

Ray Davies, The Third Single (Dialogue)

The phone rang, it was a call from Larry. "Hello, cock. Cock, it's time for the third single". If this is a flop, if the third single doesn't make it, our career would be over. I'd written another song that we played on stage quite a lot. It was called 'You really got me'. And the audiences loved it, no, the audiences loved it. They liked it because they could dance to it. But the record company hated it. They said "You can't record that piece of rubbish. And we don't like the sound of that terrible distorted green amplifier. No, no. You can't record it, that's final". But Robert and Grenville thought it was marvelous. "Don't you think so, Grenville?". "Oh, every time they play 'You really got me' I get shivers up my spine". "I think it's a hit, cock, I gotta tell ya, I'll state my reputation on it". Now, with management like that, how could we fail?

But the record company said "Look, we don't believe in it. We're very sorry, we don't believe in it. If you wanna make the record, fine, but you have to pay for the recording yourselves". And that was really cruel, because they knew we were broke. But Robert knew a man. "Here, Ray, here's 200 quid. Go in the bloody studio and make that record. And make sure it's a bloody hit, what?".

You see, Mick Avory hadn't signed the recording contract, and they said he couldn't play on the record. We'd have to get a session drummer in, he's a guy that'd come in and play for hire. And they said this thinking that we'd be loyal to Mick and cancel the session. But we weren't gonna do that. But at the last minute we snug Mick into the studio. He can only play tambourine, but at least he was on the record. I'd written 'You really got me' as tribute to all those great blues people I love: Leadbelly and Big Bill Broonzy. And Dave was playing the song in the studio that day, but he was playing it in the style I'd written it. But then Dave plugged the guitar into the green amp, and he plugged the green amp into a Vox AC30, and it sounded hugh.

And when Dave played the opening chords to 'You really got me' they were so loud that the session drummer forgot the complicated little pattern he was gonna play at the beginning and just hit one beat on the snare drum as loud as he could, pow, as if to say to Dave "You noisy little bleeder. I can play just as loud as you can. And I've got a big stick". But that's exactly what we wanted, you see, we wanted to sound loud. Now we sounded like a group.

Halfway through the song it was time for Dave's guitar solo. This moment had to be right. So I shouted across the studio to Dave, give him encouragement. But I seemed to spoil his concentration. He looked at me with a dazed expression. "Fuck off". If you doubt me, if you doubt what I'm saying, I challenge you to listen to the original Kinks recording of 'You really got me'.

Halfway through the song, after the second chorus, before the guitar solo, there's a drum break. Boo ka, boo boo ka, boo ka, boo boo. And in the background you can hear "fuckoff". You can, you can. When I did the vocal I tried to cover it up by going "Oh no", but in the background you still hear it "fuckoff". And it's even clearer on CD, it's really embarrassing.

Well then Dave looked like you'd done something wrong, his mouth relaxed and his jaw dropped. But it was halfway through the most important track we'd ever do. And if it wasn't a hit, it would be the last track we'd ever do. And the lead guitarist stops playing before the solo. But then Dave's eyes squinted and his face broke into that arrogant sideways grin I've learnt to love and hate over the years. You see, he hadn't heard me shout at all. He just thought of looking at me at the same time as I looked at him, a kind of telepathic way of saying "This is it, remember, the front room". Then he gritted his teeth and sneered at me one more time and cocked an attitude before turning away into the corner of the studio to play himself into rock 'n' roll history.