

Tom Lehrer: "Who's Next?" (to get the "Bomb")

[Thomas Andrew Lehrer](#) was born April 9, 1928, in Manhattan's Upper East Side [one of the most expensive parts of New York]. He is an American musician, [singer-songwriter](#), [satirist](#), and mathematician, who later taught mathematics at university and musical theater. He recorded **pithy** [precise, forcefully, brief] and humorous, often [political songs](#) that became popular in the 1950s and 1960s. His songs often **parodied** [comic imitation] popular musical forms, though they usually had original melodies.

Lehrer was mainly influenced by [musical theater](#). Many of his best-known songs were written for the satirical television show [That Was The Week That Was](#) (TW3). These were later released as a record with the same name. In the 1970s, we gave up writing songs and performing, preferring to teach instead.

"Who's Next?"

All right uh... A few weeks ago, the American press reported that China had exploded a nuclear bomb. Now this was a **great leap forward** for China, of course. But it was an even greater leap forward for the American press, because for the first time, they called it China instead of **Red China**. For 18 years, they've been hoping it would just go away; and for the first time, they called it a bomb instead of a **device**. So with China possessing the bomb, it makes us wonder who's next?

First, we got the bomb, and that was good,
'cause we love peace and **motherhood**.
Then Russia got the bomb, but that's okay 'cause the
balance of power is maintained that way.
Who's next?

France got the bomb, but don't you **grieve**, 'cause they're
on our side, I believe.
China got the bomb, but have no fears, they can't **wipe us
out** for at least five years.
Who's next?

Indonesia claimed that they were going to get one any day.
South Africa wants two – that's right – one for the black
and one for the white.
Who's next?

Egypt's **gonna** get one too, just to use on you know who.
So, Israel's getting tense, wants one in self-defence.
"The lord is our shepherd," says the Psalm,
But just in case, we'd better get a bomb.
Who's next?

Luxembourg is next to go?
And who knows? Maybe Monaco?
We'll try to stay serene and calm when **Alabama** gets the
bomb.
Who's next? Who's next? Who's next? Who's next?

The [Great Leap Forward](#) as a disastrous economic and social policy in China to collectivise the rural economy and develop steel production. It contributed to millions dying of famine.

The "[Red Scare](#)" was the hysterical fear in the United States about Communism, first after the Russian Revolution in 1917, and then during the McCarthy era in the 1950s.

Device = a gadget, a manufactured object, a measure, a plan

'**cause** = because

Motherhood = the state of being a mother

Greive = to feel great sorrow, to be very sad

To wipe out = to destroy, to eradicate

Gonna = slang for "going to"

Serene and calm = this is a word-play on the Prince of Monaco, the Serene Highness
Alabama = a state in the US where the civil rights movement was strongly repressed in the 1960s



Lehrer performing in Copenhagen, 1967