

## drivin on 9 background info

<https://songmeanings.com/songs/view/62172>

march 1, 2023

**General Comment** This song's a cover of an Ed's Redeeming Qualities song originally written and performed by a man. The original has the verse "Looking out my window sill / wondering if you took your pill / wondering if it's mine" and feels a lot darker than The Breeders version which is still pretty great.

rmfnordon August 10, 2013 [Link](#)

•2 Replies | [Log in to reply](#)

•+1

**General Comment** Yeah, I think it's about a country or desert girl that gets knocked up and marries the father of her baby even though he doesn't want to be in the picture and she's not sure she wants to marry him. I get the impression that she's leaving him as she's driving down 9, if you see the events described as backwards, it kind of makes sense.

My boyfriend lived on a farm road 9 when I was in high school and this song always reminds me of him.

LoserNo1on May 02, 2010 [Link](#)

•1 Reply | [Log in to reply](#)

Yea I think so. It's a reversed sentiment song: you'd expect a guy to be doing a runner on his wedding day, hence the "shotgun wedding" reference, but in this version it's a woman... and she's pregnant.

Now there is a character not often illustrated in pop or country music. She's pregnant and she doesn't care about being alone, she'd rather start on her own than marry the guy. By the time she's in the car she's almost forgotten him, he's just a meaningless shadow. So he's either one distant guy emotionally or she's one cold fish herself.

On another level I think it's about leaving the illusion of the white picket fence, mainstream culture and security, existence behind and going out to find something personally meaningful.

xby45on March 23, 2014

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### •Song Meaning

First off, The Breeders did not write this song. So you can throw out all your ideas about where Kim/Kelly lived or their experiences. The song was written by Dom Leone of Ed's Redeeming Qualities. They were a Boston band, so it could be about Massachusetts Route 9. But, said band also moved out to San Francisco. South of San Francisco is California State Route 9, which might well be the "9" in the song. There also the lyric "looking for 138". Which could be an address or exit number.

Or, here is an even wilder idea I think is right when you put all the pieces together. This could be a song written about a vacation through the desert southwest. Here's why I think this. First off, there is a hwy 9 in Utah that goes through a particularly scenic part of the state (it is the main hwy through Zion National Park). That is in the eastern end of the desert southwest.. Second, there is a hwy 138 in the California Mojave desert, again, in a scenic part of the state and in the southwestern end of the desert southwest.. Then there is the reference to Carson City. Carson City, NV is in the northern end of the desert southwest, thus completing a large triangle that encompasses the three geographic regions in the area, The Great Basin, The Mojave Desert, and the Colorado Plateau. Add on the general western/country sound, the fiddle, and the possible references to a shotgun wedding and it all seems to come together. I find that people from outside of the desert southwest, especially those from wet climes, romanticize it. It's easy to write a song about something you are enamored with.

Now of course I could just be seeing patterns in the clouds here, and we might never know because Dom Leone died in 1989. Maybe someone can ask the surviving members of Ed's Redeeming Qualities.

Lastly, one Steve Hickoff is also a credited writer of the song, but I can find absolutely no information about him.

livid\_impon March 24, 2020 [Link](#)

•No Replies [Log in to reply](#)

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•General Comment I love this song its one of my faves by the breeders...  
xbrettx

brettylad666on January 26, 2006 [Link](#)

•No Replies [Log in to reply](#)

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brettylad666on January 26, 2006 [Link](#)

•No Replies [Log in to reply](#)

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•**General Comment** i always thought the last three verses were about a shotgun wedding.

hypnationon January 10, 2007 [Link](#)

•No Replies [Log in to reply](#)

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### •My Opinion

First "wicked imp" correctly attributes songwriting credits to Dom Leone. Dom's cousin Dani (nee Dan) was a founding member of Ed's Redeeming Qualities, along with Nino Perrotta and Carrie. Second, they are/were at that time (and forever in our hearts) a New Hampshire band. Without the University of NH Durham graduate writing program there would be no Ed's. I knew all the "band" from UNH and because they were friends with my friend Dave, band leader of N.A.F.T. and No Such Animal, who was also in the writing program. There was a party at our house on Hunking Street in Portsmouth NH (thanksgiving 87?) and Dani showed up with a ukulele and Neno and Carrie showed up and they played some calypso in the living room. As far as Route 9 goes... makes sense to me that the reference is to Ohio State Route 9 which is an old north/south route that has as it's northern terminus Salem Ohio, just down the road from Youngstown area where Dom (and Dani) grew up.

