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Margaret Thatcher

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Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Can we start by whirling back to your youth and asking you if you had any particular heroes and heroines when you were growing up?
PM

I think you have got to remember that I was growing up in wartime and things were very, very different, and indeed if you were growing up in wartime, you really do appreciate peace; you know, if you have known a time when the planes went out - the bomber force went out most nights and the fighters were about and there were battles and you were losing ships - you just imagine if Falklands had gone on and on and then it had been much closer; so it was a very different time but then you had to have all kinds of relaxational relief because of the armed forces, and I suppose really that our heroes in those days, because we had no television, we had radio and we used to listen to radio and everyone listened to Winston Churchill, everyone listened, for example to J B Priestley give his talks, Arthur Askey, there was ITMA, Tommy Handley, all of those great variety things on radio were very much part of our lives, part of our entertainment because we hadn't very much else; and then the other great entertainment in my generation, which one day I hope will come back, was to go to the cinema to see a film. First it was your only access to films, but secondly, you know, it wasn't only just going to see a film, when you go round there was an atmosphere to the cinema as well and you are seeing it with a lot of other people as well so it was a social occasion. I sometimes regret that we haven't so much cinema life in some towns - perhaps it is going to come back.

Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

I hope so. PM

And what did we see? The films we saw ... Ginger Rogers, Fred Astaire - fantastic, but you have seen them; they are great smash hits with the comebacks. And these great musical films; there was Jean MacDonald, Nelson Eddy, and Ann Sieglar, Webster Booth, those marvellous, Jean Arthur in "Plainsman", all the Western things, there was Carmen Miranda who was "South of the Border Down Mexico Way", but the point I am making is that those stars - there were fewer of them - meant as much to us, because it was a life that was way beyond anything we ever imagined and we thought it was very glamorous. I suppose things turn out to be less glamorous the closer you get to them - they are jolly hard-working, jolly hard-working, and you do not quite see that. Then there were the films - there was one called Picture Goer I remember was the one that we always used to take - but we looked at them avidly because it was a kind of escapism from the lives that we led and it was something that women were lovely and they seemed to lead very exciting lives while we led humdrum lives and sometimes very difficult lives, so it was the same in a way, but it took a different form from what it takes now. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Was school in those days very different from what it is today, in that what it was in the war, and therefore you had to all sort of muddle together rather than get up to naughty tricks? PM

Well, we had another school evacuated to us so we went in the morning and they went in the afternoon, and so yes it was very different but things were much more formal in those days when I was, I remember very much, at primary school. We were taught in classes of forty but, my goodness me, by the time we were six or seven we all knew how to read and write and knew our arithmetic and so we were taught very well although we were taught much less individually and all together, but I do not think myself that young people have changed that much. I think that growing up is a very difficult time particularly when you get in your teens and it is not always easy to talk to your parents. Sometimes you think, "Well, they do not understand me", you cannot imagine that they were ever young and so you have got to have someone else to talk to, you obviously talk to your friends, but I just think it is also important to have someone else older to talk to, so that you can go to them if you are worried about things and often it is your friends' parents you can talk to and they can talk to yours, or often we find that grandparents can often talk to the present generation much more. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Were you ever very naughty at school? PM

I don't think I was terribly naughty, I liked the work, I did a certain amount of sports, I tended to be rather serious because I enjoyed ... they were serious times in which we were living and I was the youngest of the family and I very much enjoyed listening to serious discussion very much and therefore I was thought to be a rather serious child, but it was because I was passionately interested in many of those things, and, as I say, they were very serious times in which we were living. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

But looking back on it, do you ever think you were too serious? Were you teased at all? PM

I think sometime, you know, parents try to give their children the things they did not have. Alfred RobertsMy father left school at the age of thirteen although he was very intelligent, he did not have the opportunity to go on and therefore was quite determined that I should have a very good education, and I do not mean only what you learn at school, but he discussed things with me a great deal, and that I should learn music and really to our generation education was the key which unlocked the future. It was not something that you got automatically; it was an enormous privilege to have very good education. My father had not had it and therefore he tried to give that to me very much. Therefore I did not have a great deal of parties or pleasure; we very rarely went to the cinema where some of my friends did, we were again very serious, and so when I was bringing up my children I want them to have more fun times, I wanted them to take part in more sports, so that if they were asked out anywhere, they almost knew almost every sport, so yes, they were taught on our summer holidays; they were taught to sail, they were taught to play pretty nearly all of the sports and they had, I hope, a little bit more fun, so you try to compensate, each generation does. Whether you get it right, you know, what you really ought to say is," I wonder what my children want or would like to have" not "What do I want for them?" Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Well, it is an impossible task being a parent, isn't it? PM

