



KESTREL
THEATRE COMPANY

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

*Performance poetry on the theme of friendship
By men from HMP Springhill*

*"My Friend might speak too loud and is never on time but he's
always there for me"*

Contributors: Abdul, Isleigh, Mark, Osran, and Dan.

THE PROJECT

The text in this collection of performance poetry has been written by men from HMP Springhill. It is all their own work, their own words, with us acting as facilitators, providing the stimulus, the various creative exercises and games and sometimes acting as scribes as their spoken words flowed spontaneously. My final role was then to act as editor making suggestions and adjustments to the flow or sense of the poems as they began to stage them.

We have been impressed how creative the participants were and their willingness to try new ideas to explore the theme of friendship which was what we gave them as a starting point.

Performance poetry (often referred to as Spoken Word) is a term used to describe poetry that is written for performance. Therefore, it must be spoken, not just be contained in a book. What characterises the form is that it has a 'message', putting people's untold stories and histories into the public consciousness.

Fittingly, being Black History Month, this art form was Black artists led, and came to prominence and popularity in the United States in the early 80's, developing from those earlier Black artists who began speaking over music in the 60's and 70's – long before hip-hop or rap became popular. What has remained from the beginning is the sense of music and musicality in words and builds on the oral traditions of Africa and the Caribbean - passing on stories without having to write them down.

Euton Daley – Performance poet and facilitator

COMEDY

It takes a lot of work

A lot of work

To craft your style

But it's healthy

Makes you live longer

It fills you with happiness

Politeness

Love and respect.

I can be humorous

This is the way I talk

Make the crowd laugh and giggle

*What's black and white and red all over? / Don't know - what's black
and white and red all over?*

A Newspaper!

Doctor! Doctor! I feel like a curtain / Well pull yourself together, man!

What's a ship you can't sail? / A ship you can't sail?

The premiership!

Bom! Bom!

Comedy is our way out

A way out

A way out of the darkness.

SPACE

"You can choose what person or individual you want to be. You can either look up at the stars, cause landing on the clouds isn't that bad, or look down at the mud, restricted and barren.

Choose/Choose your gravitational point. Yep! Yep! (yep! Yep!). Choose your gravitational point."

(Yep! Yep!)

I look forward to your majestic arrival

Like clockwork, never let me down yet

You're my stability, means I survived another day

You've never given up on me

Even when it was quite a challenging day.

Yep! Yep! (Yep! Yep!)

I messed up again

Yep! Yep! (Yep! Yep!)

But you still adorn above me

The warmest quilt

Showing off your jewels

Like the golden mile

Yep! Yep! (Yep! Yep!)

How can it be?

So dark and yet my fantasy...

I can't wait for my first trip

To join you close up

Everyday a different display

Shooting (star), turning (moon), the lamp on full (glittering)

Causing tidal waves

What sparkling wonder

Yep! Yep! (Yep! Yep!)
You never end
Yep! Yep! (Yep! Yep!)
Where do you begin?
Yep! Yep! (Yep! Yep!)
Thanks for being there for me
No matter where I go
Yep! Yep! (Yep! Yep!)
Yep! Yep! (Yep! Yep!)
Yep! Yep! (Yep! Yep!)
Yep! Yep! (Yep! Yep!)
Yep! Yep!

"My Friend is smart, smart, smart. In fact, he's impeccable!"

SHE

She never let me down
Or cost me too much money
She never answered me back
Or went cold on me
She wasn't that needy
Or even that greedy
She never left me stranded
In Oxford or Bournemouth
She was always waiting.
My girlfriend would get jealous
But you never told any lies
My girlfriend would check too
Cos she had her spies.

I treated you well

Because / You were worth it
Spoiling you often
Because / You deserved it
Loosing you was like / Losing your legs!!
Getting closer to freedom
Means I can replace you
Maybe same colour
Maybe same smell
Oct 18, I'll get you back
Hopeful by then
Someone has fixed the windscreen crack

"My Friend shows generosity in times of need"

"My Friend can be trusted with my darkest secrets"

I NEVER QUIT

I never quit

I never

I never

I never

Quit

I'm not a quitter

No quitter stands before you

We / never quit

No matter how hazardous the journey

How difficult the path

How high the hurdles

Whatever the barriers are

Regardless of how often you try to trip me up

We / roll with the punches

Stagger and might fall

But won't let you bring me down

If you quit

You'll never know.

Looking for the light

Looking for the light

Looking for the light at the end of the tunnel.

You're not good enough! /Take your negative thoughts

Everybody's going to laugh at you! / Your negative words

You can't do it! / Your negative energies

You're going to fail! / Such negative vibes!

You'll never amount to anything!

If I'm going to fail
I'm going to fail trying

My daily struggles are often my so-called friends
When you win, everybody wins
When you lose, you lose alone
That's when you know who your true friends are
The last few steps are often the hardest
A few encouraging words from a friend
You're nearly there!
You're doing great!
Do you need a hand?
Can make all the difference

I've worked out what others think of me ain't my business
Stopped worrying about street cred
Searching for that inner belief

Looking for the light
Looking for the light
Looking for the light at the end of the tunnel.