But wait just a minute! Steve Hickoff got co-writing credit? Well, now. Steve was also there at UNH in the writing program. And there is also a Route 9 (A US route I believe) that those of us who have lived around the Piscataqua River basin of New Hampshire and Maine are very familiar with. It's a well traveled road. Could be that the inspiration for that reference is either or both highways. Especially given that Steve and Dom both had a hand in the lyrics. Steve lives in the area and ..."writes about the outdoors for Foster's Sunday Citizen." And you can find his books on Amazon.

And the connection between Ed's members, Ray Halliday (then a member of No Such Animal) and the Breeders was forged at the Tree Cafe in Portland Maine. Somehow I booked NSA the opening slot for the Pixies. It was winter of '88. I came down with flu, had a fever of 104 and had to stay home. But both bands were on fire that night and I know that Carrie and Dani were there as well. ERQ were devoted friends and fans of NSA. Ray would know.... So would Dani.

RIP Dom.

waverideron July 15, 2021 [Link](#)

•No Replies [Log in to reply](#)

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### •My Interpretation

The "Nine" could directly refer to a couple of different roads. Since The Breeders are from Dayton, you can assume it's either Ohio or Indiana (since that state is very close to Dayton). There's an Indiana State Route 9 and an Ohio State Route 9, and both intersect US 30 along their route. The Indiana version is closer and hits a few major towns, but it parallels I-69 for much of its route. Then again, it also provides a decent way of avoiding Indianapolis by heading north on it from I-70.

Hard to tell. Maybe it's not a direct reference, but just generally about somewhat aimless driving.

Definitely one of the songs on this album that makes it so damn good. I mean, the fiddle just sort of comes out of nowhere.

[bocmaxima](#) on July 03, 2012 [Link](#)

• 2 Replies | [Log in to reply](#)

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The song was written in the late 80's by Dom Leone and performed by ERQ- check the link -[oocities.org/soho/5953/...](http://oocities.org/soho/5953/...)

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Not sure exactly where in the Seacoast NH area Dom was living when he wrote it.

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And I haven't been to Youngstown. But I've driven through to Pittsburgh. It's a long drive across Pennsylvania and New York and Route 9 (now re-badged NY 7) runs from Troy through Vermont to Keene NH. By the time I get to Albany when going home from Pittsburg I am ready to get off the interstate. Route 7 out of Troy to Route 9 in Bennington heads through the mountains to Brattle boro then to Keene NH where you can stay on Rt9 to Dover or jump on to Rt 101 to head straight east to the coast. Parts of the route are beautiful and lonesome too. Good songwriting territory.

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I'll bet you a donut and cup of coffee that Dom drove between Ohio (Youngstown area) and NH more than once. I like to think that he took the scenic route.

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[waverideron](#) May 11, 2013

[@bocmaxima](#) I'm not sure if anyone still looks at this site..anyway, with all of the themes of your girl being pregnant and the possibility of a shotgun wedding in the original lyrics of the song could the "9" being referred to here be the 9 month "road" that this couple could be on leading up to the baby being born instead of an actual road?

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[Bebop379](#) on September 25, 2018

***link chaser:***

<http://www.oocities.org/soho/5953/erqbio.html>

Ed's Redeeming Qualities:

Dan Leone ('88-'96)

Dom Leone ('88-'89)

Carrie Bradley ('88-'96)

Neno Perrotta ('88-'91)

Jonah Winter ('91-'96)

Ed's Redeeming Qualities was formed in spring of 1988 to enhance creativity and relieve tension during graduate school at the University of New Hampshire, and was named after the title character in one of Dan's stories. (*see next page*)

Dan, his cousin Dom, and Neno already knew each other from their home in Youngstown, Ohio, and met Carrie and Jonah at UNH. They began playing calypso cover songs, then later their own songs, at a trailer park.

