

JUKEBOX AWARDS

2016

ZOMBIE AMERICA

I just need to hear myself talk for a couple minutes.

--David Letterman
9/17/01

The talk show host, one who made a career out of sending up the absurdities of the business he found himself in, spoke on his first night back on the air following the 9/11 terror attacks. Letterman had turned the inability to take anything seriously into a mission statement. That night he sorted his feelings out loud and tried to reconcile himself to a new reality. His words exemplified the shock everyone felt. Similar sentiments were voiced across the country. America was unified by tragedy and felt solidarity in a sense of purpose. Soon enough there would be doubts. Wars would be waged on false pretenses. The country which extolled human rights would be responsible for torture and flouting the Geneva Convention in the treatment of prisoners—in most instances refusing to call them prisoners of war as a dodge to better deny them the protections of international law. By turns, a presidency in which the American people had placed their trust, proved to be a front for war profiteers, as combat zones became playgrounds for military and civilian contractors. It was sold with the slogan, “You’re either with us or against us.” They would have used, “Love it or leave it,” but that would have reminded people of Vietnam and 38 thousand dead Americans.

It would have been laughable if it were not so ugly and familiar. America has the habit of calling forth violence and persecution. It fades cyclically as the citizenry begins again to listen to the better angels of their nature. Then it comes back from the dead to wreak havoc once more. It rises from the grave because it cannot be killed, quite possibly because this sickness is congenital and there may be no cure. Our present national mood is such that this horrific thing may not be put down again and it will rage out of control until it destroys what passes for the ideal of America.

The prospect of that scenario fills this writer with contempt and a bitter weariness. So I feel compelled to expose the readers of these pages to one more bit of futile analysis; another serving of punditry. It will not be polite. It will sometimes be offensive. Yet this is no time for optimism and it is no time to ignore hate. It is certainly not the time for measured words, taste or refinement.

You have been warned.

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He is so smooth and so effective a performer that he completely won over the American people. Only now, nearly seven years later, are people beginning to question whether there’s anything beneath that smile.

--Donald Trump on Ronald Reagan
The Art of the Deal (1987)

It was the era of television series such as *Dallas*, *Dynasty* and *Falcon Crest* with their soap opera depictions of the amoral rich. The characters stabbed each other in the back while wearing designer clothes. A president who played to the camera had helped to elevate image over substance because the viewer believed what he saw and not what he heard. It was the era of trickle down economics, in which they convinced most of the public that policies to subsidize the creation of more wealth would eventually put money in the average Joe’s pocket. Oliver Stone’s 1987 film *Wall Street* spotlighted the leveraged buyout capitalism and insider trading culture which kept making the news, but the critique evaporated and all that was left was the catchphrase of its villain, “Greed is good.”

It was against this backdrop that Donald Trump co-authored *The Art of the Deal*. A mass-market autobiography designed by the New York real estate developer to publicize his achievements, *Deal* is a product of its time. Trump recounts how his father pioneered low-income housing in Queens with the help of federal subsidies. Five pages later, the son decides to get out of that business, in part to avoid getting shot while collecting rent. (The consensus in the five boroughs today is that Trump Sr. was a slumlord.) Trump soon buys open land on Manhattan before he really has any money to develop it. His Trump Tower brings a high profile condominium project targeted to wealthy people unable to pass the screening process to get into the type of co-op buildings surrounding Central Park. Trump crows about how he made sure security muscle at the Tower kept peddlers and undesirables away from the building's entrance. A little over 100 pages later, at war with tenants in his newly purchased 100 Central Park South property, Trump moves homeless people into vacant apartments and frames it as charity. His foray into hotel casinos in Atlantic City is spurred by studying the corporate reports of hotel chains and discovering that their Vegas holdings contribute substantially to their bottom lines. The echoing motif of the book is the way Trump views his rivals, politicians and potential partners through the lens of his own obsessions and ambitions. He is harder on those he interacts with than those he cannot touch. However, you read of the anger when he quotes an unnamed New York rival who purportedly said, "Trump has a great line of shit, but where are the bricks and mortar?" The book ends with a summary of his achievements thus far and therefore does not anticipate his Atlantic City casinos going bust in that oversaturated market.

Business books are like bad pop music, even the bestsellers. They are ephemeral and as of-the-moment as last year's calendar. Often they have not the "legs" to become oldies. (When was the last time you heard "Kung Fu Fighting?") Nonetheless, *Deal* was the birth pangs of the Trump brand. The real estate magnate slathered his name on his hotels and casinos, then hit on the idea of selling the rights to use that name on for-profit colleges, real estate seminars and even to property developers in foreign countries eager to gild their ventures with the American's mystique. It resembled a peculiar variant of a franchise restaurant model in which the name and interior design ambience is purchased from the parent, but the franchisee is on his own when it comes to food recipes and suppliers. The owner of the name makes money with less risk, unless the franchisee puts the name under a cloud through mismanagement of the brand's reputation.

Perhaps the foremost expression of Trump's flair for publicizing his brand was the reality TV show *The Apprentice*, which debuted in 2004. Trump was a natural for a television genre specializing in contrived conflict, rudeness and embarrassment. Like chef Gordon Ramsay, another reality show executioner, Trump seemed to delight in the small cruelties of delivering bad news to the contestants vying for a job with the mogul. More than one casual observer thought the winners should envy the losers with Trump as the epitome of the nightmare boss. He was also not the best partner in the world, at least by the example of Martha Stewart. Trump roped-in the domestic lifestyle authority, fresh from her stint in prison for insider trading. Naming her the new hostess of *The Apprentice* in 2005, Trump then launched and starred in a competing show. When it cannibalized ratings for the home comforts oracle's program, Trump blamed Stewart for the adverse results.

Branding is now so omnipresent a term in a reality show racket that has given us the Kardashians family, that people overlook the fact that branding is just another scam that causes the mark to buy the sizzle instead of the steak. Nike's success as a company is premised on the idea that it is not selling shoes. Nike sells a way of life/the magic of winning/the glow of health. Branding finds a similar counterpart in the contemporary clothing dubbed "athleisure"—exercise clothes worn by women who would not break a sweat for a million dollars. Branding is expensive in the rag trade. It makes foreign clothing mills and their cheap labor a necessity. Tommy Hilfiger began as a clothing line without a single factory. All its manufacturing was contracted out. Goods made cheaply in the backwaters of the Third World are more profitable when the brand name allows you to charge more. And foreign-owned sweatshops offer deniability if the factory burns down and kills hundreds. Bad publicity might hurt the brand.

The mere fact that a bit of embroidered logo costing pennies or that the name on a sewn-in tag allows the seller to charge a premium price is evidence enough that you can sell some people anything.

But, mademoiselle, politicians are always of bad faith.
Without bad faith politics is not possible.

--Jean-Louis Forain, 1907

The cover of *Adbusters* in late summer 2016 depicted Donald Trump with a Hitler mustache consisting of a barcode. Metaphorically, he was a product, the kind offered in every chain drugstore in the land. These can be found in the aisle under the sign "AS SEEN ON TV." Here are the items of dubious quality purporting to solve problems the customer imagines he has. Implicit in this "Let the buyer beware" scenario is the hangover of dissatisfaction in the pause before a new product is offered.

Trump's decision to run for president in a crowded Republican field seemed ill-advised. Never having been elected to office, he was an unknown quantity with no political experience save the usual zoning battles in New York City and group photos with politicians at groundbreaking ceremonies. Projects in foreign countries brought him in contact with government officials, but the extent of those relationships was a question mark. The mass media and the American political establishment did not consider that Trump was running for any other reason than generating his own publicity. At first they paid no attention to him. They had a kind of faith in the seemingly interminable presidential election cycle of primaries followed by conventions and a two-way race of finalists lasting roughly 90 days. The duration alone typically weeds out the incompetent and those with past indiscretions. The field tends to lose participants as candidates make mistakes from which they cannot recover. Election staff professionals use a vetting process to investigate their own boss's past behavior to allow for plans to intercept any scandals. Oddly enough, Trump was said to have refused to submit to vetting by his campaign staff, but the consensus by some was that this was more a manifestation of his outsized ego and a refusal to be judged by underlings. Presumably, he had nothing to hide.

And now the first of several imaginary interludes having no basis in reality.

TRUMP FANTASY #1

(Night. Exterior. Headlights grow brighter as a car comes up a driveway. A large, black sedan pulls to a stop outside a Russian dacha. The building's front door is open and a light shines from within. The driver of the car gets out and opens the rear passenger door. Vladimir Putin steps out as a man emerges from the shadows of the home's veranda and walks up to the car.)

"He's inside."

The pair walks into the home then pause in the foyer. Several stolid men with severe haircuts and wearing dark overcoats mill about the room. Putin's guide gestures at a hallway. Putin says, "Wait here," before proceeding by himself.

Putin enters a room off the hallway lit only by a lamp on a nightstand and finds Donald Trump sitting on a bed. The half-naked American is spotted with dried blood. Behind him, sprawled across the mattress is a woman's body. The bed-sheet concealing her privates is bloody.

"I thought I could help you Mr. Trump."

"Listen, I didn't do anything."

"You're lucky we met the other night. The local militia chief called me. They all worry when a stranger drops the name of someone important. Sometimes the stranger is right and they don't want to lose their jobs."

"When I woke up I was on the floor and I don't know how it happened."

"You can't remember?"

"I passed out.... (He turns to untie the woman's hands from the bedposts.) It was a game... Jesus.... Jesus. Oh God. (Sobbing) Oh God.... Oh God. I don't know and I don't understand why I can't remember."

"You don't have to remember. Just do as I say.... This girl had no family. Nobody knows she worked here. It will be as though she never existed. And all that's left is our friendship."

(Some dialogue courtesy of *The Godfather Part II*)

Roughly the past decade of election cycles has offered the surprising revelation that the lack of a record is an advantage. The press and the opposition cannot frame past statements or positions as indications of a political philosophy or viewpoint. Sarah Palin parlayed this into a vice presidential slot on the McCain ticket in 2008 before she started tripping over a series of gaffes which betrayed her incompetence. Barack Obama took a single U.S. Senate term and not much of a voting record, then tacked on a message of hope and change. It was what the electorate wanted at the dawn of the Great Recession. Trump's candidacy had its precedent in the post-Reagan ascendancy of "he-man" actors-turned-politicians such as Minnesota's Jesse Ventura and California's Arnold Schwarzenegger. Both were elected governors of their respective states, only to become disillusioned after meeting resistance to their agendas and the need to compromise rather than dictate orders. Apparently, they had confused reality with the previous scripts in which they had played the part of heroes who always won in the end. Frustration was an unpleasant experience to pampered stars.

