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Lyrics To Who Can It Be Now

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Unpacking the Mystery: A Deep Dive into the Lyrics to Who Can It Be Now

Few songs from the early 1980s have maintained their cultural resonance as powerfully as Men at Work's iconic hit, "Who Can It Be Now." From its instantly recognizable saxophone riff to its hauntingly relatable verses, the track has become a staple of classic rock radio, movie soundtracks, and nostalgic playlists. But what lies beneath the surface of this chart-topping single? The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** tell a story far more complex than a simple question about a visitor at the door. They delve into themes of anxiety, paranoia, and the desperate need for solitude in a world that refuses to leave us alone. This article explores the song's origins, its lyrical depth, its musical composition, and the enduring legacy that keeps listeners pressing play decades after its release.

The Birth of a Classic: Context and Creation

To fully appreciate the **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now**, it is essential to understand the environment in which they were written. Australian band Men at Work, fronted by the charismatic Colin Hay, emerged from the pub rock scene of Melbourne in the late 1970s. The band's sound was a unique blend of new wave, reggae-infused rhythms, and pop sensibility. Colin Hay, the primary songwriter, penned "Who Can It Be Now" during a period of intense personal upheaval. The song was written in a small, unassuming room where Hay was living at the time. He has often mentioned in interviews that the lyrics were inspired by a genuine feeling of being overwhelmed by external pressures—phone calls, unexpected visitors, and the constant demands of daily life. This authenticity is what makes the song so enduring. The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** are not abstract poetry; they are a window into a very real state of mind.

Interestingly, the song almost didn't make it onto the band's debut album, *Business as Usual*. The record label was initially hesitant, fearing the song's paranoid tone might be too dark for mainstream radio. However, the band insisted, and the track became the second single from the album, following the global smash "Down Under." The decision proved to be a masterstroke. When listeners first heard the **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** over the airwaves, they were instantly captivated by the tension between the upbeat musical arrangement and the anxious lyrical content.

A Line-by-Line Look at the Lyrics

The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** are deceptively simple, yet they pack an emotional punch. The song opens with the protagonist hearing a knock at the door. Instead of feeling excited or curious, he feels a wave of dread. The opening lines immediately establish the song's core conflict: the invasion of personal space.

"Who can it be knocking at my door? / Make no sound, tip-toe across the floor / If he hears, he'll knock all day / I'll be trapped, and here I'll have to stay."

These lines masterfully capture the feeling of being hunted in your own home. The protagonist is not just annoyed; he is genuinely afraid. He tiptoes, hoping to evade detection. The lyrics to Who Can It Be Now

As the song progresses, the lyrics reveal more about the protagonist's state of mind. He is not just avoiding a stranger; he may be avoiding everyone.

"I've done no harm, I keep to myself / There's nothing wrong with my state of mental health."

This defensive line is crucial. The protagonist is aware that his behavior might be perceived as abnormal. He is preemptively justifying his reclusiveness. The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** hint at a societal pressure to be social, to open the door, and to engage. The protagonist is pushing back against that pressure, asserting that his desire for privacy is not a sign of madness. It is a preference. It is a necessity.

The chorus is the most memorable part of the song, driven by that iconic saxophone hook.

"Who can it be now? / Who can it be now? / Who can it be now? / Who can it be now?"

The repetition here is intentional. It mimics the relentless nature of the knocking. It is a question that the protagonist asks himself over and over, with no satisfactory answer. The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** do not offer a resolution. The song ends with the knocking continuing, leaving the listener in a state of suspended anxiety. This lack of closure is what makes the song so compelling. It invites the listener to project their own fears and experiences onto the narrative.

The Musical Tension: How Sound Supports the Story

The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** would not be nearly as effective without the musical arrangement that accompanies them. The song opens with a soft, almost hesitant guitar strumming. Then, the saxophone enters—not with a triumphant blast, but with a cautious, questioning melody. This saxophone line has become one of the most famous instrumental hooks in pop music history. It perfectly mirrors the confusion and suspicion of the lyrics.

The rhythm section provides a steady, nervous beat. The bass line is tight and pulsing, creating a sense of urgency. As the song builds toward the chorus, the tension escalates. The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** are delivered with a rising intensity by Colin Hay. His voice shifts from a whispery, guarded tone in the verses to a more forceful, almost desperate cry in the chorus. This dynamic range keeps the listener engaged. You feel the protagonist's heart rate increase as the knocking persists.

The use of silence and space is also noteworthy. There are pauses between phrases where the only sound is the echo of the saxophone. These moments of quiet amplify the feeling of isolation. The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** are given room to breathe, allowing the listener to absorb the weight of each line. It is a masterclass in musical storytelling, where every instrument serves the narrative.