Their demo tapes Ed's Kitchen and Ed's Redeeming Qualities, and EP Ed's Day were recorded there. Ray Halliday produced, and backed vocals on The Boy I Work With.

For some reason, they were more popular an hour away in Boston than in their own town, and became known as a Boston band. More Bad Times and Safe World were recorded there.

Dom died of cancer in '89, and really shook the band. They continued to do a lot of his songs, and recorded Guess Who This Is as a tribute.

During '89, ERQ became friends with Kim Deal, of the Pixies, who later formed the Breeders. When the Breeders needed a violin player for a song, they called Carrie. Kim loved Drivin' on 9 from the early ERQ shows, and covered it on the Breeders' Pod album.

ERQ moved to San Francisco, California in '90, and recorded It's All Good News in '91. Neno moved back to Ohio in '91, and Jonah moved from New York City to San Francisco the next month, and joined the band. They were interviewed on Dr. Demento's international radio show in May of '92.

Static and Weak Tea, recorded in '93, contained ERQ's only recorded cover song, Jamaica Farewell, as well as many other songs that would show up on later albums. Big Grapefruit Clean-Up Job was recorded in '94.

The movie Ed's Next Move was a pleasant surprise. A fan of the band's needed a band in his coincidentally titled movie, and wrote them in with their permission. They play four of their old songs for the movie.

At the Fish & Game Club, their final album, was recorded in '96, with the final tour date appropriately being in Coitsville, Ohio, along with Dan's dad's band.

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## *one of Dan's stories:*

### **Ed's Day** by Dan Leone

I was crossing the street one day and a dollar bill blew up and hit me on the ankle. I thought, Okay, this is going to be my day.

At this point you're thinking, What can Ed do with a dollar, someone who needs so much? And in a lot of ways you're right. For example, I do need a lot of things, I would like to have a lot of things, and what's a dollar? In other words, what can you do with a dollar? What will a dollar buy you these days?

Not much -- it's true -- except that this wasn't an ordinary day. This was no ordinary day, no sir. For example: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday. This was none of those days. It was Thursday.

And if you don't know what day Thursday is, I don't know what to tell you, except that it's ten-cent hot dog day at the bowling alley lounge. Every Thursday from noon to five.

So at this point I'm thinking, Ten hot dogs. At this point I haven't had much of anything to eat since Louie died. Don't get any ideas, though. I've been hungry on more than one occasion in my life, but the way I see it, a friend is a friend. Period. A friend is not, under any circumstances, a meal. Or anything else, for example.

I will say this much, which is that I did sell Louie's pocket knife to a little boy for two dollars. And I'd be the first to admit that I used that money wisely. I could have done a lot of things, like Louie would have done, with that money. But I've seen too many nice people do a lot of things and where does it get them?

No thank you for me, sir. I like to eat. So I took that two dollars right down to the A&P -- it was a Monday, not a Thursday -- and I got me three loaves of bread and a little green super-ball.

I don't want to rub it in, but I ate like a king for two weeks straight. That's more than I can say for a lot of people.

The thing is, and I don't want to rub it in, but the thing is that I'm lucky. I have one thing. That's more than a lot of people can say, I realize it as much as the next guy, but I do have one thing, and that is a place to stay. A place to stay and a super-ball. Two things.

I stay in a building, and I'm not going to tell you about it because it's taking me too long to get to the moral of this thing, which is: **IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.**

It's true because I found a dollar bill that day -- Thursday -- and I was on my way with it to the bowling alley thinking, If he was alive, would I have told Louie about this dollar?

I don't know. I'm just glad I didn't have to deal with it, in a way. See, Louie would have wanted to go to the liquor store with it, and that's not my style.

So I'm one-two-ing it to the lanes thinking, Ten-cent hot dogs, ten-cent hot dogs. Except I had to go to the you-know-what, so I thought about the Sunoco station a little bit, too. I'm halfway to the bowling alley.