Well, it is not impossible. I think when you are younger you think, "When I have a family, I will never say that to them" and then you find yourself saying exactly the same thing to them, and so it happens with each generation as each rebels and then realises, only when you become a parent do you realise the wisdom of some of the things that your parents were saying. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

How did your children rebel? Did Mark grow his hair long and ... PM

No, no Mark Thatcherhe did not grow his hair long but he liked motor racing which worried me enormously; you can imagine how very, very much I was worried by that. They were both very good at sports which again pleased me because if you are good at sports it both gives you an interest, gives you an exercise, and gets you in touch with a lot of other people. Don't you find that today you need to do something that gets you a lot of friends by virtue of what you are doing? If you sail or if you can play tennis, or if you play hockey or play, Mark played cricket, or rugby football or football, then you have a lot of friends. But Mark went for motor racing and also became a very good golfer. We took them away for holidays, we had our holidays really in winter, sometimes we went away, also in summer we hired a house and I took them away and my Denis Thatcherhusband came down at weekends, so they learnt to sail there. We went to the same place every year so that they had a lot of friends. Do you know friends are the most important thing in life? They really are, I cannot emphasise that. The friends you make when you are young you keep in touch with but people are friends because you have an interest in common. Now I did, as I said, I was

interested in debating societies, I was interested in all kinds of things; it may be photography, it may be music; music gives you a lot of friends. Mine were both quite, Mark certainly was quite interested in music, Carol ThatcherCarol - very much her own ideas and still has and she is a journalist, but you have got somehow to accommodate - young people will have their own ideas as to what they want to do and it is their life and you cannot - I think it is a mistake to try to persuade them into a direction in which they do not want to go. On the other hand if they want to do terribly glamorous things which are not going to give them a living you have got to say, "Now look, don't you think it would be worthwhile taking some sort of training that can earn you a basic living, if then you want to go off and do something else, fine, off you go and do it, but do try do take some training which will give you a much better chance of earning a basic living." That is what I did with both of mine; my son took accountancy which is a good basic training, my daughter took law. My son, it was entrance to business and for my daughter, I said, "If you take law it will always be useful to you whatever you do, even if you want to buy a house you will know a bit about it, even if you go to buy goods you will know something about it," but then she wanted to become a journalist, so she took that. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Would you have been very upset if they had formed a pop group? PM

No, I should not have been at all upset. I know a number of people who were very keen on pop music, jazz in my time, jazz was very skilled, no, I would not have been at all. I would have been much more concerned if they did not do anything. I would not have been at all concerned with a pop group because you meet a lot of people, you are often doing something together and Mark ThatcherMark did, as a matter of fact, learn the guitar because he wanted something, an instrument that you could go around instantly and you could get people singing or play. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Was he any good at it? PM

Not particularly, but he had quite a musical sense, quite a musical sense and they all listened to - heaven knows, we had all the latest pop records - there were the Beatles in our time you see, and they are very interesting and they are just coming back because their songs were tuneful. I remember "Telstar", lovely song, I absolutely loved it. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

The Tornadoes? PM

The Tornadoes, yes, then we had Dusty Springfield, but the Beatles I remember most of all. They had to have this thing on all day, you know, I said "The pair of you, did you have to listen to that?" but it became a part of the background. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

They didn't play it too loud? PM

Yes, "Turn that thing down", of course they did. But far better to be interested in that than not be interested in anything at all. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Do you try to keep up to date with pop music? PM

No, I am not up to date with it at all but I was very interested to do that "Superstore" thing. Sometimes, you know, I am told what is the latest thing in the charts and I am fascinated that some of the older things are right up top from the sixties: the one "When a Man Loves a Woman" - it is a lovely thing, and do you know why I think why? Because I said on "Superstore" it is not just noise and rhythm; there is a theme to it and there is melody and also when you are young, most of many of the things are either about rhythm or they are really about girl loves boy, boy loves girl, that is the perennial theme and that is an absolutely lovely, lovely song. I am interested that they are coming back. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Yes, well I think you are right, there is too much rhythm in the ... PM

Yes, the rhythm is easy but it is having a tune. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