Trump took his lack of a record and made up positions on the fly. His campaign became a listening tour. He parroted the discontent voiced by what became his base of supporters. Years of right wing pundits piling on "career politicians" led Trump to fashion himself as an outsider. The rallies evoked scenes in Robert Penn Warren's 1946 novel *All the King's Men* and its hero Willie Stark, who declared, "You are a hick and nobody ever helped a hick, but the hick himself." So Trump gave vent to the prejudices of the white underclass and the geriatric demographic that makes up the Tea Party. Looking for someone to blame for their misery, Trump listed the usual suspects his crowd despised: elites, "tax and spend" politicians, immigrants and the elusive "they"—the common euphemism for black Americans. He framed front-running Democrat Hillary Clinton as a crook and promised to put her in jail for crimes that varied upon the coordinate of the news cycle. Trump branded opponents as "losers" and when you define yourself as a "winner," you will take the crown by any means necessary. No one paused to think that a guy who had gone to a private military school and earned an economics degree from Wharton was not of their breed, but Trump's base heard their views issue from him as if he were a ventriloquist's dummy. He represented the vulgarian dream of how they would imagine it would be to be rich—intimidating people with less money than you have and insulting them without suffering any blowback. On some level, they had to realize that the rich are insulated from the punishment of the law in ways the ordinary citizen is not, but they did not find this idea disgusting. The disaffected followed him like a shadow. Suddenly Trump was George Wallace in 1972, but there was no Arthur Bremer standing by.

For years Republicans had beaten their law and order drum, while demonizing everyone who did not support their vision for America. (One could imagine GOP leadership sitting around in a moment out of the peace conference scene in *The Godfather*. The Mafia families have decided to bring heroin into the ghettos. One man says, "They're animals anyway, let them lose their souls.") Collegial respect had withered in both houses of Congress in a winner-take-all strategy. Republican rhetoric had taken up a dogmatic conservatism, most of which had no reasonable expectation of being implemented. Suddenly, the GOP faced the likelihood that their standard bearer might actually carry out policies even the party leadership thought were absurd fantasies. For one, immigration is the problem hardly anyone in business wants solved. Restaurants do not want to lose cheap labor. Grocers know that shoppers do not want \$5.00 heads of lettuce. Foreign electronic engineers who retain their status as aliens are less of a burden to their employers in terms of administrative expenses and employment taxes. And as for those drug dealers and their suppliers, would they even be in business without American citizens as customers?

That the campaign stops took on the sound and fury of a lynch mob bothered everyone but Trump and his supporters. Mobs tend to identify with the godlike powers of the forces of law and the nation state. They envy the ability to take life without being punished. Scenes at these rallies recalled the faces seen by this observer in an Andrew Dice Clay concert film lensed at Madison Square Garden during the peak of the comedian's fame. Even then, it looked like a Nuremberg rally for morons. Hillary Clinton was criticized for calling Trump's constituency a "basketful of deplorables." It was not that she was wrong. It was just that she used words of more than one syllable. These were the faces the Sixties Freedom Riders saw outside the bus windows.

Some described the mood of these Trump supporters as a kind of addiction to anger, framing it as something new. However, it is a recurring theme in America's story. The settlers seized the land from the Native Americans. They killed each other in the lawless frontier. Yet, if American civilization now stands on a different plateau, that position is characterized by the ability to contract out the killing. Journalist Hunter S. Thompson long ago discussed Richard Nixon's appeal to some voters, describing their admiration for that "kinky Mick Jagger streak." It delineated the wish to have a leader capable of exercising cruelty in the name of patriotism. Plato once wrote that the tyrant acts in daylight upon the fantasies that tempt and terrify men in their sleep. Trump's audience seemed to derive a near-sexual pleasure at the prospect of him taking actions they could not undertake. And the candidate maintained the heat of that anger by exploiting social media tool Twitter as if he were a teenager with ADD. There he threw insults the way the pope casts holy water. Trump's crowds were so blinded by hatred they did not even stop to think that they were supporting a stand-in for the same rich guys who drove the economy into the ditch in 2008.

Trump's march to seize the nomination had a charmed life. No one piled on his inconsistencies. He said some inaccuracy in the morning, denied it in the afternoon, and then blamed the news media for the entire thing. And he would repeat that same error three days later. It later led George Lopez, professor emeritus of Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame to call Trump "a tornado of b.s." Trump dismissed rational explanations early on, prompting his oft-quoted remark, "I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose any votes." All the while he presented himself in the image of the popular jock running for high school class president, a roiling mass of loud, macho braggadocio, quick with the putdown and contempt for those he deemed inferior. It was not exactly performance art, but some observers kept waiting for him to pull off a mask and reveal himself as Lyndon Larouche, the political gadfly whose followers offer a conspiracy-fueled theatre of opposition instead of a policy platform.

The closest Trump came to losing momentum was when incriminating audio emerged in October 2016. Trump was caught bragging to television correspondent Billy Bush of *Access Hollywood* in 2005 about his adventures in sexual harassment. It would have finished any normal candidate. Wealthy entrepreneur Mark Cuban observed via Twitter, "Bernie Madoff now has a better brand than Trump." However, the outcry from offended women and the candidate's dismissal of their outrage did not dent his support. Bush lost his current job with *The Today Show* while Trump skated. After all, years of right wing insults directed at feminists proved conservative Republicans had no capacity for caring about women's issues. Still, it made Democrats overconfident in the misguided belief that Trump would be convicted in the court of public opinion. Additionally, it was not apparent that Ms. Clinton was a divisive figure among some women for reasons better understood by a viewing of the 2004 film *Mean Girls*.

Trump's November victory was achieved by taking key states with an abundance of electoral votes. Since the Electoral College determines who ascends to the presidency, it is notable that when Trump did not win the popular vote (i.e. the plurality) as well, he took it as a personal insult. To someone for whom winning is the only option, the vote numbers registered as a bit of *lese majeste*. Trump may be the first presidential victor to allege vote fraud because he did not win *enough*; obsessing about the issue up until the day these words are typed.

Trump's behavior is not surprising in someone whose psychological quirks are on public display. Still, few things defy belief more than a rich, successful, bitter white man. In victory he demanded that his opponents rally around him in tones not of outreach and reconciliation, but of threat. He seemed surprised that, after running a negative, bigoted, misogynistic campaign, not everyone was ready to join hands and sing "Kumbaya." Of course, Trump would likely claim, "It's just business." Yet, for a salesman, Trump sometimes finds it hard to lie with conviction. He sounds less persuasive when he talks about love of country than when he is talking about all the things he hates. It recalls the half-hearted way George Bush would frame Islam as "a great religion." When Trump spoke prepared remarks he could make like a politician. However, at a press conference, he improvised, be bopping and scatting all over his perceived enemies. Lifelong Republicans kept waiting for Trump to turn into Ronald Reagan, but even if he were to read a speech written by Peggy Noonan that transformation would not occur.

Some in the Republican Party and their backers had been less than enthusiastic about Trump's prospects and spent the bulk of their political action committee donations on House and Senate races, as well as at the state and local levels. This translated to a Republican majority in both houses of Congress. It meant a renewal of corporate welfare, a Supreme Court tilting away from civil liberties and the erosion of environmental regulations. Deregulation gave us Love Canal and superfund sites. Lack of oversight in the financial markets gave us the Great Recession. Freedom to Republicans ultimately means freedom from responsibility when people get hurt. Trump vowed to bring back the coal industry in light of his skepticism about global climate change. It was an absurd decision, considering that China does not even want to burn coal anymore and they need to grow their economy 10% per year or face eventual civil unrest. Freebooting capitalism has gotten its way so far because money is liquid. The rich can transfer it somewhere cleaner and more to their lifestyle while their industries poison the country listed on their passport. Nonetheless, this does not prevent Americans doing business overseas from being increasingly willing to renounce their citizenship so they can avoid paying taxes.

Meanwhile, only Trump's supporters still believe the promises he made on the campaign trail. He abandoned threats to put Ms. Clinton in jail and withdrew plans to release his tax returns. Trump also refused to put his business empire in a blind trust. This created a massive conflict of interest and a potential violation of the foreign "emolument" clause of Article 1, Section 9 of the U.S. Constitution—not to mention a possible scenario of insider trading of monumental scale. Then Trump speciously claimed a safe distance from his real estate interests by putting his sons and daughter in charge, even as he gave them White House positions. To paraphrase a line from *The Godfather* films, "Keep your friends close and your family closer."

Suddenly those “career politicians” seem less odious than a certain inexperienced amateur. Traditionally, people were drawn to public service out of a sense of civic responsibility. Many were lawyers and had respect for the law. Some had a concept of the public good and were driven to enact policies to help those not in a position to do so. With Trump, one gets the impression that he believes solely in his own gain and that his public policies swerve between the top news stories from day-to-day. It leaves the country living in a story out of the old television show *The Twilight Zone*, thereby reminding this writer of the recent British television program *Black Mirror*. That series is an anthology-styled dramatization of life set in the very near future. In an episode titled *The Waldo Moment*, a CGI bear is elected to the British Parliament, defeating a flesh-and-blood candidate from the Labour Party. The voice actor portraying the bear masterminded the campaign without concern for the ramifications. After winning he can only act like his profane cartoon character in relation to the Parliamentarians present for legitimate reasons. The woman who lost her seat tells the actor, “If you were preaching revolution, well that would be something. But you’re not, because that would require courage. And a mind-set. And what have you got? Who are you? What are you for?”

Part of the American public sees Donald Trump as a hero, the other as a madman. We face four years (or until Trump gets so angry that his head explodes) of rudderless leadership from an autocrat who believes that he can micromanage global politics and trade policy through personal relationships with world leaders. It sounds like the fantasies of a delusional egomaniac. Or someone forging business relations with foreign governments in order to build personal wealth.

The heroes of Greek tragedy suffered from *hubris*, an overabundance of arrogance. This pride would cause the protagonist’s destruction. In the case of this newly minted president, we will be lucky if he does not destroy the country—or the world.

Or maybe in 2020, he will be defeated by an emoji.

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TRUMP FANTASY #2

(Scene: The Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C. within a large conference room. Donald Trump is meeting with the heads of America’s largest technology companies.)

TRUMP: Now that the photo op is over, let’s get down to business. Most of the companies in this room thrived by manufacturing their products in China. You have huge market value and some of you have cash on hand in the tens of billions of dollars. I know this because many of you donated a lot of money to my opponent’s campaign. Now what I want you to do is move those manufacturing jobs back to the States. The people who voted for me did not want jobs leaving the country and they do not want immigrant workers coming over here no matter what their skill level. If necessary, I am prepared to slap considerable tariffs on computer hardware, phones, digital devices—whatever. This will hurt your bottom lines and you don’t want that.

MICROSOFT CEO SATYA NADELLA: The restrictions on immigration you have already proposed would dry up the number of foreign students coming here to get an education. Some of these students graduate with the skills our industry needs. Many of them remain in America and become citizens. I know if the rules you want were in place when I came to this country to study, I would not be sitting where I am today. And stringent visa requirements will cause people with talent to take their knowledge elsewhere. This will have an impact on America’s leadership in technology.

