

MARK KNOPFLER

Analysis of a
Life's Work

**CELTIC BARD • GUITAR MYSTIC
MELODY MAKER • SUPERSTAR**

PDF E-book
for promotion only

by Richard Koechli

 tredition®

Volume **1**

DIRE STRAITS

1949 – 1995

MARK KNOPFLER

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This book was written by a hardworking human being. In the market, it's in competition with soulless and meaningless books about Mark Knopfler, spat out in minutes by using AI. Thank you for choosing the real thing.

The most comprehensive book about Mark Knopfler and Dire Straits. Sensitive storyteller, master of subtle virtuosity, relaxed superstar – Knopfler's career breaks almost all records. Renowned Swiss musician and author Richard Koechli dives deep into the universe of the British songwriter and singer with that unmistakable guitar sound, to pay tribute to his life's work in meticulous detail. With passion, know-how, respectfully critical and in a light-footed, humorous language, he examines Mark Knopfler's art and philosophy, the influence of his forerunners and companions, the background of music history in the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s. Dire Straits' story alone takes up 500 pages; a second volume about Mark Knopfler's subsequent solo career will follow in a later edition. It's an inspiring multimedia adventure with countless anecdotes, background stories and audio-video examples; a must read for Mark Knopfler fans as well as for guitar geeks, audiophiles and lovers of music history.

Swiss slide guitarist, singer-songwriter and book author **Richard Koechli** is a proven expert in Blues, Folk & Country Music. His book 'Masters of Blues Guitar' received the German Edition Award, his music has been honoured with the Swiss Blues Award and the Swiss Film Music Award.



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 - 03 Silence (R. Koechli), 2008
 - 04 Mister Marketing Man (R. Koechli), 2008
 - 05 Sensitive Kind (J.J. Cale), 2020
 - 06 Blessed Be The Name (Trad.), 2022
 - 07 Six String Spell (R. Koechli), 2016
 - 08 Lord I Just Can't Keep From Crying (B.W. Johnson), 2022
 - 09 Feel Like Going Home (Charlie Rich), 2022
 - 10 I Got Life (R. Koechli), 2018
 - 11 Le Jardin De Tes Sens (R. Koechli), 2018
 - 12 Samhain (R. Koechli), 2002
 - 13 Blue Collar Worker (R. Koechli), 2018
 - 14 Laid-Back Sur Hamac (R. Koechli), 2008
 - 15 Easy Road (R. Koechli), 2011
 - 16 Carry On (J.J. Cale), 2020
 - 17 My Slide Is Crying (R. Koechli), 2008
 - 18 Pedro (R. Koechli, E. Rosier), 2018
 - 19 The Unsung King Tampa Red (R. Koechli), 2018
 - 20 Goalies Intro (R. Koechli), 2013
 - 21 Love Endures Everything (R. Koechli), 2023
 - 22 Local Hero (Mark Knopfler), 1997
 - 23 Lily Of The West (Trad.), 2005
 - 24 Der Barde Taliesin (R. Koechli), 2002
 - 25 Irish Man (R. Koechli), 2018
 - 26 Holy Blues (R. Koechli), 2022
 - 27 Down In The Valley To Pray (Trad.), 2022
 - 28 S' Grossmuetti Zöglet (R. Koechli), 1997
- Bonus:** Sultans Of Swing (Dire Straits), 1991 (live)

Free download of the mp3 album (including bonus song):

www.richardkoechli.ch/images/laidback.pdf

Preface

What makes a person? What shapes us? How do fairytale careers come about? The fact that there are a thousand answers to this question is what makes life exciting. Even if, from my own point of view, some of these explanations may fall into the category of ‘nonsense!’ (‘baloney again’ Mark Knopfler would probably say...), it seems to be best to put on the table the whole range of answers to the question of what exactly makes Knopfler a songwriter and musician, in no particular order – ideally without evaluating them. Mark Knopfler has an audience of millions, an extremely loyal one. Each and every one of these people has their own life story in which, at some point, the MK penny dropped because a song or a guitar note by the successful British musician opened the heart and touched it forever.

We sometimes hear that he is the best guitarist of all time, the greatest genius in music history. Or, in some forum (in response to the question of whether Knopfler is religious), a fan's answer: ‘Mark Knopfler is greater than God and Jesus together.’

Phrases like this can be shocking, but they basically just show how unbelievably strongly music can touch people. We know from countless cases that adoration can take truly religious proportions. Hey, what do you think it's like in the camp of die-hard Bob Dylan fans, for example? Discipleship! There is no discussion about how good Dylan and his voice really is in a particular song – Dylan songs are a revelation *per se*, amen.

I can respect that without a problem. Nevertheless, I want to discuss it! I want to try to understand music and its power to move people as deeply and nuanced as possible. I want to decode the phenomenon that is Mark Knopfler, want to analyse his musical life's work and place it in a context of music history – but definitely not to take the magic out of it.

On the contrary! This kind of study helps me to understand music even better, to experience it even more intensely, to celebrate it!

This also helps me as a musician. Through the work on my numerous books about great or forgotten music legends, I have learned more as a guitarist, singer and songwriter than in a thousand hours of practice. Why does a very specific note at a very specific point in a song move people? How is it supposed to sound in order to touch people? Of course, these are often simply questions of playing technique and music theory; however, as interesting as they may be, such questions are not the main focus of this book. Although guitar fanatics will also get their money's worth, I am not writing a guitar tutorial here; I have written enough of those in the past. This book is about bigger questions: How does inspiration arise, where does it come from and how wonderfully interwoven music history is.