It wants a good tune, don't you? PM

Yes. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

I do not know if you are aware of groups like the Smiths and the Housemartins ... PM

Yes, I know the Housemartins, yes. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

... who are very left-wing groups, not so much in their songs which are about men and women like all pop songs, but in their interviews they are very left-wing and say "We must get Mrs Thatcher out of No 10." PM

Do they? I remember when I went down to Limehouse Studios once, there was a pop group who I was told I would not get on with at all well. Well, I was absolutely fascinated because they were rehearsing for television; it is a highly professional business. The cameras have to come in on certain shots, there is a fantastic amount of energy and of course their voices, and I have watched Elton John too who was highly - I am so sad that he is having this difficulty with his throat - highly professional. I think it has become much, much more professional in the technique you use now. You just had echo chambers in our time but now it is much, much more professional. I do not mind. Most young people rebel and then gradually they become more realistic and it is very much a part of life rebelling.

When they want to get Mrs Thatcher out of No 10, I have usually not met most of them and it really is lovely to have the chance to talk to them. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

It is nice to be mentioned. PM

Yes, it is nice they know your name isn't it? Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

What did you think of the whole Live Aid? PM

I thought it was marvellous. I watched some of it, I watched some of it on the Wembley thing, I thought it was absolutely terrific. It was the first time that we had been able to get a great body of young people, not merely interested in something, but actually doing

something for it and loving doing it. I thought it was absolutely terrific and I watched some of that; one group after another came. Carol Thatcher My daughter went to listen for quite a time and she said that the atmosphere was terrific, absolutely terrific and they did a marvellous job. Again, I do think that young people want to give something, they not only want to take something, they are desperate to give something and particularly too, youngsters just do not have a chance. Please believe it, our generation are the same. I wanted, when I was young, to go and work in India because I think a lot of people want to know that what they are doing, not only they can do it well but that there is something good about what you are doing, and obviously helping people who are not well off or are poverty stricken, is very good and let me say this: you can never, never judge anyone by their appearance, ever. Some of the kindest people have the most strange appearance. Really, you cannot tell them, you cannot tell their politics by what they look like, you might be able to tell by what they have got printed on their Teeshirt, but not by what they look like at all. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Yes. But during the Live Aid thing, you came in for some criticism from Bob Geldof and I believe he was rather rude to you at one stage, wasn't he? PM

Was Bob Geldof he rude to me? I met him at the Star, you know when we did the Star awards, he was not rude to me. Christine Wall

No, I think it was the media who interpreted his actions as being rude. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Really? Christine Wall

He tried to have a word with you, that is all. PM

Well, we did. We did talk. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

In a certain newspaper it was reported that he had snubbed you. Christine Wall

Well, that was their interpretation. PM

But we did talk. Obviously he came up and talked to me about the things that most interested him. What fascinated me was this; not only "Why doesn't Government give more?" but "What can I do as a person?" This was his approach. After all, if Government took so much away from young people that they hadn't anything left to give; that would not be much of a life. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Sure. PM

There would be Government substituting their judgement for what young people want to do with some of their own money and that has always been my point. If you want to take everything away from people in taxes, it is because you do not trust them. Well, I do. I think they should have some say. Of course we have to have enough for defence, law and order, social services, but it is people's earnings and they should have a good deal of say on what they want to do with it, as well as looking after their families and if you left them with

nothing which to give themselves you would have a very dull society and a wrong society, yes wrong. If Governments say the money you earn is first mine and I will decide only what you shall have left, I would say that that would be wrong. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

What do you think are the most pressing problems that young people face today? PM

I think in some ways the same things that we faced. You always wonder what is going to happen to you in the future. I can remember, as a teenager, thinking, some young marrieds I knew, they knew who they had married, they knew what their training was going to be, they knew the sort of job they got and it is the tremendous uncertainty and it is both a problem and an excitement and a challenge.