TRUMP: That may be so, but any fallout from my policy will not have an impact on me. I’ll be out of office and making more money than I did before. It’s your problem, not mine.

APPLE CEO TIM COOK: Since you mentioned money and Mr. Nadella has been talking about talent, we have some very talented people who work for us. Since many of us here are in the information sciences business, we have decided to present you with some facts useful to explain our position. Would you please slide this folder down to the President?

TRUMP (examining the folder’s contents): These are my tax returns!

AMAZON CEO JEFF BEZOS: You were going to release them anyway. Weren’t you?

TIM COOK: Documents further down the pile outline the loans you received from the Russian oligarchs after the bankruptcy of your Atlantic City casinos—back when no domestic banks would lend to you.

JEFF BEZOS: As you said, we have cash. My net worth is in the billions. According to these returns, you're not even a billionaire.

FACEBOOK CEO MARK ZUCKERBERG: You're all hype.

TRUMP: This is blackmail.

TIM COOK: Not yet it isn't.

SATYA NADELLA: You see, Mr. Trump we do not have to dig any deeper into your past, but it requires very little imagination to suspect the hand of the Russian government in all this. I mean, it's all over the mass media. Now we aren't asking for anything. We just want you to do nothing. Maintain the status quo. No one wants to pay twice as much for a Chinese-made smartphone, not even the people who voted for you. Make an issue of steel-dumping or Italian motorcycles. Or people who make Confederate flags in Bangla Desh.

(Trump pouts and fumes. He pulls out his phone.)

TIM COOK: By the way, we all chipped-in and bought Twitter. We're shutting it down.

MARK ZUCKERBERG: You should try getting your message out like a regular politician. You know, news conferences, interviews, speeches...

GOOGLE CEO LARRY PAGE: Or CB radio.

JEFF BEZOS: Well, if we're done here, I have an appointment. Elon Musk wants to show me a rocket engine.

* * *

Of course the people don't want war.... But after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy, and it's always a simple matter to drag the people along.... All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country.

--Herman Goring at his
1946 trial for war crimes

The first Iraq war was notable for receiving business magazine *Advertising Age's* recognition as the top marketing event of 1991. The continuous hum of sales pitches surrounding us is like a kind of background music lulling us into thinking we can ignore it. We should question whether our own mild ability to tune it out means that everyone else is doing the same. Governments and the political parties' propaganda arms (for that is what they are) act to mobilize popular opinion. They employ the same tools the ad game uses to sell you soap or toothpaste—fear and guilt among others. The landslide of drug ads is designed to send you into your doctor's office to ask if the latest pill "is right for you." This means you are going to the doctor to ask about medicine before you even have a diagnosis. The goal is to make you act without thinking. Coca-Cola is everywhere, but it never stops advertising.

This modern variety of political salesmanship really came into prominence during World War I. George Creel was put in charge of getting the public's support for the war effort. His Committee on Public Information included Edward Bernays, the father of modern public relations. Woodrow Wilson had just won a second term based on his resistance to involving America in the European war. When Wilson changed his mind, suddenly the Germans became "Huns" and framed as the enemies of civilization. German-Americans found themselves marginalized. Sauerkraut became "Liberty cabbage." ("Freedom fries" anyone?) The war footing also allowed an energized state security apparatus to flourish. Anarchists, socialists and labor activists with more loyalty to a "One World" philosophy than fervid nationalism were either imprisoned or deported. Unionists in the International Workers of the World were prosecuted in Chicago for hindering the war effort. That many of these dissidents were Jews from Eastern Europe or Russia offered the opportunity for covert anti-Semitism. Many were immigrants and had limited legal status.

When the war ended, the same security combine switched gears to a new enemy. The embryonic Soviet Union offered a threat to capitalism. Immigrant minorities were believed to be smuggling this ideology into the United States, so the government imposed a quota system, most notably on Asian immigration in 1917. Those with Communist sympathies in the labor movement were rounded-up and deported, even as returning veterans sought workers' rights. Steel workers, miners and even Boston policemen went on strike in 1919 to obtain a share of the booming economy. The rising financial markets saw some wage-earners participate through stock purchase, dissipating labor agitation until the 1929 crash and the Great Depression created disillusion with the capitalist system. The Soviet Union mandated full employment, while in capitalist America, 1932 saw roughly 12% of Americans unemployed out of a population of 120 million. In that same year, 34 million Americans had no income at all. From a distance, Communist Russia seemed to be actually doing something to help its people.

Franklin Roosevelt's presidency tried to steer democracy between the rocks of the two warring ideologies offering solutions to the global Depression—fascism and communism. There are numerous forgotten examples of American extremism opposed to democracy during the Thirties. The Black Legion was an anti-immigrant hate group, a splinter faction of the Ku Klux Klan. In the mid-Thirties they had roughly 25 thousand members in Michigan. Meanwhile, the German-American Bund masked pro-Hitler sympathies behind the trappings of a fraternal organization for ethnic Germans. Roosevelt's view that policy should be dictated by the needs of the American people and not business, led some financiers to conspire to overthrow the government. Marine Corps General Smedley Butler, when approached to aid the coup, testified to Congress about the "Business Plot." Since Butler did not try to infiltrate the conspiracy, it evaporated when exposed to the light of government scrutiny. The media ridiculed it as a hoax, but a House Committee confirmed some of the details.

The debate over who was a genuine American often hinged on conceiving of them as "the enemy within." Pearl Harbor brought a unanimity of opinion when it came to putting Japanese-Americans in internment camps. Manpower needs were such that those with communist sympathies were eventually accepted into the armed forces. The consensus was that fascism had to be defeated for a new world of international cooperation to emerge. It was a viewpoint depicted in *Why We Fight*, a series of indoctrination films showed to American military personnel. Director Frank Capra (who returned to postwar Hollywood and directed *It's a Wonderful Life*) demonized the enemy, described the struggles of subject peoples and urged their liberation. The Russians were allies with the Western powers in that fight, but those Americans with communist sympathies found themselves suspect after the Allied victory. The government decided global communism was the enemy again and a reality of war without end created a mood of disillusion and betrayal. A cinematic souvenir of this era is the forgotten documentary *Strange Victory* (1948). Producer Barney Rosset's film depicted how the same hatred mounted against the Germans during the war was easily transferred to domestic political radicals and those on society's fringes. Rosset later commented, "It was about how we won the war and crushed Hitler, but he escaped. Escaped and came here."

American politics has increasingly sought to demonize accidents of birth and opposition to established order as excuses to marginalize and persecute. The American way is great for those it is working for, but it is profoundly underachieving in addressing the problems of those for whom it is not working. It does not have to look up from the relentless pursuit of wealth and power because those who suffer under the system cannot unify to oppose it. And they never will so long as the underclass can be convinced to fight each other.

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Once you dust for fingerprints, it's pretty
clear who ruined America: white people.
I guess ruining Brooklyn was just a dry
run.

--Samantha Bee on
Full Frontal
11/9/16

The United States is not the old Soviet Union. If you do not cast a vote, the local community watchdog will not knock on your door to accuse you of lacking team spirit while threatening you. This may be why voter participation in this country is so low—that and avoidance of jury duty. The number of people eligible to vote in the 2016 election, but who did not bother, was somewhere around 100 million. Non-voters gripe that their fellow citizens are idiots and the old expression that “all politics is local” translates into reasonable people being the victims of their unenlightened neighbors. Still, people carp about the choices offered by the major parties and mutter that line about choosing between the lesser of two evils. However, the options in this past election were certainly more clear-cut. As DeRay Mckesson of Black Lives Matter put it before the primaries were over, “This is not an election about the lesser of two evils. There is one clear evil.”

You would not realize this if you talked to a lot of educated white people who should have known better. Some were offended by Ms. Clinton’s treatment of Senator Bernie Sanders in the primary. Some took Sanders’ lukewarm endorsement of Clinton following her nomination as a cue to guide their own behavior. Libertarians, the Republicans who don’t bathe, marched to their different drum. They always vote out of a kind of moral superiority common in supporters of an ideology that never has any traction. The Green Party cast their votes in a political limbo of their own devising—smug in their meaninglessness.

This writer feels a little bit like giving a Guy Debord-style pronouncement in praise of these factions and their refusal to compromise their revolutionary principles by working within the system—sarcastically, of course. However, I prefer to frame them the way I would Julian Assange. Styling himself as the world’s Ombudsman, a hero to those who felt hacking into government files would actually harm the power structure, the head of Wikileaks thought only of himself. Feeding harmful information regarding the Clinton campaign to the media, Assange figured a Trump victory would spare him further legal trouble while he evaded prosecution for a sex scandal by gaining sanctuary in the Ecuadorian embassy in London. Both Assange and the outsider parties stroked their respective egos and put the world in jeopardy as a consequence.

British politician Edmund Burke famously said, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” Congratulations! You did nothing. It is called the sin of omission. Your circle in Dante’s Inferno waits. The eternal punishment is desire without hope.

Somewhere a black man is saying, “Fuck all y’all!”

* * *

I’m surrounded by idiots. Is there a single person in this place whom I can ask for advice? Intelligent people are born into a kind of absolute exile. Humanity produces an incredible quantity of idiots. The dumber the individual, the greater his desire to multiply.

--Milan Kundera
The Farewell Party (1976)

Life’s hard. And it’s harder when you’re stupid.
--Redd Foxx

HOW CAN 59,054,087 PEOPLE BE SO DUMB?
--U.S. election
headline in England’s *Daily Mirror* 11/04/04

No one ever went broke underestimating the stupidity of the American people.
--H.L. Mencken

Some media studies scholar must have already written a dissertation on how the gradual atomization of news reporting served to erode consensus among America's citizens. The infancy of broadcast journalism absorbed the work habits of the newspaper world. It reflected the daily paper's hunger for the "scoop" and editorial decisions over what was important. When there were only three national television networks, the evening news tried to establish a spirit of trust. Walter Cronkite on CBS epitomized this corporate philosophy. Political opinion could be found in local papers' editorial pages. The *Manchester Union-Leader* in Sixties New Hampshire was notoriously ultra-conservative. Long Island's *Newsday* in the Eighties was not. However, events in the past such as the Great Depression penetrated the everyday lives of so many Americans that the majority realized there was something wrong. When things were not being done to address the problem, the voters elected someone who would.

Capitalism's ability to offer a universe of product selection as a substitute for freedom from want eventually led to cable television, which penetrated valleys in the countryside where a 50-foot TV antenna did not guarantee trouble-free signal reception. CNN's television debut in 1980 offered 24-hour news coverage and compelled the network to send out news crews to scour the world for programming to fill that slot. As music programming moved to the FM radio band, AM radio increasingly switched to news and talk formats. This led to a niche where conservative political pundits such as former rock deejay Rush Limbaugh spouted his opinion as if it was the only acceptable version of reality. Had this merely offered the opportunity for isolated people to vent their frustrations, it might have served a palliative psychological purpose. Instead it turned anger into entertainment. Radio hosts framed the latest nebulous outrage before opening the phone lines. Talk radio thereby turned political discourse into the equivalent of TV wrestling. If that seems a stretch, think about how today's anger over foreigners mirrors the petty nationalisms of the Seventies seen in the professional wrestling ring--Japanese bad guys as surrogates for that country's auto industry success or Arab villains during the OPEC oil embargo. These talk show hosts continue to fan those flames today, but always seem to look skyward and whistle while other people paint the swastikas and break the windows.