I'm not a quitter
I never quit
Everyday I aim higher
Always higher and higher
Reach /soar to new heights
Enjoy the rewards
Don't call me a quitter
Quitters need babysitters
I'm mature enough to go without

I'm taking the bull by the horns
I'm riding the tiger
Surfing the tidal waves
Facing life head-on
Taking each challenge with a smile

As an opportunity
A series of opportunities
Turning negatives into positives
What happens to you doesn't define you
It's what you do next that makes the person
That's why I'm not a quitter
I never quit
I'll never quit
Never quit
Never
Looking for the light
Looking for the light
Looking for the light at the end

Follow your heart
Have your own thoughts
Follow your dreams
Rising like a Phoenix from the ashes
WE'LL / NEVER QUIT

THE PEN

Sound and colour transformed
She is metamorphosed
And with a different hue reborn
It is profound, often without vision or sound
As flexible as water, subtle as air
A thing light to bare
Spontaneous, sporadic, often a blessing
Sometimes tragic, a powerful medium
This idiom of magic, a gift of the lord
A double-edged sword we cut with or defend
We break hearts with it
But once broken it seldom mends? / It seldom mends
A joy for lovers, a bridge between friends
Yet if we use it less will we learn more? / Will we learn more?
For we have two ears but only one tongue
Be careful how you use this tool!
And may your words never betray you
Walk humbly and live long!

THE HERO IN ME

You are my lover and my best friend
When I first found you, I wish you'd never end
First thing in the morning, last thing at night
Last thing at night, first thing in the morning
You wrapped me up and kept me from harm.
You were always near me and always on my mind
First thought, first action, first reassuring sight.
Forward planning was the name of my game
Being without you was always a scare
Made sure I saved you – I can never run out
Like a car without petrol, I'll keep you topped up
If I go into the red or the lights come on
I'd have a major panic. Panic! Panic!
As I need you / I need you the most.
How goes the saying "It's in the post"
You were my family, my lover, my friend
When I was with you, life was always rosy.
You were my lover / And my best friend

"My Friend never puts me in danger"

FALLIN' IN LOVE

I was never classically trained
Nor did I get that Yamaha keyboards for my birthday
So when you hear those cords play
Knew I had no understanding of what the cords say
But it's a feeling
A feeling of trust
A feeling of patience
It's that feeling that makes my heart beat
My heart beats at 120bpm /bpm/bpm
Beats per minute/ beats, beats, beats/ 120bpm
I was raised in the Biggie and Tupac era
I vividly remember rapping me Shakur lyrics
At my Gran's house on my Walkman
I was raised a little young nigger
Doing bad shit
I took much shit
Cause I didn't have shit
I remember been whopped in class
And if I didn't pass, Momma whopped my arse!
Could you image the look on my Gran's face
Automatic beats
I was eight at the time
Hip hop had schooled me to the acronym
N/Never-I/Ignorant-G/Getting-G/Goals-A/Accomplished
I was falling in love / Falling in love / Falling
In love with hip-hop
Rap was the voice of my generation
TDK & VHS crossed-landed and seems to make it to my JVC

Be sure to break the windows out
Or Mommy will tape over me
It taught me what cool was
Rocking a high top fade with dreads on the side
Baggy clothing got to hang off you
Designer labels with the tags left on
Walking with a slight bop in my step
In '95 my household got cable TV
I'd pretend to go to sleep at 8pm
Just to wake up at 3pm to catch my weekly dose of MTV
Yo Raps, Eric B and Rakim would rock the mike
Who remember Melly Mel yelling
Is Brooklyn in the House!

Big Daddy Kane and KRS I would spit back to back
Those were the days, the good old days
The old days, going back to my old school
Sending out love to the old school
Love to the old school.

"My Friend is kind to everyone in his inner circle"

"My Friend is emphatically trustworthy to all he sees as Family"

FRIENDSHIP

A friend will stand by you – shoulder to shoulder
Shoulder to shoulder a friend will stand by you
A friend will tell you when you're wrong
A friend stands by you whatever you do
A friend and you talk about life experiences
A friend is a friend - is a friend - is a friend - is a friend
Is a friend - is a friend - is a friend
A friend is ME, loyal, humble,
A friend is solid /staunch, supportive,
A Friend is FOREVER.
My friend let me down
Betrayed me

Back-chat me behind my back
Can't be trusted
WHY ME!
He once saved my life
How could I forget!
We all deserve a second chance
I can't repay thee
You're part of the family
You could have my last rolo!
So I picked up the phone and made that call
"Hi" was all I needed to say
Grow with me in the struggle
My friend
Grow with me in the struggle.

"My Friend is never rude to my Mum!"

"My Friend is Awesome"



KESTREL THEATRE COMPANY

Using the arts in prison to help change lives

Kestrel Theatre Company is dedicated to working creatively with offenders in the criminal justice system. Kestrel projects put professionals in their own field (theatre directors, poets, filmmakers, writers etc) together with groups of prison residents to produce new and original work, usually for filmed or live performance.

We believe passionately that those incarcerated should have access to the arts, which free the imagination, give an outlet for our creative energies and can change lives.