Psychological and Social Themes in the Lyrics

On the surface, the **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** describe a person hiding from a visitor. However, the song operates on multiple psychological levels. It is often interpreted as an allegory for anxiety disorders and agoraphobia. The home, which should be a sanctuary, becomes a prison. The outside world is a threat. The knocking at the door is a metaphor for every external demand that feels overwhelming—work emails, social obligations, family expectations.

In the context of the early 1980s, the song also resonated with a generation that was beginning to feel the pressures of a rapidly changing world. The Cold War was ongoing, economic uncertainty was high, and the pace of life was accelerating. The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** captured a growing sense of alienation. People felt disconnected from their communities, even as they were more connected than ever through new technologies. The telephone rings, the doorbell chimes, and there is no escape.

Colin Hay has confirmed in later interviews that the song is about paranoia, but he has also noted that it is not entirely autobiographical. He amplified a feeling that many people experience but rarely talk about. The **lyrics**

give a voice to the part of us that wants to hide under the covers and ignore the world. It validates the feeling of being overwhelmed. That is why the song has become an anthem for introverts and anyone who has ever needed a day of solitude.

Cultural Impact and Legacy

Since its release in 1982, "Who Can It Be Now" has permeated popular culture. The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** have been referenced in television shows, movies, and commercials. The song appears in iconic films like *Billy Madison* and *Zoolander*, where it is used for comedic effect. However, even in comedic contexts, the underlying tension of the lyrics remains. The joke works because we all recognize that feeling of being caught off guard.

The song also earned Men at Work a Grammy Award for Best New Artist and helped the album *Business as Usual* sell over six million copies in the United States alone. The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** were a significant factor in that success. They were different from the typical love songs and party anthems dominating the radio at the time. The song offered a darker, more introspective perspective that resonated with a wide audience.

In recent years, the song has experienced a resurgence thanks to streaming platforms and its use in viral social media videos. A new generation has discovered the **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** and found them surprisingly relevant. In an age of constant notifications, social media pressure, and the blurring of boundaries between work and home life, the song's message has never been more timely. The knocking at the door has been replaced by the buzzing of a smartphone, but the anxiety is the same.

The Music Video and Visual Storytelling

No discussion of the **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** would be complete without mentioning the music video that accompanied it. The video, directed by Peter Smillie, is a darkly comedic narrative that expands on the song's themes. Colin Hay plays the protagonist living in a chaotic, cluttered apartment. His mother arrives for an unexpected visit, and he frantically tries to hide the mess and avoid her. The video adds a layer of humor to the paranoia. The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** are illustrated with physical comedy—climbing out windows, shoving clutter under rugs, and pretending not to be home.

The video was a hit on MTV and helped cement the song's place in pop culture history. It visually reinforced the idea that the "intrusion" could be something as benign as a parental visit. This made the song even more relatable. The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** were not just about a stranger at the door; they were about anyone who disrupts our carefully controlled environment. The video's success proved that the song's appeal crossed cultural and generational boundaries.

Cover Versions and Interpretations

The strength of the **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** is evident in the number of artists who have covered the song. From rock bands to acoustic solo artists, the song has been reinterpreted in countless ways. Each cover version highlights a different aspect of the lyrics. Some emphasize the paranoia, slowing the tempo and adding dark instrumentation. Others lean into the pop sensibilities, making the song more upbeat and danceable.

One notable cover was performed by Colin Hay himself, as a solo artist, in a stripped-down acoustic arrangement. Without the iconic saxophone riff, the **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** are laid bare. The vulnerability of the lyrics becomes even more pronounced. Hay's solo version has been praised for revealing the emotional core of the song that was sometimes masked by the polished production of the original. This demonstrates the durability of the writing. Great lyrics can survive any arrangement.

Conclusion

The **lyrics to Who Can It Be Now** are far more than a catchy hook from the 1980s. They are a poignant exploration of anxiety, privacy, and the human need for sanctuary. Colin Hay and Men at Work crafted a song

that speaks to a universal experience: the desire to be left alone, even for just a moment. The tension between the upbeat music and the paranoid lyrics creates a listening experience that is both enjoyable and thought-provoking. Decades after its release, the song continues to find new audiences because its themes are timeless. In a world that demands constant engagement, the question "Who can it be now?" remains as relevant as ever. Whether you interpret it as a literal question about a visitor or a metaphor for the pressures of modern life, the lyrics invite you to pause, listen, and maybe stay quiet for a while longer.

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