When the Federal Communications Commission did away with the Fairness Doctrine in 2011, radio and TV stations no longer had to set aside time slots to air opinions contrary to news stories and viewpoints of station management. Guest editorialists wearing bowties and talking about the dangers of fluoridated water were boring. The audience might tune-out. So hostile opinions proliferated without the equivalent of the newspaper's "corrections" column. Faithful listeners could monitor their favorite station and have their world view confirmed without fear of contradiction or discover that other people thought differently and were anything less than enemies of the children of light. Then someone was inspired to offer a television channel to superserve that audience. And what is television, but a means to make the viewer unhappy so that he buys things to make him stop being unhappy?

If commercial radio had turned the phone-in show into a lucrative franchise of niche programming, the debut of FOX News in 1996 on onetime Australian media magnate Rupert Murdoch's television network offered a visual variant. Under former Republican political operative Roger Ailes, FOX trumpeted a journalistic perspective that was "fair and balanced"—only in terms of preaching to the right-wing converted. FOX gave a platform to Bill O'Reilly, a pundit who styled himself a "cultural warrior" for the kind of people who wondered why they ever took *Sing Along with Mitch* off the air. Much of O'Reilly's broadcast career was spent expressing indignation over the perceived excesses of pop music hits and authoring bestselling histories designed as extensions of his personal brand rather than contributions to the historical record. Meanwhile FOX News served up a goulash of news and opinion, interwoven so they could not be distinguished from one another. The imaginary motto of FOX seemed to be, "The more they watch, the angrier they get." This led to moments such as the 2008 comment by *American Pulse* host E.D. Hall about Mr. and Mrs. Obama giving each other a "terrorist fist jab" at the Democratic Convention. It served as Exhibit A that Ms. Hall knew absolutely no black people.

The rise of the Internet saw most of the traditional media landscape grow fearful about losing their audience to the new kid on the block. Radio, TV and print were compelled to create online equivalents to their products as a way to draw the youth demographic. The buy-in was not so expensive that it would prevent barely-talented amateurs from trying their hand. Soon blogs, fan-focused Websites devoted to pop culture and Internet radio proliferated. The major appeal was an entrepreneurial one due to the possibility of selling advertising to companies eager to reach an online audience. Political sites were not far behind. The drawback of launching these outlets lay in the necessity of engaging the audience and soliciting comments. The Internet's nature as the world's biggest washroom wall allowed insulting invective to be delivered anonymously from an audience comedian David Cross once bluntly described as "pussies." The use of that word (unlike Donald Trump's variation on it) was intended to ridicule the overwhelmingly male market segment which feels it necessary to give their regarded opinion, especially since it can be proffered without contradiction from a place of concealment. An illustration of this could be seen in the 2016 rewrite of Christmas seasonal chestnut "Baby, It's Cold Outside" designed to modify the date rape-leaning lyrics of the 1949 original. The rendition sung by Lydia Liza and Josiah Lemanski on streaming site SoundCloud received comments such as, "You god-awful, easily frightened and addicted to victimhood morons" and "Feminism is cancer." Ah, spoken like the 45-year old sons still living in mom's basement they probably are. Write if you get work.

It should be noted that amateur-generated online content has no guarantee that it is prepared using accepted journalistic standards. Parody newspaper *The Onion* excelled in humorous topical print headlines such as, “POPE VOWS TO GET CHURCH PEDOPHILIA DOWN TO ACCEPTABLE LEVELS,” before moving online in 2014. One can only speculate whether this comedic newspaper led to the rise of “fake news.” As delineated above, a substantial part of the news audience started preferring information they could agree with. So they started searching for it. What they found was the equivalent of the funhouse mirror of the defunct *Weekly World News* with its ongoing stories about Batboy, the part-human, part-bat. Once responsible reporting techniques such as fact-checking and reliable sources/witnesses were cast aside, news could be anything the writer wanted. By turns, some Websites became fountains of rumor and innuendo. Since prosecutions for libel on the Internet are nearly nonexistent, self-discipline was rarely practiced. The more absurd the headline, the more likely that thousands of eyes would visit your site and please your advertisers.

Exemplifying the unforeseen consequences of fake news was the misadventures of Edgar Welch, a 28-year old man from North Carolina. He believed what he took for a piece of Internet journalism describing Hillary Clinton operating a child sex ring out of a Washington D.C. pizza parlor. Since the Comet Ping Pong restaurant actually existed, Mr. Welch drove to our nation’s capital with an assault rifle and discharged it inside the establishment in an attempt to live out some weird rescue scenario from the 1976 film *Taxi Driver*. He was arrested. When newspapers reported that the sex ring story was false, social media lit up with many statements disputing those articles, including an authoritative assertion from Representative Steven Smith of Georgia, who does not exist.

Meanwhile, on the campaign trail, Donald Trump was dismissing news stories about his controversial statements and possible contacts with the Russian government and labeling them fake news. After his victory, Trump’s staff came up with the term “alternative facts” to cover their boss’s refusal to correct errors in his public pronouncements. It recalled the rock ‘n’ roll song “What the President Meant to Say”—the Leaving Trains, whose subject was the incoherent political verbiage of the first George Bush. In Trump’s case it may simply be that “yes-men” have surrounded him throughout his business career. No one corrects Trump’s errors, he suffers no consequences and he keeps right on sucking those alternative facts out of his little finger.

The opposite of fact is fiction. The opposite of the truth is a lie. The White House’s press functionaries are public relations people. The statements they make offer “the truth as we see it,” a ship which sails a little farther from the shores of objective reality every day. They live in the wonderful world of spin, the search for an angle on a message allowing them to put dodgy policies over the goal line. The gun lobby frames the Constitution’s right to keep and bear arms as a glorious freedom, just as it ignores the rights of the unarmed citizen to be free from the likelihood of getting shot in a grade school classroom.

The slow rejection of concrete facts in favor of statements filtered through ideology had already carried the day as shaping opinion for a sizeable segment of the American people. The common criticism hurled at television news for over three decades was, “If it bleeds, it leads.” Vivid video footage of a distant disaster would always be featured instead of an important local story lacking dramatic visuals as a matter of course. Media theorists took note that the image presented to the viewer would often be interpreted at cross-purposes to the audio commentary simultaneously delivered. This fracture in the process of explanation can be illustrated in news stories about Americans staging political protests in the wake of police killings of suspects in Ferguson, Missouri, Chicago, Baltimore and New York. Television news presented the evolving story of black citizenry acting in opposition to a tradition of indiscriminate police violence applied with little restraint on the use of deadly force. Police often responded to the protests wearing riot gear, used tear gas and made arrests. Some viewers lost the part about the protest and retained only the interpretation that police were responding to a riot and keeping the peace. It did not help that outlets such as FOX News were interpreting the story for their viewers. In this way, the legitimacy of black grievances was massaged into another meaning by the visual nature of media coverage.

One of the many facets of racial segregation before the Sixties was geographical isolation. By confining people of color to “the other side of the tracks,” different neighborhoods or different towns, a broader sense of American community could not be formed. Thus everyone could not meet and agree on shared values—the life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness stuff in the schoolbooks. Racism was a cultural tradition in the American South because it preserved the class superiority of white country folk who were little better off economically than black sharecroppers down the road. (Pellagra, a crippling nutritional deficiency afflicted Southern whites almost exclusively because impoverished blacks were compelled to vary their diet through foraging for edible vegetable protein. God has a sense of humor.)

Vast areas of this country are rural, semi-rural and populated solely by white people. Drive across the expanse of Nebraska west of Omaha and east of the Colorado border and you will get an idea of the isolation. You are lucky to tune-in a radio station. People in the hinterlands know everybody in their small town and everyone's business. They are suspicious of outsiders. Unless they have visited a big city, their only view of the outside world comes from television—hardly the most realistic representation as has been demonstrated above. As such, they have an image of America distinct from the one in more populous areas. And anyone who does not share that perspective tends to get out of town as quickly as they can.

Those fugitives from rural America probably went to a city, where the contrast is staggering. This writer lives in a Chicago neighborhood a little over a block from a mosque. If I walk in another direction and get on a bus, I can walk down a street filled with restaurants and stores owned by immigrants from India and Pakistan. They get along because they had enough religious conflict in south Asia. It is why they came here. If I stopped early in my initial trip and transferred to another bus to go north, I could look out the window and it would appear that every other address was either a Mexican restaurant or a mom and pop Mexican-American grocery store selling the flavors of home. There are two African restaurants. There are two gay leather bars almost next to each other.

Simply put, if urbanites spent any time thinking about how everyone is different from them, they would lose their minds. Familiarity does not breed contempt. It fosters indifference. England's national fast food dish is not tea and crumpets. It is curry. Indians brought it with them after England shed itself of that colony in 1947. Part of the reason people live in cities is cultural diversity. They had enough church suppers and high school band concerts growing up. Now it is Thai food and free wine at the art gallery opening. Not every story ends like Aesop's fable of the country mouse and the city mouse. One reason Trump did not carry the big northern cities is that people there are used to confidence men selling watches on street corners and hustling card games on the subway. Folks in the city weren't buying Trump's "76 Trombones."

There will always be people who idealize small town life as portrayed in Mayberry, the fictional town in the Sixties TV series *The Andy Griffith Show*. The titular star and producer of the program based Mayberry on the North Carolina hamlet in which he grew up. One never saw black people on the show, nor were they referenced. Perhaps Andy Griffith's hometown was not the kind of place a black man would want to be found walking down the highway after sundown. Congressman Tom Emmer had to calm his constituents in St Cloud, Minnesota upset about legal immigrants from Somalia—the subject of the 10/28/16 airing of the public radio program *This American Life*. For years the population was white and either Lutheran or Roman Catholic. (Chris Rock once joked, "The only black people in Minnesota are Prince and Kirby Puckett.") Black non-Christians were suddenly in their midst. Some of those locals wanted all immigration stopped, fearing a foreign influx capable of instituting Sharia law and its religious courts seen in predominantly Muslim nations. Emmer had to tell his constituents that Dearborn, Michigan, which had a 40% Muslim population for years, did not even have Sharia law. Some of those voters did not believe him, but panic is what happens when headscarves come to Mayberry.