Let me say one thing about the Sunoco station johnny, before I go on.

Never mind.

Well, it's about the you-know-what machine on the wall. I can't figure it out. For example, do you get one of every color for fifty cents, or just one color a shit. For example: green. Which, don't get me wrong -- I've never got the quarters anyway, or any use for the things, frankly, I'm sorry to say.

Anyway, don't worry about it, because the important thing is this: On my way out I'm going past the pumps, which is my favorite place to walk, after the bakery. When it comes to smells, buns first, gas second. So I'm heading out of Sunoco and there it is on the ground. Forty dollars. Forty dollars in twenties. Two of them on the ground together by the pumps at Sunoco -- and no cars around.

I think you're starting to see what I'm getting at here. The moral is that in this country -- I'm not saying whether it's good or bad, I'm just saying it -- **YOU GOT TO HAVE MONEY TO MAKE MONEY** in this country, things being how they are. I don't want to insult your intelligence, but if I didn't find that dollar in the street that day, I wouldn't have been on my way to the bowling alley in the first place. No bowling alley, no Sunoco, no forty dollars. You get the picture.

I'm not saying good or bad, I'm just saying that's the way it is.

Okay -- now I'll tell you about the building. This is the place where I stay -- that's what I'm talking about. It's a kitchen that's supposed to be shared by five guys. Five guys have separate one-room apartments in the bottom of this building, see. They share a kitchen and a bathroom, theoretically, but nobody uses the kitchen. Ever. So I get to stay there. The agreement is I live in the kitchen for free if I clean the bathroom for these guys, because they hate to clean the bathroom, I figure.

Sometimes I sleep on the counter between the refrigerator and the sink. Sometimes, for privacy, I sleep underneath the sink, across the bottom of the cupboard, with the pipes. And the sad thing about this place is that the cupboards are empty -- no food. Period. I look every day to see if anyone has bought something -- you know, community things, like oatmeal or pretzels. **NO SUCH ANIMAL**. Five guys eat out. That's what I call them -- Five Guys. I'm Ed.

But that's besides the point, the point being: Forty-one dollars.

I'm sitting at the counter in the bowling alley lounge. Do I put it all down at once, like the young playboys at Mr. Donut who leave their change on the counter until they leave? Four hundred and ten hot dogs, please. Onions and ketchup. No mustard.

No sir, that's not my style. Ed's not showing, thank you.

At this point, looking back on it, I don't think it had sunk in yet. **FORTY-ONE DOLLARS**. Then it sunk in.

I set the single on the counter and said real calm to Tommy, Ten hot dogs. One at a time.

Tommy looked at the dollar, then he looked up at me and smiled. Ed, he said. Ed, baby. He was so happy for me he gave me a free Coke.

Did I tell him about the two more greens at the bottom of my pocket? No thank you, sir. I know when to keep my mouth shut.

Then, okay, I told him.

Sure, he said. Sure sure sure.

After Number Three I asked him for a pencil.

Sure, he said. Which he did -- he gave me a pencil.

I got a piece of scrap paper out of my pocket and smoothed it out on the counter in front of me. I was going to make a shopping list. I'd swing past the A&P on my way home. And won't Five Guys be surprised, coming home from work to the smell of pork chops and corn and tossed salad. Would I offer him any?

At this point I don't know. After all, when did Five Guys ever ask me out to dinner with him? Then again, maybe he's shy. Sure, I'll share.

Okay, but I couldn't think of anything to write down on my shopping list. Let me put it this way: I couldn't stop thinking of things to write down on my shopping list long enough to actually write any of them down.

Pork chops. Corn. Tossed salad. Fritos. Tomatoes. Canned Tomatoes. Fresh buns. Ham. Cheese. Fritos. Ketchup. Beans. Steak. Curry powder. Potatoes. Butter. Coffee. Collard greens. Graham crackers. Jelly. Tuna fish. Celery. Black olives. Green ones. Apples. French bread. Pretzels. Chicken.

What're you doing? (This is Tommy talking.)

I'm making a shopping list.

He looks at the paper, which there's nothing on it still, at this point.