These days, when it comes to training, there are far many more choices than we ever had. That too gives you problems. For us to go to university or to go to college or to get an apprenticeship or to go to learn your craft from someone who was very good at it was a fantastic opportunity, and if you got one opportunity you were lucky. Now for some young people it is very difficult to get it which is why we have got the youth training - YTS. Now we have got another one called Job Training Scheme. But the wider the opportunities sometimes the more difficult it is to decide what subject shall you take, which course you shall take and it is problematic - particularly when they don't necessarily get the right advice and that is why I always feel, as well as just talking to your contemporaries, you should have some older people to go to that you could talk to. That is why I am very keen on young people not living their lives in horizontal age groups, yes belonging to some clubs where there are older people there, it may be sports clubs, it may be music things, it may be leisure centres, it may be some particular thing that you're interested in, it may be that you just go to parties when other people's parents are there, because I am quite for having some parents around. It is a protection for some youngsters if they need it. But you want to have someone you can go to who you can talk things over with. Otherwise they worry "What training shall we take?", there are quite a lot of jobs available for which you cannot get people because in the midst of unemployment, you have got a shortage of people taking the requisite skills. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

But it might be quite frightening to be thirteen years old today. If you have not got someone to talk to and you have got AIDS advertisements and heroine. PM

Yes, I agree. You see television, in a way tells you a lot of things that you would not otherwise know, but it stops a lot of things because it is too jolly easy just to go home, either do your homework and then sit down in front of television and the family is sitting down in front of television and you are not talking to one another and I just hope that television is beginning to become a little bit like radio became in my time: first a novelty, then you had it on all the time for background news but you were not listening to it the whole time, it became background. Television, sometimes I think now, has become a kind of background but it must not be a substitute for doing things

you want to do. All right it may be going out belonging to a pop group, maybe going out doing a hundred other things; maybe you are keen on filming, maybe you are keen on photography, keen on doing all other sorts of things, maybe keen on doing it yourself; learning crafts of one kind or another. It maybe that you are keen on going and cheering a football team or some other team. It maybe that you are keen now on learning snooker, but do DO something, do not be just a spectator. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Sure. PM

If families go and do things, maybe they are interested in model railways, whatever it is and I think it is marvellous to learn an instrument, particularly one you can pick up and you will never be lonely if you can play something because music takes you right out of yourself, it really does. We all have gramophones or disc playing things these days. But do not just be a spectator. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Having said that, what do you like to watch on television? I know you like "Yes Prime Minister". PM

I adore "Yes Prime Minister", it is great fun isn't it? Sometimes I do watch some of the old films. Now we did watch yesterday one which I suppose to me was like - I watched one from the First World War called "Dawn Patrol". Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Oh, yes. PM

You know - it was a very telling film. It taught you a lot. Now that I suppose would be like the modern generation watching something from the Second World War. I also watch, because I loved it, I just happened to turn on for the news, Welsh Male Voice Choir, a thousand of them in the Albert Hall. I did enjoy "Superstore", I enjoyed it enormously, I did not know there were things called Pop Videos. I do like to watch a film of something on the stage because I am very keen on theatre; I enjoyed enormously going down to Limehouse Studios and we opened the Superchannel. You know where Superchannel is? Well now, we went there, there was a youth band there, terrific: saxophones, clarinets, I will not say quite as good as Glen Miller but you know, those jazz bands, they were terrific. Glen Miller, in my youth - fantastic. He brought the clarinet, of course, right in and do you know, they were good, they got their saxophone and they came in, a big Big Band, thirty or forty playing; marvellous. You go to those studios and it was an opportunity for young people to do their own thing and before we had Channel Four, it did not have a chance, and there they all were, and there we were having all the latest technological developments. You have got to use technology, don't be frightened of it. It is going to bring fantastic opportunities and there we were saying "Look, if you want the best of British going over to the continent". Paul Daniels, I watch - he is fantastic, marvellous, really so unbelievably skilled. I do not have a chance to watch a lot of things but those are the things. Eurovision Song Contest, now we have not done terribly well, when we won we had a group of four, it was a song about a little girl because she is only three. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Oh yes, Brotherhood of Man that was. PM

Lovely, but a fantastic young group, really professional and they had worked out all their actions, because in my young days it was Cliff Richard and Adam Faith. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Can I put in a word for Cliff Richard? I think he should be knighted, he has been around for ... PM

Cliff RichardHe has done wonders. It is he who got the movement going really and moving to the music and then Adam Faith came in with a slightly different technique - always melodious and still about, Cliff Richard more than Adam Faith. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

So you will put in a word for him at the next ... PM

All right. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Have you ever seen the quite notorious Spitting Image? PM

I have only seen trailers of it and I myself do not watch it, but I will tell you I did watch one, not of myself but there were one or two things, they had some things on about the Royal family and I did not like them very much. We are fair game, politicians but I ... Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