The real life equivalents of Mayberry today are found all over rural America, but it is not all Aunt Bea's home cooking. Boredom and unemployment spur the indices of vice and related forms of license. Young people fall victim to medical grade opiates ("hillbilly heroin" in the vernacular) obtained through forged prescriptions. They start pot farms in the woods or methamphetamine labs. Crack cocaine tore through the rural South not long after it was epidemic in the Northern cities. In the past, their only worry was whether a bad batch of moonshine might kill them. It stood in contrast to cable television series such as *Honey Boo-Boo* and *Duck Dynasty* with their good-hearted, but often-bizarre denizens of the white South.

Since the country folk were not inclined to leave their homes and look for work when the economy tanked, the few options available included the various training and education programs instituted under the Obama administration. Unfortunately some of these states were like West Virginia, where the high school dropout rate was high and 16% of the residents have no secondary school diploma. Jobs were plentiful and well paid in the healthcare field (The rising cost of healthcare is partially due to knowledgeable specialists and trained support staff, expensively educated with commensurate pay following graduation.), but the unemployed did not want to go back to school or could not qualify. So they sat around waiting for the jobs to return and they voted for someone who told them he could make it happen. He promised infrastructure spending, perfect for guys who only know how to dig ditches and hammer nails. Maybe there was a time when they ridiculed the idea of frustrated ghetto dwellers looting their own neighborhoods. Now, with Trump's help, Ma and Pa Kettle were going to burn down American society.

This country wants nostalgia
They want to go back as far as they can
Even if it's only as far as last week
Not to face now or tomorrow,
but to face backwards.

We have fallen prey to selective amnesia
Remembering what we want to remember
and forgetting what we choose to forget

Civil rights, women's rights, gay rights--
It's all wrong.
Call in the cavalry to disrupt the perception of freedom gone wild.
Godammit, first one wants freedom,
then the whole damn world wants freedom.

--"B' Movie"--

Gil Scott-Heron (1981)

* * *

J.D. Vance's 2016 book *Hillbilly Elegy* took the spotlight in the wake of the Trump victory. Mr. Vance escaped poverty in the American South, eventually becoming a lawyer and corporate executive. He recounted an unstable mother, a sheltering grandmother and telling lies in court to save mom from a jail sentence for child abuse. Politically conservative today, he explains his family's mistrust of government as rooted in a belief they could solve their own problems (a task they were not very good at, he admits). Vance's extended family accepted religious hypocrisy in the name of fellowship and bristled at the nebulous forces of class and money keeping them down. In part, the book romanticized people once depicted by comedian Chris Rock as living in trailer parks, having sex with their sister and listening to John Cougar Mellencamp records. *Elegy* became a bestseller, the redneck *Roots*, as people of intelligence tried to make sense of a Trump victory. A common sentiment was that Americans should initiate dialogue with the white underclass and should try to understand their desperate support of a political opportunist.

Speaking as an alienated intellectual proletarian, such sentiments are a fool's errand. Race considerations aside, you probably know some people who you would not invite into your home. You do not want to talk to these people. If David Letterman returned to late night television he could have a feature called "Stupid White People." It would make stars out of the likes of Kathy Miller, who lost her position as volunteer chairwoman of Donald Trump's campaign in northeast Ohio after stating in a video interview, "I don't think there was any racism until Obama got elected," adding later that if blacks were not successful in the past 50 years, it was their fault. Is it surprising so many Republican politicians are elected from farming states and rural constituencies? Miller's sentiments reflect the widely held fantasy that racism ended in the late Sixties. Some believe that, once laws were enacted banning segregation, prejudice was over. Unfortunately one cannot legislate away emotions such as hatred. The Reconstruction era proved that.

Black Americans represented just 12.3% of the U.S. population as of 2001 census figures. A black man in the White House and numerous sports and entertainment figures led to the term "post-racial" to describe this country. Yet the sentiment persisted in some quarters that black American progress somehow came at the expense of white people. One did not have to prod some white people very hard to hear them claim that blacks were "gaming the system." Scholarships to black students bumped white students, they felt. The old system of welfare had become "workfare" under Bill Clinton, but did not kill the myth of millions of black single mothers scamming government subsidies for their children. Psychoanalyst Erich Fromm once described how people express moral indignation as a mask for hatred. Angry white people are unhappy with black failure and they are unhappy with black success. Each new Beyonce video somehow diminishes their station. It leads one to suspect that their belligerence stems from dissatisfaction with their own lives and the choices they have made. It becomes easier to turn their hatred outward and blame someone else for their own failures.

They could try blaming the rich. May 2016 saw the release of files hacked from the Panama-based Mossack Fonseca law firm, which specialized in the creation of shell companies for the purpose of tax avoidance. These allowed corporations and individuals the ability to hide wealth in the manner of a Swiss bank account, thereby offering a companion to the offshoring typically found in the Cayman Islands. What was shocking was how some American state governments turned the creation of such companies into a revenue bonanza. Delaware, known as the corporate home for thousands of companies, does not charge its residents sales or property tax. It does charge for registering new companies, a process netting the state \$928 million in 2014. The shell company advantage is that it permits the movement of money around the world to the place it will be taxed the least. A Japanese company registered in Delaware would not have to reveal its owners to the Japanese government. More importantly, global terrorists and cybercriminals can pursue and expand their activities using such legal shelters. For that reason alone, it cries out for dismantling, if not stronger regulation. All those Republicans bullish over anti-terrorism policies would support it, but they are too busy backing laws written-to-order by tax lawyers representing the wealthy. And why reform the laws registering shell companies when the states are rewarded so handsomely by the present system? So Republican politicians speak of law and order for the street criminal and not the white-collar variety. The subject of income inequality is not raised as political campaign coffers draw wealthy donors to help reelect cooperative politicians.

Meanwhile, the Mossack Fonseca scandal fell off the radar.

This writer's only complaint as a Caucasian, subheading American mutt, is having racist white people confide their prejudices to me. They assume that shared pigmentation equals shared opinions. Disgust with these people leads me to exit their presence as soon as possible. As such, I have yet to utter the singular refutation of all their base sentiments: "How can a group of people with less money, less opportunity and less clout in our society have it better than you? If they have it so good, would you trade places with them? No? Then shut up." The Republican Party is not trying to take away white voting rights or gerrymander Congressional districts to make it easier to elect black Democrats.

This is all part of a new strain of institutional racism rooted in old methods and aided by civil rights limitations imposed as part of anti-terrorism legislation. *Vice* magazine reported in May 2016 that the Department of Homeland Security monitored Twitter and social media after the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Maryland in April of 2015. It found a single tweet which mentioned killing police and proposed recruiting to ISIS those angry over police shootings of criminal suspects. DHS then began going to protest marches to gather intelligence. Meanwhile, right-wing blogs and news sites got wind of the tweet and used it as evidence that Black Lives Matter was actually a terrorist organization. Police unions and law enforcement advocates had already pushed for a Blue Lives Matter movement despite the fact that blue is not a race—not even for the Blue Man Group. It was a distraction from the legitimacy of BLM grievances. In Chicago, after years of research, the Citizens Police Data Project revealed that 74% of the victims of police shootings between 2008-2015 were black.

Further muddying the waters was the *Washington Examiner's* Michael Barone, who wrote in 2016 about a "Ferguson Effect"—crime increasing in black neighborhoods because police were reluctant to use aggressive tactics because they feared accusations of police brutality. The implication was that deadly force was the price black urban dwellers had to pay to be safe in their own neighborhoods. Barone noted that black Americans would be the prime victims if the "Ferguson Effect" continued, without noting that they would also be the prime victims if police continue to ride roughshod all over them. (The *Washington Examiner* is a conservative weekly owned by Philip Anschutz, the wealthy owner of the Staples Center in Los Angeles and most of the property surrounding it. Anschutz also owns concert promotions firm AEG Live.)

So with police, the government's security apparatus and right wing mouthpieces arrayed against black people, it is safe to say angry white men can sleep soundly, secure in the knowledge that their sacred social order will remain intact. It was thus laughable to hear Trump supporters expressing fears of an American government "deep state" putting the new administration in jeopardy. Conservative lobbying groups sent out mailings soliciting donations emblazoned with warnings about an Obama deep state. News flash: There is no left-leaning deep state. The intelligence community, the diplomatic corps and the staff of the various branches of government are predominantly white, male, attended Ivy League schools and are rich. You think they could afford to live in Washington on a government salary if it were otherwise? These are the descendants of the guys who made the decision to contain Communism after World War II, to project American military power globally and to overthrow any Third World governments getting the wrong ideas. Their projects continue regardless of the party in charge. Eisenhower left office and Kennedy inherited the Bay of Pigs project. They are an untitled aristocracy as much as the plutocrats who paid the way for the Republicans in the last election. They would not move against a Trump presidency unless it ran against the nation's interests—as they see it.

But what if they would?

TRUMP FANTASY #3

(Scene: The Oval Office in the White House. Donald Trump sits at his desk. The intercom on the desk sounds.)

"Yes?"

"A man from the NSA is here."

"Send him in."

The door opens and a man in his forties enters. His bearing is that of an active duty soldier.

"You're new here, but in case they didn't tell you at headquarters, I don't like these briefings. Try to make it quick."

"Certainly."

The man sets down the attaché case he carries, snaps it open and withdraws a laptop computer. Flipping up its screen, he types a series of key strokes, then sets the computer down before Trump and says, "Please study the following images quickly because they will disappear from the screen in 30 seconds."

Trump looks at the screen, his eyes widen and his cheeks redden. "Godammit! Where did you get this?"

The visitor lifts the computer from the desk, snaps it closed and returns it to the attaché case. "That was a wireless transmission. The link has been terminated and the file is not on this device. The information is at a secure location. As for the source of this information, well, it's impossible to keep a secret in the global intelligence community, even among the true believers. You see, every man has a price...but I'm not telling you anything you don't know—at least as evidenced by what was on the screen."

"How dare you threaten me? I'll have your job! No one will believe you!"

"No one has to believe me. They will believe us. Before I was sent to this meeting, provisions were made to safeguard the record of your past actions regardless of what happens to me."

Trump's eyes shift as he contemplates his situation. "Who are you?"

"We are the same people who decided that the Allies were irrelevant after World War II and new contingencies had to be developed to protect the American way of life. Naturally, we are concerned when anyone tries to upset that order. We have been reasonably successful at maintaining it." The visitor pauses. "Do you really think you have enough support in the government to move against us? Every person in your circle who we suspect might threaten us already has a strategy for their neutralization. As for members of your own party, well, politicians can be very fickle."

"You said every man has a price. What's yours?"

"Our price is your resignation—for health reasons."

"You're crazy! I'm not going to give up the power of this office and the chance to make even more money with the contacts I'm going to develop!"

"Mr. Trump, our psychological profilers are the best in the world. They told us your self-worth is interwoven with your image as a winner. Be content with gaining the presidency and going down in history. It is preferable to the shame of impeachment and a series of revelations seamier than the one I just showed you. It will drag the Trump name—that is, to say, your brand—through the mud. And what value will it have then?"

