[04222x] **E7/b:**[0221xx] **A/a:**[00222x] **D:**[x00232]
Every day I look at the world from my window...

I'm inclined to play these descending-bass-line chords against the open 6th string, because it's a lot easier than not hitting that string, or trying to dampen it, and because, arguably the e note fits, as this whole section is effectively in the key of A, and almost as if in the key of E. It also adds some low-end punch, which is what Bro. Dave's part seems to be all about.

The **closing chord**, over the fading "Waterloo sunset's fine..." is some sort of **A5** (just 1s and 5s, no 3rd). I like the way 5022xx [notes: aaeaxx | fingers: 4011xx] works here, because it sounds right and it makes it easy to precede it with 3022xx [notes: gaeaxx | fingers: 2011xx] for the first fraction of the beat on "Wa..." This passing chord could be read as an A7, but it really functions as a mechanism to ornament the tonic (**a**) with the flatted 7 note (**g**):

- WA, 4 Mar 2001. Last edited 14 Aug 2002

Date: July 26, 1999 5:28 PM
From: Jonathan Longstaff, durandal@newearth.org

Here are the leads: [] [These are for E](#) - rewrite, or remove

This one comes at the beginning and at the end. Basically, it's just the melody.

```
e |-----|
B |-----5-----|
G |---4s6s4---s6-4---4-----|
D |-----4-s6s4---4s6-4-----s6-4-2-----|
A |-----2-s4s2-----4-----|
E |-----|
```

When Dave plays this at the end, though, some of the slides become hammer-ons.

Now, here's the very subversive, hard-to-hear lead throughout the song. It is played in several variations, but here's how it appears the first time:

```
e |-----|
B |-----5-----|
G |---2-4s6---6s4-2---4---4---2-4s6---6s4-2---|
D |-----2-4s6---6s4-2-2-2-4s6---6s4-1-1-1-2-4-2-----|
A |-----s5-----4-----|
E |-----|
```