I hope you will join me on this journey through Mark Knopfler's life's work. This is not meant to be a biography, and certainly not an authorised one, although I will also be placing events from Mark's biography (there are hardly any secrets here) in their musical context. However, the music is always at the centre of my journey – and in Mark's case, there is more than enough substance. I'm not interested in revelations, scandals or cheap celebrity stories; there's hardly anything of that sort to be found in Mark's case anyway. Blind worship, however, is not my credo either; I can understand this adoration and partly relate to it, but I want to get to the bottom of his life's work from the perspective of a curious, passionate musician and a critical music journalist. I hope the mix of these two levels does justice to Mark Knopfler.

Artists are shaped by their own lives, by their environment and by everything that has happened before their time. No one in this world reinvents music; everything is interwoven, linked and connected to the past. That's why I dig quite a bit here in general music history; I don't look at Mark Knopfler

in isolation, I'm also interested in his fellow musicians and the music-historical circumstances that shaped him.

Hanspeter 'Düsi' Kuenzler, the wonderful London-based freelance Swiss journalist, conducted several lengthy interviews with Mark Knopfler. Düsi is giving us these exclusive interviews for the book here, just as a gift – amazing! I will quote from them and from countless other media reports where appropriate. In one of these interviews, conducted by Hanspeter Kuenzler at the legendary British Grove Studios in 2018, Mark Knopfler ended the long but highly entertaining conversation with an answer that says it all to Düsi's question: 'What about other people's records? Do they give you new ideas?'

Mark Knopfler: 'Oh, yes. I think so. I absolutely think so. It's a good thing, too. I mean, that's what they're for. That's what it's all for. You drop a stone into a well, and ripples come out, and then they come back, you know. And also, it makes other people do things. You're making other people — other people are creating off what you've done. It's wonderful.'

It is wonderful! Let's look and listen to all those waves; those that reached Knopfler and those with which Knopfler in turn reached others. Of course, we will listen to tons of audio examples and watch videos that I refer to, because only in this way music can fully reach our soul. There is hardly a sound or video recording that cannot be found on the internet. Displaying the corresponding QR codes in the book would, of course, be a tempting modern idea – however, I have had bad experiences with this in previous publications because internet addresses can change from time to time and thus QR codes suddenly no longer work. That is why I have basically listed the titles (*in italics*) here, under which you can easily find the articles on the internet at any time (provided they have not been deleted).

Since my book is about music and nothing but music, I have also decided against including photos. Ultimately, it is a question of concept; an illustrated book naturally has its charm, but the visual language competes with the musical and textual language. Mark Knopfler is not a photo model, he is a musician and songwriter; we all know what he looked like back then and what he looks like today. It doesn't matter to me, and it would make the book unnecessarily more expensive and legally more complicated.

Okay, let's go! I am looking forward to our journey together with the passion of a child, dear readers. I originally wanted to write a single book about Mark Knopfler's entire career – as you can see, this life's work now easily fills two extensive books...

Sincerely,

Richard Koechli

Music as a mirror

As stated in the preface: artists are shaped by their own lives, by their environment and by everything that happened before their time.

What made Mark Knopfler the person he became? We are not asking these questions out of a desire to snoop; we are not voyeurs. It's about music! An artist's privacy deserves to be respected. Mark Knopfler is one of those stars who appreciate having a beer in a pub without being disturbed and without having people fall to their knees screaming 'Oh my God' on the street. The attitude of wanting to remain unrecognised probably has something to do with Knopfler's approach as a songwriter, too. He has the mindset of a journalist (which he actually was for a while before his career in music); Mark prefers to listen to other people's conversations discreetly and respectfully – it's there where he can get inspiration for his wonderful songs about the feelings, worries, hardships and experiences of 'ordinary' people. It is the perspective of a neutral observer.

As neutral as possible, but at least not judgemental. Subjectivity always comes into play when we try to put ourselves in other people's shoes, interpret them or even try to explain them. When Mark Knopfler turns other people's stories into songs, he doesn't ask them whether 'it's okay, do you recognise yourselves in the mirror, can I publish the story like this?' He just does it, sends the songs on their way. In a way, I'm doing the same now. My view of Mark Knopfler the musician and songwriter is biased by my subjectivity, and I send this subjective view on its way without asking him 'is it okay?' first. That is the difference from an authorised biography. I do not have any conversations with Mark Knopfler, my English would not be good enough for that anyway, and in the worst case it could even destroy the 'song'

that I want to write about him here. I observe Mark and his life's work in a way that he himself observes people for his songs.

If I am interested in certain background information in addition to his music, it is because I find it exciting and inspiring to puzzle over how an artist's work is intertwined with his life and the paths he has travelled. How every aspect and facet influences all the others. Music is more than a simple craft; music is a mirror, a kind of diary of life. This also is in line with my philosophical assumption that we evolve not only through practice and striving. Everything you think and do in life (*how* you do it) also mysteriously affects your work – that has always been my credo as a musician. That's why many artists become better, more mature and more expressive with age, even though they usually work less hard at it compared to their earlier days.

Of course, some kind of golden thread can't be wrong in such an endeavour. Even if 'time' is not the only level – the best and most useful thread is still to proceed chronologically. Looking back is a popular pastime in old age anyway, and it really can do you good; most dreams and influences come from our childhood and youth. Connecting with them retrospectively is like religion in its true meaning: Latin 'religare' (to connect, to bind, to descend); reconnecting with our origins, in other words. Our existence cries out for it.

Okay, here we go. A brief look at Mark Knopfler's childhood and youth...