Trump seems to sag and is silent.

"Our profilers also stated that there was a likelihood your voluntary resignation would be too overwhelming an action for your self-respect. If that's the case, we offer an alternative."

The man reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out an envelope, He tears it, shakes the contents out onto the desk and slips the envelope back into his suit.

Trump looks at the pill on his desk.

"It's something we have used for years. It causes a sudden, fatal stroke and its chemical footprint disappears in under an hour. The desirability of this option is leaving your supporters in mourning for your sacrifice on behalf of their many causes."

Trump looks at the visitor and for the first time feels the weight of his 72 years. There is silence as the possibilities flood in on him.

"Well, you have a lot to think about. We will be waiting for your response, but you only have 24 hours from the time of this appointment. The pill's ingredients become inert less than eight hours from now."

The man turned to the door, "Don't worry, I'll let myself out."

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I read the newspapers from the States—well,
they're always going in for pogroms over there,
it's part of their thing.

--Doris Lessing
The Four-Gated City

This writer attended a party in 2016 and watched a fellow poring over a globe and speculating about the route that the Islamic militia ISIS would take into Europe. Not wanting to be a rude guest, I did not tell him that it was no longer the fourteenth century when the Ottoman Turks threatened Europe. Today it is impossible to move massive armies without observation. Military satellites can determine how many lug nuts are on a truck tire from earth orbit. Then too, ISIS is not the Mongol hordes. They number either side of 5 thousand combatants, whose lack of strategy is balanced by an excess of zeal. They never got the memo that you are supposed to kill the other guy, not yourself in the process. Theirs is a zero sum game. The fact that their initial conquests came in the deserts of Iraq just made them easier to bomb from the air with minimal damage to property. Finally, no one has achieved conquest using asymmetrical warfare. Insurgencies can inconvenience colonial powers so they abandon distant possessions (say England dumping Kenya in 1962). It cannot defeat modern military forces in direct battle.

ISIS represents a threat to the easily frightened and an opportunity for the conservative brain trust that uses fear as a fuel for public policy and a magnet for votes. Republicans long ago repeated the need for a strong defense and opposition to the Communist peril as their major issues. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, all they were left with was Cold War nostalgia. With Bill Clinton's penchant for pro-business policies and a balanced budget, voters perceived the two parties as little different from each other. The Republicans needed a foreign enemy.

The 9/11/01 terror attacks provided the answer. George Bush's 6/1/02 West Point speech set forth a policy of preventative war. Military action would be considered in 60 (!) countries around the world because they were said to harbor cells of Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda organization. Bush spoke of the war on terror taking years. It also fit in with the Republican model of military adventurism—kicking the crap out of some third-rate country as a flag-waving exercise. Republicans are always opposed to deficit spending except when it comes to military action. Better the Army buys more \$500.00 hammers and \$10 thousand toilets than the government pays for health care. Some observers were left to question the botched pursuit of bin Laden and his Taliban hosts through the mountains of northeast Afghanistan and into Pakistan. This translated into a prolonged U.S. presence in Afghanistan and eventual status as America's longest undeclared war. Learning is part repetition and part reinforcement and the one lesson America is still learning from Vietnam is that our ground forces have yet to master counterinsurgency. A cynic would ask, "Why wipe out a resistance movement if it shortens the war and lessens the amount of military spending and big checks to contractors?" So I did.

The part of Trump's immigration strategy focused on blocking visitors from countries in the Middle East found an idea man in Stephen Bannon, a former Goldman Sachs investment banker. Bannon reinvented himself as yet another radio pundit, appearing on the right wing Breitbart News Daily channel on Sirius XM. The satellite network has a channel for every taste from Howard Stern to Little Steven's Underground Garage. Trump appeared on Bannon's 11/2/15 premiere show. At the time, Trump favored immigration for talented technology graduates with advanced degrees. Bannon sniffed that America was "a country more than an economy." During a Trump visit a month later, Bannon asserted that the choice was between fighting climate change or radical Islam, implying the issues were mutually exclusive. During a 2016 program, Bannon returned to a frequent theme, the prominence of Islam in the Turkish government. Trump tried to change the subject to his construction project in Istanbul, Turkey's capital. Still, Trump's immigration policy, incoherent and legally slipshod, was a way to pander to his supporters' irrational fears. Website Business Insider determined that the likelihood of an American being killed in a domestic terrorist incident by an illegal immigrant is 1 in 138 billion. The odds of being dealt a royal flush in a game of poker are 1 in 649,739.

Bannon appears to be like any other Islamophobe one can hear on talk radio stations across the country, but further perusal of his statements reflects a mixture of nationalist and isolationist sentiments interpenetrating one another. It presents as intentionally vague so that the focus of the central issue blurs as Bannon shifts between subjects. He seems to oppose globalization and its impact on the American masses and the internationalism that sees trade and contact with ideological opponents. Yet, the military solution always hovers in the background because unilateral action without the support of allies requires more strength of arms than what can be achieved with the help of military coalitions, trade partners and diplomacy. Bannon perceives Islam as a threat to Europe and, by extension, the United States. He also singles out China, which he pairs with Third World Islam as enemies of "the Judeo-Christian West."

One can argue that the Judeo part throws a bone to Israel and offers Bannon and the Breitbart combine a bit of distance from what has come to be referred to as the "alt-right." This loose coalition of movements has stepped from the shadows with the ascendancy of Trump, though some in its confederation of organizations have previously drawn scrutiny from the Southern Poverty Law Center in its crusade against the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis. Right wing extremists such as the National Policy Institute have a mission statement dedicated "to the heritage, identity and future of people of European descent." This sentiment is personified by Richard B. Spencer, who was captured in a 11/19/16 video giving the fascist salute and proclaiming to a Washington D.C. crowd, "Hail Trump, hail our people, hail victory." While this essay was being prepared, Spencer appeared at a May 2017 rally in Charlottesville, Virginia to oppose a plan to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. On 5/13/17 Spencer announced to a crowd, "We are white, we are a people and we will not be replaced." The Charlottesville rally saw less than 100 attendees bearing torches. All that was missing was a gasoline-soaked wooden cross.

Tangential to the alt right are radical Christian Identity groups such as the Phineas Priesthood. These vigilantes take their inspiration from the Biblical Phineas who killed a Jewish man and his pagan wife to prevent God from visiting a plague upon his people. The adherents of this hate group interpret the brief passage in the book of Numbers to allow them to wage war on interracial couples, foreigners and people of color. Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center notes Christian Identity extremists are a greater danger than Islamic terrorists because of the sheer number of fringe Christian fundamentalist groups isolating themselves from the broader society. Their common cornerstone is that those framed as violating God's law are judged immoral and must be struck down.

The self-styled militia who took over government land in Burns, Oregon in January 2016 called on armed citizens from around the country to join their movement. Leader Cliven Bundy's gripe was not being able to graze his livestock on federal land. Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh was not the only dangerous white man with an axe to grind. Without resorting to the Internet, it is safe to wager that a Google search under his name would turn up several Websites framing McVeigh as a hero or victim of a conspiracy. When you factor in violent crime and every lone wolf with a grudge, the number of gun deaths in America annually is no surprise. England's 56 million people generate 50-60 deaths from firearms per year. In 2014, America had 8,124. You are more likely to be killed by one of your fellow Americans than some foreign terrorist.

Dylann Roof, following his arrest for a shooting spree at a prayer service in which nine people were killed, admitted that he entered the church to kill black people. As he shot his victims, he accused them of "taking over the country," hoping his actions would trigger a race war. Roof had visited the Website of the Council of Conservative Citizens, which listed scores of examples of white people killed by blacks. The CCC is the successor organization to the White Citizens Council, which opposed desegregation in the Sixties South. Roof chose to stage his gunplay in a place where he would not have the challenge he would in, say a sports bar. He was lucid enough to plead guilty as a way to avoid the death penalty. Life in prison protected by Aryan Nation types must have seemed like the right strategy. One look at a photograph of Roof led this observer to note that here was a guy who had never had sex and now it would only be non-consensual with fellow convicts.

This is the redneck version of identity politics. They feel white Americans are the true heirs of the country. Everyone else is a latecomer or interloper not entitled to the same rights as them. Unstated is the idea that their presumed superiority in the pecking order over black Americans would put them in a weak position if the situation were reversed. They fear the proverbial shoe on the other foot. Curiously, these American extremists have much in common with ISIS. The Islamic State offers people in the Third World a direction when they have no job and no future. Providing a world view to explain why they are stuck in poverty and making no progress, ISIS offers someone to blame and a target to kill. It is not as if their home countries will care if ISIS recruits leave to do their killing somewhere else instead of fomenting revolution to overthrow their own governments. Peace seems to have a deleterious effect on some young men. America is not the only country where the two paths for undereducated youth are jail or the military.

The easy availability of firearms in this country offers the opportunity for mayhem in pursuit of nebulous and muddle-headed political goals. What were once called survivalists are now called “preppers.” The implication is that they are preparing for disaster or the collapse of civil society. Or to hasten its demise. It makes for a variety of state-sanctioned violence making it unsafe for anyone not living in a gated community protected by private security. It occurs due to the benign neglect of Congress to restrict gun purchase, even for the mentally ill. Making this possible is the National Rifle Association, the organization at the heart of the gun lobby. The NRA applies the money and muscle to frighten legislators into supporting their agenda. (The 1996 Dickey Amendment was their handiwork, prohibiting federal money to research the causes of gun violence.) The Trump victory was less their doing than the defeat of Ms. Clinton. NRA publication *America's 1st Freedom* featured the Democratic candidate unflatteringly on several covers when not depicting Mr. Obama as “Pinocchio.” (They held a grudge about the president delivering sixteen speeches following mass shootings during his two terms.)

However, the most interesting *Freedom* cover was on the August 2016 issue. A black male in casual attire and a baseball cap held an AR-15 assault rifle. The headline read, “Why Would You Ban the Gun You Pray the Police Show up With?” The impulse is to interpret the cover as fear-mongering over armed black men taking on the police. The background to the story is much stranger. The man depicted in the photo is one Colion Noir, a name worthy of a character in the next *Star Wars* film. (Colion suggests the “made-up name” some white people stereotype urban blacks for having. Noir is the French word for black.) It turns out Mr. Noir is the NRA’s spokesman for gun rights for black Americans, a curiously recent bit of outreach by the organization. The NRA keeps the demographic information of its membership private, though unofficial statements by some members cite moderate Asian and Hispanic participation. Some NRA types bristle at the “good old boy” public image. However when you go to the NRA Website and request information about black participation, you are immediately asked for your email address/phone number.

