

Breakfast In America

is the title track of British group Supertramp's most successful album

Speaker:
Justin Ratcliffe
(Standard British accent)

(pictured below right). It was released in 1979 and has sold over 20 million copies to date. Supertramp's singer Roger Hodgson wrote the song when he was still a teenager, explaining on his DVD "Take The Long Way Home": "I was dreaming of one day going to America and seeing all the beautiful girls in California. Little did I know at that time that it would come true." In the song the singer believes that life is better in America, but, living in Britain, he will have to make do¹ with a more mundane² lifestyle, which includes his girlfriend. The song also refers to wealthy³ Texans having kippers⁴ for breakfast: this is an unlikely – yet amusing – image, given that this type of smoked fish is distinctly British, and more likely to be enjoyed by the lower classes, rather than millionaires.

When Supertramp were recording their sixth album, Hodgson brought the song to the studio, but keyboardist Rick Davies asked him to rewrite the lyrics, insisting they sounded too innocent. Tensions were already high between the two, so Hodgson tried, but "just couldn't do it. The lyric is so much part of the song – I didn't even change one word. Then we had a big fight, even about the title of the album. He didn't want the album title *Breakfast In America* either. So I guess I won out on both counts⁵."

The song is now familiar to a new generation because it is the hook⁶ of group Gym Class Heroes' hit single "Cupid's Chokehold". Using the voice of Fall Out Boy's Patrick Stump, rather than the original version, its meaning is rather different – the singer regularly falls in love with new girls, believing each to be "the one." Travis McCoy, frontman of Gym Class Heroes, has admitted that it was difficult to get the copyright clearance⁷, but is pleased that Supertramp "ended up really stoked⁸ on it."

You can see the lyrics to *Breakfast In America* at <http://music.yahoo.com/Supertramp/Breakfast-In-America/lyrics/7382335>.

(This recording features brief excerpts from the two versions of "Breakfast in America." The first is from the 1979 original by Roger Hodgson and Rick Davies (Almo Music Corp. and Delicate Music). The second is from "Cupid's Chokehold" by the Gym Class Heroes (2007).

Fergal Kavanagh, the author of this article, runs the website www.tuneintoenglish.com. The Students' Area features activities for learning English through pop music.



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THE SONG

- 1 to make do - accontentarsi.
- 2 mundane [mʌn'deɪn] banale.
- 3 wealthy [weɪlθ] ricchi.
- 4 kippers - aringhe affumicate.
- 5 I won out on both counts - ho vinto io su entrambi i fronti.
- 6 hook - ritornello.
- 7 clearance - autorizzazione.
- 8 stoked - entusiasti.

