



Creating a viral hit

Narrated by Gareth Malone

Video transcript

To find out why Pack Up Your Troubles was such a big hit let's have a look at the score – I've got the original one here.

When Felix wrote the music he wrote in 6/8 time. Which is like 1 2 3, 2 2 3, 1 2 3, 2 2 3, it gives it a very lilting feel, it might have sounded something like this... [plays and sings little of the chorus in 6/8]

When the brother decided to enter into a marching competition they changed the time signature and made it into 2/4, which is 1 2, 1 2. It makes it much more appropriate. (Sings) 'Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile.' Really evokes the sound of marching feet that time signature.

Another reason for the song's success is its simplicity. It's written in G major, which is (plays the keys on the piano) nice democratic key, it's only got one sharp and it can be played on a wide range of instruments, relatively easy. This is music for people to play on violins, accordions, on their home pianos.

The first line of the song is very direct and familiar to people because it mentions a kit bag, every soldier in the country would have had a kit bag. And the second line is about a Lucifer which is match which they would have used to light their cigarettes, so these are words that any regular tommy would immediately connect with.

The song functions are very simple music hall song (plays the piano), would have been very familiar to people coming to buildings like this, sort of 'umm-pa' feel and then half way through it goes...(sings) 'What's the use of worrying...' and we have this moment where it's almost like a sermon from the pulpit, comforting.

(Sings) 'It never was worthwhile...' like an organ underneath... (continues to play) and then we come back for one last rousing version. (Sings) 'Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile...' it can almost be straight out of Mozart that last section, it's really rousing, really grand.

It hoodwinks you, this song, you think it going to be a simple music hall song then we go into a slightly rousing and emotional section, and I think that's the key to this, this

is why it grabs people. People are in need of a song like this during very very difficult times.