Sure, he says, plopping down Number Six.

After Number Seven I picked up the pencil and wrote on the paper: Everything. Then I folded it up and put it in my pocket.

I'm not going to say too much about what exactly went on in my head between Hot Dog Number Seven and Hot Dog number Ten. Onions and ketchup. No mustard.

Let me just make it clear that normally I am a real-life person. That means I take things for what they are. For example, a hot dog is a hot dog. Period, depending what it's got on it. But I don't take it any further than that, thanks. A hot dog doesn't mean anything beyond what it tastes like, you see what I'm, saying?

Normally, I'm saying, I understand all this and life flows.

But something about having food in my stomach and green in my pocket -- it set me thinking. I'll be the first to admit it. And I started to think about my shopping list as something more important than it actually was. Saying something more.

All it said was: Everything. But that was the point. Everything. It got me thinking: What if I die, like Louie, and they find me and go through my pockets for identification and find my shopping list that says, Everything. What would they think? Here is a man -- Ed, if you want to get technical -- who has nothing. What does he need? Everything. What can we give him? Nothing. Well, maybe a decent burial.

Now I know what you're thinking. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I know what you're thinking. Well, you're wrong -- whatever you're thinking, which is probably that I spent the money on booze. And all I have to say to that is this, Hey, who am I? Am I Ed? Would Ed do a thing like that? No thank you, kindly.

I went bowling.

I swallowed the end of Number Ten at two o'clock, and I bowled from then until eleven that night, when they closed.

What was going on in my head? Absolutely nothing.

Was it like me (Ed) to do a thing like that (what I did)? No.

Am I sorry? No.

Did I still have some money left? Yes.

It's a dollar a game. I played fifteen plus Tommy bowled one, on me, when he got off work at five. By then I was good enough to beat him, which I did.

Ed, he said. Ed Ed Ed.

Tommy, I said.

So forty-one minus sixteen is twenty four. Twenty-four dollars.

TWENTY-FOUR DOLLARS.

You see what I mean? I ate ten hot dogs and went bowling and afterwards I was still richer than I've ever been that I can remember. ONLY IN AMERICA.

Only in America can you find forty-one dollars on the ground, spend seventeen, and still have twenty-four.

I got home at midnight. All I can say is my fingers were sore. And my feet. But it was a good feeling. I like to bowl. I got home with my hands in my pockets and who's in my room? Who do you think? Five Guys. One of them, anyway, and he's got water boiling on the stove. First time.

Hi.

Hi.

I walked up to him and looked at him, but he wouldn't look at me. My name, I said, is Ed. Then I said, Go have some lunch with me tomorrow?

Hi, he said. I'm Dave.

He was so nervous, this Dave Five Guys, he forgot to answer my question. He poured the water into a cup and left, which I watched him do it.

Frankly, I wasn't going to say it again. If he wants to have lunch, I'm asking him. If not, I'm still asking him but at least he could say it, one way or -- for example -- the other.

Dave, I thought. I'm thinking: Dave Dave Dave.

And then I crawled into my cupboards, thinking Dave, and went to sleep.

Basically that was my day. I still remember it.



## ***Driving on 9***

ERQ lyrics:

[Intro, spoken]

Haha, that's the way I always play it!

[Verse 1]

Drivin' on 9

You could be a shadow

'Neath the street light

Behind my home

Drivin' on 9

I sure miss you

Pass the motel

Give a dog a bone

Drivin' on 9

Looking for one thirty-eight

Maybe I passed it

Go another mile

Drivin' on 9

You'll sure look pretty

In Carson City

Walking down the aisle

Drivin' on 9

Will you wear white?

I sure hope not

But you might, just to spite

Drivin' on 9

Does your daddy have a shotgun?

He said he'd never need one

Looking at the pines

[Verse 2]

Drivin' on 9

Looking out my windowsill

Wondering if you took your pill

Wondering if it's mine

Drivin' on 9

How old is Cindy?

She sure looks like me

Send me a card

[Outro]

Drivin' on 9

Turn off your headlights

This is just like stagefright

Coming back home