It is reasonable to jump to conclusions about that photo of Mr. Noir. The NRA’s companion publication *American Rifleman* has a column titled “The Armed Citizen,” which offers capsule news stories highlighting gun use to scare off criminals or dispatch them. The underlying message here is that criminals are omnipresent and it’s “us versus them.” (There is that pronoun again.) It was not that long ago that auxiliary policeman George Zimmerman shot unarmed Florida teenager Trayvon Martin and cited that state’s “stand your ground law” to obtain a jury acquittal. Not long after, an argument over loud music at a Florida gas station saw Michael D. Dunn fire a gun into a vehicle filled with young black men. Noise abatement was nothing worth anyone dying over. But as the NRA likes to say, “Guns don’t kill people. People kill people.”

However back to the photogenic Mr. Noir. One wonders if he is actually a photographer’s model used by the NRA as part of a plan to increase membership among black Americans. The NRA can claim to be defending the gun rights of everyone by appealing to the black population’s self defense concerns over a Trump presidency and his racist supporters. More firearms are purchased, some are used and problematic minorities are flushed out and “taken care of.” After all, they are outnumbered twelve-to-one.

See fake news is easy. (It is fake, isn’t it?)

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“...in America the citizen had long since
become accustomed to an organized barbarism.”

--Doris Lessing
The Four-Gated City

The Four-Gated City leaves shrapnel in you. Lessing begins with the trappings of the then-emerging feminist novel. It depicts the journey of Martha Quest through the political convulsions and austerity of post-World War II London. She tries to find her way as a divorced woman while working for a writer. Reading of her interactions with his extended family and friends while dealing with their neuroses and her own amidst the political flux of the times, one is lulled as if this is some sort of page-turning work of women's literature. Then, as if a switch is thrown, the novel goes in an entirely different direction. What was madness is revealed as clairvoyance. Pessimism and a flair for spotting government conspiracies and inaction are actually harbingers of the rapid dissolution of civilization. For every one who has ever said, "Who cares? I'll be dead by then," *City* tells you what it is like to be alive when it all goes to hell and you have to apologize to loved ones for having missed the signs or not having done enough. Or to survive long enough to watch everyone you care about die until you are the only one left.

One can read old book reviews of *City* and find critics ridiculing the depictions of the novel's inhabitants, such as Lessing's echoing description of the younger characters as "beautiful." One could argue it establishes those figures as vibrant as life itself so that their death leaves a void. Those same critics were skeptical about the probability of the world's destruction in the novel, but they were still close to the remnants of Sixties optimism and the belief that we would solve our problems. They could not imagine human conflict and greed would block the action needed for the world's survival. Then too, the film *Network* was once thought to be an over-the-top satire instead of predicting reality television and network executives playing God with people's lives to obtain a ratings bonanza.

Lessing calls her disaster the Catastrophe, a combination of pandemic, industrial poisoning and nuclear radiation that wipes out the world's population, save for some isolated areas where the weather patterns turn the hurricane of death away. The survivors recall the thousand hints of approaching doom they ignored—senseless violence, surrendering the ability to protest in the name of national security, the fact that the guardians of that security were bought and paid for by those few whose needs were at odds with everyone else's. Simply put, everyone was too busy fighting each other to see that humanity was running out of time. Hovering over it all is the metaphor that the world had borne humans too long and was washing its hands of them.

* * *
If Utopia has been achieved, then unhappiness
does not exist, the poor are no longer credible....
It is as if the Last Judgment had already
happened. The good have been found virtuous,
the others have been cast out.... Utopia has
arrived. If you aren't part of it, get lost!
--Jean Baudrillard
America (1986)

It's called the American Dream because you
have to be asleep to believe it.
--Anibal McKinney in
a letter to the *Village*
Voice 4/20/16

What was once considered thoughtless aggression was now bravery. To think of future consequences was cowardly. Moderation was considered effeminate. Empathy was considered a sign of incompetence. Fanaticism was to be admired. To strike first was the best defense and to criticize that strategy was to become a suspect. Revenge was compelling regardless of the outcome. This is not a description of Trump's style of governance. It is the Greek historian Thucydides describing the political upheaval in Corcyra in 427 B.C.

We have a kind of blindness in this country. Much of it stems from America's creation myth epitomized by the reverential tones certain politicians heap on the "founding fathers" and the U.S. Constitution. They speak of that document as if it were the Ten Commandments—etched in stone and irrevocable. Some cite its perfection, which once caused Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall to quip that it was so perfect it only required 27 amendments. The so-called "textual originalism" argument espoused by Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia centered on the proposition that any interpretation deviating from original intent of the writers of the Constitution was a kind of blasphemy. Why interpret law at all? Maybe Scalia's lifetime meal ticket on the bench had something to do with it and he wanted to play a lot of golf.

Edward Thomas once said, “The past is the only dead thing that smells sweet.” The slavish worship of tradition is a recipe for disaster. No great civilization has survived without adapting to new situations and emerging challenges. The Chinese, once called “the most misruled nation on earth,” were so xenophobic that all foreigners were called barbarians. This sense of Chinese cultural primacy left them ill-prepared when Westerners came to trade goods, then introduced opium and the threat of superior firepower to back up the product launch.

Americans think they have an ideal political system and ignore evidence to the contrary. Our achievements include 2.3 million people in American prisons of various kinds (source: Prison Policy Initiative 2015 figures). Our country ranks 27th in infant mortality behind virtually all of continental Europe and Japan. We exalt “all men are created equal,” but the reality puts whites above people of color and the rich above everyone else. If you are born a woman, it is a life sentence earning less money than a man. The people for whom the system works extol their idealized vision of the country. Surprisingly, many of those who suffer the most keep marching to the night rally waving American flags. For some, the ongoing pedophilia scandal in the Catholic Church was a deal breaker and a colossal breach of trust that could not be forgiven. Others kept filling the collection plate and framing the victims as gold diggers. Looking back at Reagan and the second George Bush—the failures of these men never disillusioned the true believers then and the same kind of people are supporting Trump now. They just sing “God Bless America” and sharpen their knives.

* * *

The typical American of the old stock had never more than a half-hearted enthusiasm for the rights of the minority; bred in a pioneer tradition, he had been accustomed to set his community in order by the first means that came to hand—a sumptuary law, a vigilance committee, or if necessary a shotgun. Declarations of Independence and Bills of Rights were all very well in the history books, but when he was running things himself he had usually been open to the suggestion that liberty was another name for license and that the Bill of Rights was the last resort of scoundrels. During the war he had discovered how easy it was to legislate and propagandize and intimidate his neighbors into what seemed to him acceptable conduct, and after peace was declared he went on using the same sort of methods to see that they continued to conform.

--Frederick Lewis Allen
Only Yesterday (1931)

Film critic Roger Ebert wrote near the start of that career, “We no longer want to be heroes, but we want to know heroes are on the job in case we ever need one.” We put people into positions of power and then shrug-off the responsibility of watching over them. Some voters advocate freedom by electing the kind of leaders who will curtail everyone else’s rights and kill those who will not go along. A pervasive quirk in the American people is our willingness to let those who are overenthusiastic in their pursuit of extremism do whatever they want because it would involve those of us who are indifferent to take a stand. Our own heroism atrophies as we do less and demand less. There were massive demonstrations in big American cities mere days after Trump’s inauguration. As of this writing, there has been no repeat. The rich and their lackeys know this about us. People will trade freedom for comfort. Much of the 2016 failure of the Democrats has been placed upon their emphasis on the identity politics of gender and race. The truth behind this may be that such support is premised on the impossibility of solving the problem of income inequality so that identity issues become a substitute. More repellent are the calls to totally turn away from identity politics, a denial of the legitimacy of the grievances which need to be addressed. When Karl Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848, 10% of the population owned 90% of the wealth. Now everyone knows how much the 1% owns. The upward mobility of the working class has receded. Getting elected now means the deployment of so much cash that the expression, “the best government money can buy” has never been more apt. Now there is no unity of vision—no class-consciousness—to bring the 99% together and become a voting bloc because too many people vote from fear and hate.

Perhaps one way forward could be read in the pronouncements by some that the Trump victory had turned America into a failed state. It had become a kleptocracy of oligarchs like the former Soviet Union, where nationalist fervor camouflaged the business of a government working for the benefit of the few. Those of good will might begin by addressing the problems to be created by the Trump administration in the same way foreign aid workers come into a country plagued by famine or an earthquake to help those in need. The simple act of volunteering may be too much for some of us to fit into the private lives which serve to insulate us from the madness outside, but it has already been demonstrated that standing by and doing nothing has brought us a calamity. Start by giving money to social justice organizations as an investment in the future, otherwise there might not be one. However, I am not hopeful. We are surrounded by idiots.

* * *

Oh yeah. Music. If you have not put your head in the oven....

Barclay's annual research report on the 2016 music business issued early in the year's last quarter was titled "Dancing Days Are Here Again." This was not that bank's reference to popular electronic dance music, but a recognition that more revenue was generated by the music business after years of erosion. Barclay's pointed to an increase of 8.1% in the year's first half versus the same period in 2015. Much of this progress could be attributed to more subscribers using streaming services: an increase of 18.3 million in the first half of 2016 versus 10.8 million in the same period of 2015. Streaming is viewed as the growth area for the music business in light of declining numbers for downloads and sales of compact discs. The report saw purchases of downloads dropping 22.1% and CD sales down 12.7% in the first half of 2016. Another reason for cheer in the executive suites was gleaned from research firm MusicWatch, which noted 42 million people bought a downloaded track in 2015. Average music spending for that group was \$50.00-\$60.00 per annum. However a subscriber to a streaming service at \$10.00 per month spends more money from the start and is perceived to have more motivation as a fan to spend amounts over that buy-in. By that metric, an increase in subscribers was a hopeful sign.

However, the nature of audio streaming might leave biz monkeys feeling a bit less sanguine about their prospects for profit. Streaming is analogous to radio. Its customers "tune-in" and listen to a selection of music reflecting listener taste, often adjusted by proprietary algorithms preparing menus of song offerings. Streaming services are either ad-supported or subscription based. The ad-supported ones pay labels and music publishers for the use of their music by giving them a cut of the proceeds from ad sales. The subscription services, the largest of which is Spotify, are on-demand. Users can pick from an inventory of music gleaned from label catalogs, not all of which is available. Nonetheless, these songs culled from record companies are paid for via a licensing procedure rooted in the model of terrestrial radio. The radio station pays music publishers a royalty for the mechanical reproduction of songs owned by those firms. However, streaming licensing fees are not calculated song-by-song and play-by-play.

