# TUNE INTO ENGLISH

# The Doors' Light My Fire

Il primo grande successo della mitica band californiana, con riferimenti velati al sesso e alla droga, divenne parte della colonna sonora della fine degli anni Sessanta. Insieme ad alcune metafore abbastanza esplicite, da notare l'uso del *second conditional*.

**LOWER INTERMEDIATE** B1

**ON CD 18**

## ⬂ GLOSSARY

1 **signature song:** canzone principale
2 **to come up:** venire fuori
3 **to release:** pubblicare
4 **despite:** nonostante
5 **to last:** durare
6 **over:** più di
7 **clauses:** frasi
8 **to perform:** esibirsi
9 **to get high:** sballarsi
10 **to avoid:** evitare
11 **lower:** più basso
12 **to concede:** consentire
13 **rehearsals:** prove
14 **to ban:** proibire
15 **to do:** scopare (figurativo)
16 **liar:** bugiardo
17 **to hesitate:** esitare
18 **to be through:** essere finito
19 **to wallow:** crogiolarsi
20 **mire:** pantano
21 **untrue:** falso
22 **unlikely:** improbabili
23 **to sexually arouse:** eccitare sessualmente
24 **to turn someone on:** far eccitare
25 **stuck:** intrappolato
26 **mud:** fango
27 **marshy:** paludosa

*Light My Fire* was The Doors' first hit and the second single from their 1967 eponymous debut album, spending three weeks at number one in the US and becoming their signature song[1].

Although it is a group composition, guitarist Robby Kreiger first came up[2] with the idea when singer Jim Morrison asked him to write about "something universal, which won't disappear two years from now." He decided to write about one of the classical elements: fire. Kreiger was inspired by the lyrics of the Rolling Stones' song *Play With Fire* and the melody of Jimi Hendrix's *Hey Joe*, both released[3] in the previous two years.

Despite[4] the original song lasting[5] over[6] seven minutes, there are just two verses —the four-and-a-half minute instrumental on the album was cut to create a radio-friendly three-minute single version. The opening verse is a perfect example of the second conditional, with two 'would' clauses[7] followed by an 'if' and a 'could' clause.

The Doors were invited to perform[8] the song on CBS TV's popular *Ed Sullivan Show*, but were asked to change the words 'get much higher'[9] to 'get much better', to avoid[10] any possible reference to drugs (although the band insisted the meaning is literal, the opposite of 'lower[11]'.) Although Morrison conceded[12] during rehearsals[13], he sang the original during the live performance and the band was banned[14] from future editions of the show. Morrison responded by saying "Hey man, we just did[15] the Sullivan show!" ⊗
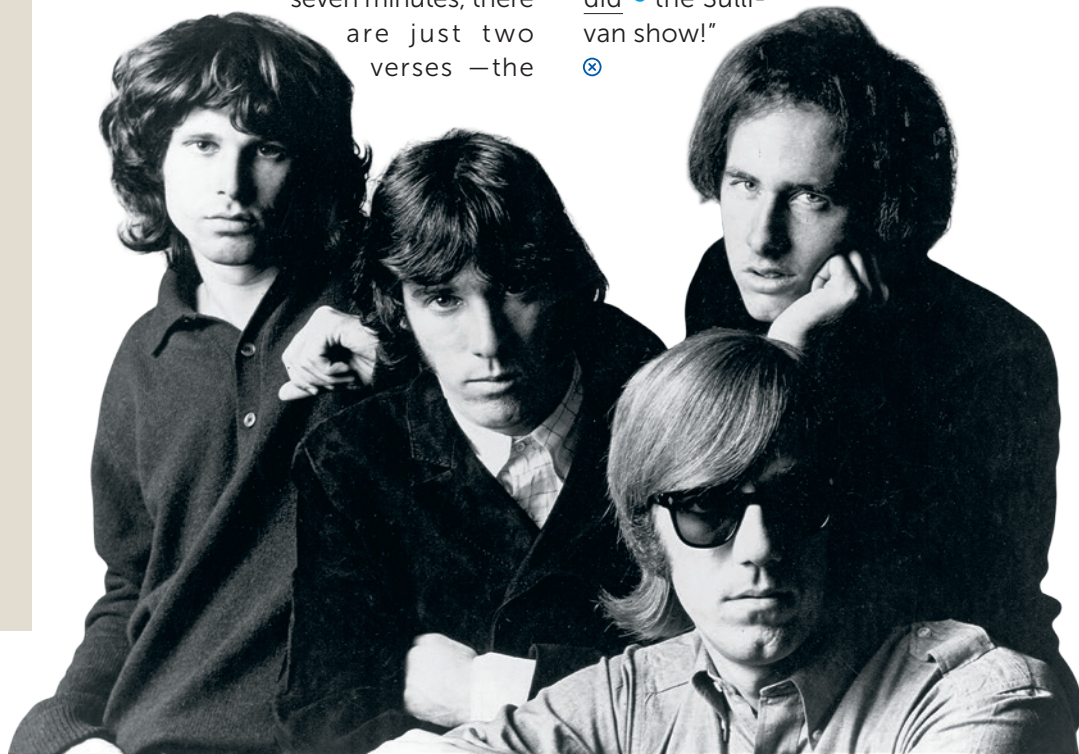
**if I was to say to you:** this is grammatically incorrect, it should be 'if I were to say to you'. This mistake has become so common in English that it is now acceptable. The second conditional is used for unlikely[21] situations and is formed by if + verb in past simple form + would + verb in infinitive ("If I were to say to you this I would be a liar") or would + verb in infinitive + if + verb in past simple form ("I would be a liar if I were to say this to you")

**through:** although the preposition 'through' is usually a function word of movement, here it is an adjective meaning 'at the point of completion'. There is no more time to hesitate.

You know that it would be untrue
You know that I would be a liar[16]
If I was to say to you
Girl, we couldn't get much higher

Come on, baby, light my fire
Come on, baby, light my fire
Try to set the night on fire

The time to hesitate[17] is through[18]
No time to wallow[19] in the mire[20]
Try now we can only lose
And our love become a funeral pyre

Come on, baby, light my fire
Come on, baby, light my fire
Try to set the night on fire, yeah

**to be untrue[22]:** is a synonym of 'to be a liar', but not so hard. Although of course the person who tells lies of things that are untrue is a 'liar'.

**To get high** is an idiomatic expression often used to mean the effects of taking drugs.

**To light a fire** means to start a fire, to set something on fire is to burn it. To 'light someone's fire' means to 'sexually arouse[23]' or excite them, like the phrasal verb to 'turn someone on[24]'.

**To wallow in the mire:** this is an idiom meaning 'to remain stuck[25] in a negative situation'. 'To wallow' means to 'roll around in something' (like a hippopotamus in mud[26]), and a 'mire' is an area of wet, marshy[27] land.

SCAN & WATCH

Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet and listen to the original song on YouTube while reading the lyrics.

Fergal Kavanagh runs the website **www.tuneintoenglish.com**, the web's largest free resource for learning English through pop music.