A little bit cruel. PM

But there are certain things I do not like images of and one is the Royal family because it is the monarchy, you know, and I think it has got to be polite about it, so I have not watched it and also I am told it would hurt very much, so I think it is better not to be hurt too much like when your youngsters say "I want to get Mrs Thatcher out" after never having met Mrs T, however. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

How did you feel about being called the "milk snatcher"? PM

Yes, I remember that, I remember that too and it has seemed to me one thing that people could provide, purchase milk for their own children. Alfred RobertsMy father brought it for me when things were very much poorer. The important thing is to do things which the state can do but to leave people with money to do things for themselves. You see once you expect the state to do everything, there is only one way they can do it, that is putting a big hand in your pocket and taking out a generous dollop of money. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Well, my last question really is an impossible question for you; how would you like to be remembered? PM

I think - I do not know quite how to put it - but we really had to make ordinary people more important than the state. When I came in, the state had a lot more powers than it has now, had powers over prices, it had powers over what you should be paid, powers to say how much you could take abroad, exchange control, had powers to say where your factory could develop and where it could not; all sorts of powers. And trade unions had all sorts of powers over their members. We turned round and said, "Look, the state must be very

strong to do things the state can do: defence, let us make sure there are enough police, they have enough resources, enough equipment and people believe in them and support them. We must try to stop prices going up as fast as they did because if they go up then the pound you save this year is only worth 50 pence in two or three years time, so we must try to stop inflation. Then it is our job to see that there is a good health service and a good education. But beyond that, we really must leave people to have the opportunity to lead their own lives. If you think of what is the great opportunity state in the world, it is the United States, and people do not go there to get social security of subsidies although they might get something of both. They go there to say, "I am free, I want an opportunity, if I am prepared to work I will find it there." So in a way, the Governments had far too much power when we first came in and so did trade unions and we had to take some of those powers away and give them back to people and part of that has meant that I feel passionately that the ordinary person should have the chance to save out of their earnings, and therefore get their own little bit of capital, earn their own houses and to build up a little bit of property, whether it is in housing, whether it is in your savings, whether it is in a few shares which give you a private income so that the stories of 'Forsyte Saga', a man of property was not for people up there - it should be to everyone. That gives you a kind of independence that you do not otherwise have and that really is what we have been trying to do and it goes right back through the first person who said "Look, if you are in politics, in the end you have got to trust the people". Of course there will be some people who do things wrong but you are not entitled to assume, therefore, that the overwhelming majority will do things wrong. People do things wrong; you have got to have a law to catch them - you will not catch everyone but you are not entitled as a politician to say "I could do better with your money than you who have earned it". You are entitled to say, "You must pay a fair whack of tax because you have got to look after defence and the other things, you have got to look after the poor. Over and above that, it is you who have earned your money and you, and your money is as good as anyone else's, you should say what you want to do with it," and we should open up the opportunities as wide as we can. That is what we try to do. So we give a good education, a good health service, we have good defence, we do as much as we can on law and order and sound finance, and then if people whose talents are to be able to develop to their full ability, they must have the freedom to do that.

So good luck to your pop groups. They do very well for us for export - they do a fantastic job and if some of them want to have yellow hair, pink hair, long hair, short hair, blue jeans, yellow jeans, or these days, my goodness me, there are some smart ones. Marvellous. When I go and look at some of the clothes for young people, gosh, they are pricey but really I think that the sort of informal period has gone, you know, people much more want to live by rules. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Well, we have got rid of the hippies and the punks. PM

I know we have got the punks. The punks spend a lot of time and money on their appearance. Tony Hibbert *Smash Hits*

Oh yes, what I am saying is that we have got the hippies and the punks more or less out of the way and they are looking much smarter these days. PM

Yes, that is right because it is better, because they like it better that way. One young person said to me the other day. "Oh" she said, aged eighteen, "there are not any rules these days, I wish we had more rules" and you know, some of the rules are coming back. Life is much better when you have rules to live by. I mean it is really like playing football isn't it? If you did not have any rules by which to play you would not be able to play the game; you have got to have rules to live by. Everyone knows where they are. Of course you will have the whistle blown sometimes because not everyone lives by them but life is better when you have some rules to live by and you know what the accepted rules are and that is coming back and that is good. The 1970s I think was not a very good time. Everyone tried to flout the rules and now they are saying "Look, you cannot live unless you have some rules to live by". Freedom requires some set of rules as well to live by, so all right we have freed it up and you have got to have rules to live by to respect other people's freedom so if we are remembered that way I think we will have done a reasonable job for young people the world over.