This ever-evolving transformation of how the audience consumes music has had an impact on the methodology music industry publication *Billboard* uses to calculate chart placement. Retailers once reported the number of barcode scans for each title to tabulate physical sales, but the shrinking retail sector created the need for new metrics to measure chart success. First radio airplay, then downloads and now streaming determine how a song or album is ranked. The latest wrinkle is the "track equivalent album" (also called the "equivalent album unit"). An album sold is tabulated for every 1,500 streams of songs from that release. Meanwhile, ten digital track/song downloads for an act counts as an album sold. Suddenly, on-demand streaming influenced chart position and duration there out of proportion to the metrics once used. Drake's album *Views* (Young Money/Cash Money/Republic Records) was *Billboard*'s #2 album of the year. *Views*' 2.9 billion audio streams since its 4/09/16 release caused twenty of its constituent songs to appear simultaneously on the magazine's Hot 100 chart. Separately, *Coloring Book* by Chicago's Chance the Rapper was a streaming-only album with no physical equivalent. This led to hand-wringing in *Billboard*'s chart offices until they could determine a way to calculate *Book*'s chart impact. Likewise, a September rules change at the National Association of Recording Arts and Sciences allowed *Coloring Book* to contend for a Grammy award.

The phenomenon of multiple chart placements at the same time was emblematic of the ways listeners were now consuming music. Previously, a record company's album marketing plan in the Nineties would involve a two-year strategy for an artist such as Michael Jackson. Singles would be portioned out one-at-a-time to radio with subsequent songs given airplay as previous songs fell down the chart. This offered an ongoing incentive to buy the album. Today's consumer seeks out their favorite artist's music compulsively. If offered more of Drake's songs, the audience wants to stream those as well, hence all those Drake songs on the chart at the same time. Marketing is geared to social media sites and mobile phone users in light of how the ubiquitous smartphone has replaced the iPod and its competitors as a way to access music.

The video component of the smartphone is having an impact on the business which is still being sorted out. Users not watching cat videos or street shootings are calling up music videos from any number of sources. They are also starring in them. Vine, the Website whose brief amateur music videos became a fad among short attention span youth, shut down in late 2016. This left the market to YouTube and its parade of newly minted photogenic teens. However, Vine had a successor in Musical.ly, an app allowing its "musers" to upload fifteen-second lip-synched videos of song hits. The app's audience/participants are 75% female, one of them becoming its first star, Ariel Martin. Ms. Martin's parents are in the wealth management business, echoing the parents-with-money lineage of Taylor Swift and Lana Del Rey. Musical.ly does not compensate the "musers," but pays licensing fees to the labels because the kids have to mouth along to something.

As music consumption becomes more like radio, corporate broadcasters are becoming more like streamers. Radio stations were quick to jump on the podcast bandwagon when they were already competing with Internet radio. The former Clear Channel Communications, a radio behemoth in the Nineties, is currently constituted as iHeartMedia following its sale by the Mays family of Texas. A substantial segment of the audience listens to the broadcaster via the iHeartRadio app, which allows smartphone users to pick a format (say country) and have songs fed to their device. Like listening to the car radio, users can “change stations” by dumping songs they do not like. iHeart used to limit the number of times this switching could occur before locking-in subsequent song sequences. These restrictions were later relaxed in light of 80 million users creating the need to maintain these fickle listeners’ loyalty, if only for advertisers’ sake. After all, hours spent listening to terrestrial radio has declined according to ratings giant Nielsen and a little over 20% of the U.S. population does not even own a radio.

Ad-supported streamer Pandora launched its ad-free Internet radio service 9/15/16. Subscribers paying \$4.99 per month were allowed to replay a quantity of songs, skip more than that number and listen offline. Notably, the song-skipping option was conditional upon watching video ads. Liberty Media, which has a controlling interest in satellite broadcaster Sirius, sniffed around Pandora’s streaming operation for possible acquisition. It seemed auto owners with SiriusXM capability were opting to plug in their smartphones and use Spotify, the dominant on-demand streaming service, rather than listen to the satellite broadcaster.

As radio stations tried to extend their audience, numerous acts tried to limit theirs in a bid for self-enrichment and an added cachet. Drake’s aforementioned *Views* launched as an exclusive via Apple. In offering up a brief window as the sole destination for an artist’s music, Apple’s exclusive policy pays acts or offers the promotional equivalent in advertising. Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* was initially available only as an hour-long video album on cable channel HBO. Rihanna’s *Anti* (Westbury Road/Roc Nation) was part of a \$25 million sponsorship deal with smartphone manufacturer Samsung—which luckily did not burst into flames like their product. For its part, the label end of the business is opposed to exclusives because it limits the size of that initial explosion of streams when an album premieres. Universal Music Group, the largest label by market share, saw its honcho Lucian Grange ban any of their acts from promising exclusives to streaming sites. At any rate, superstars who can fill arenas the way Drake can are less likely to worry about the fraction of a penny they receive per audio stream.

Rihanna, like Kanye West and Beyoncé are among the chosen few shareholder/artists whose music is available on Tidal, the streaming audio site launched by Beyoncé’s husband Jay Z. Tidal’s sales pitch boasts high sound quality streams for \$20.00 per month or a lower quality tier for \$10.00 per month. Market leader Spotify had 40 million users going into the year’s third quarter. Latecomer Apple had 17 million, while Tidal had 4.2 million in the same period. This shortfall was likely behind Kanye West taunting the company founded by Steve Jobs to buy Tidal. This raised the question of why Apple would offer an exit strategy for West and his fellow shareholders. Out of the kindness of their hearts? Buying market share? As Warren Buffett once remarked, sometimes smart investment involves doing nothing. Tidal might be worth less money a year from now. And Kanye West is not one-tenth the businessman Buffett is.

Spotify did have a few obstacles. The growth of its user base has leveled-off and it has yet to breach the 50 million mark. The firm postponed a stock offering, partially due to wanting the best scenario to pay down the debt and seed money it has required to get this far. Spotify’s investors include the major labels, who have a unique status in that Spotify is paying them for use of their music. Those not part of that equity group claim to lack the privileges given to the major labels. At the dawn of 2016 David Lowery of Nineties veterans Cracker sued Spotify for \$150 million as part of a class action. Lowery accused Spotify of copyright infringement via its ignorance over which publishers should be paid for all its streams. Independent label Victory went further by claiming, through digital distribution and monitoring company AUDIAM, that Spotify had not paid them for 50 million streams. This spurred Spotify in March to pact with the National Music Publishers Association to make it easier for rights holders to claim royalties if they do *not* make copyright infringement claims against Spotify. The NMPA spoke consolingly of not wanting to put Spotify out of business, but missing from a 3/18/16 *Wall Street Journal* article on the deal was the fact that most of the biggest music publishers are owned by the label partners of Spotify. The licensing deal with those labels was soon to expire, having a rate of 55% of revenue. Spotify was pushing for a reduction to 50% and wanted to continue its free ad-supported tier. The labels would prefer Spotify to go all-subscription and cease the giveaways. The year ended with Spotify paying 55% while a new deal with the labels was being negotiated.

Streaming exclusivity, even as a bone of contention, was not quite what it used to be. In January 2016, one could hear a Tidal-exclusive Rihanna track remix on YouTube. How was this possible? The same type of young geniuses who came up with filesharing had whipped-up software which allowed users to “burn” streaming audio. Laptop DJ tool Audacity could “record” music from podcasts, blogs or streaming sites. A “Streaming Audio Recorder” was available from Apowersoft. The dubious security of the whole enterprise was noticeable when users contacted the site Lifewire for information on how to record streaming audio. The site would detect if you did not have a “private connection,” thereby putting passwords and credit card information at risk. Lifewire offered a warning before proceeding, but it is doubtful other sites would be so concerned. Basically, if you are crooked enough to go outside regular channels to get your music, others are similarly inclined and ready to take from you.

The purloined streams wound up on YouTube because, despite its perception as a video channel where all sorts of visual programming can be found, it is actually a “user upload service.” People can post sound/visuals, establish their own channels and, by building an audience, attract ad revenue. As a free site YouTube makes its money from advertising sales, which it splits with its countless programming hosts. This model ignores the fact that the rights holder/recording artist may not have granted permission to post the material. For example, YouTube was flooded with Prince tribute videos following his death in April 2016. While he was alive, Prince was adamantly opposed to having his music put online without his permission. He hired Web Sheriff Ltd.; a West Coast company specializing in finding unauthorized videos online and issuing takedown orders. Prince’s hostility stemmed from his wish to have complete artistic control over his image and music, a philosophy mirrored in his frequent battles with record labels. Prince also felt free views were outright theft and cannibalized sales of his music. He was serious enough about the issue that he dragooned friends and relatives, paying them to look for his music on YouTube.

YouTube parent Google claims its proprietary Content ID system automatically polices the site’s ecosystem. Content ID generates a takedown notice after detecting users uploading master recordings. However, it appears Content ID is not as sophisticated as rating service Nielsen’s SoundScan, which monitors radio airplay to tabulate the number of times a song is aired. SoundScan can distinguish a particular song’s sonic fingerprint and sort a soundalike version from the real thing. YouTube users soon figured out that songs with portions edited out or having altered playback speeds (child’s play with digital deejay mixing software) could fool Content ID. More than one person began to suspect that YouTube was more concerned with high visitor traffic than the complaints of rights holders, even though they were the ultimate suppliers of the site’s content.

This writer’s trifling experience with YouTube has been as a guest at users’ homes, waiting for a turn to pick out a song hit by a group performing in footage from Sixties television. The parallels between YouTube and on-demand streaming services were readily apparent. However, YouTube does not pay a licensing fee the way Spotify does. Additionally, a 2016 RBC Capital survey found YouTube was the most widely used service for music listening. In short, they surpassed both traditional radio and streaming.

YouTube’s ability to dodge responsibility for its clients’ activities stems from its origin story. When YouTube launched and began using music videos as part of its programming fodder, the record labels looked upon it as a promotional vehicle analogous to MTV. Music biz veterans recalled how they found themselves devoting hundreds of thousands of dollars to lens a music video during the Eighties in the hope that it would air on the music video channel. MTV did not pay for that content. They were offering the labels promotional access to the channel’s audience. With YouTube on the ascendancy, the labels leveraged a cut of the site’s ad revenue in exchange for not denying use of their intellectual property. The labels did not foresee the possibility of “videos” which consisted of a static photo of the artist or footage of a record spinning on a turntable as the music played. The upshot was that the video was superfluous to those who wanted to hear the song since that was the reason they keyed-in its title.

The financial boon to YouTube due to not being considered an on-demand streamer was obvious. In 2015 YouTube paid \$634 million to the labels. In contrast, Spotify and Apple Music paid a combined \$2 billion due to the licensing model. Agreements between publishers, labels and the tech companies are the only way to get compensated in light of a generation of consumers who have grown up not paying for any recorded music. The cable company/online service provider business model which centers on pay for access does not help the scenario. The customer reaches YouTube through a service provider. In his mind, he has already “paid” YouTube.

This leaves the creative community dissatisfied with what they view as YouTube's lax attitude on overseeing their video-uploading clients. Among the most vocal critics is Maria Schneider, a respected jazz bandleader and composer. That she is not the stereotype of the wealthy rock star is a given. Schneider argues that YouTube puts the onus on labels and artists to police the destination in light of Content ID not doing an optimal job. Though YouTube allows artists to use its Content ID technology, Schneider's experience is that YouTube is more inclined to deny permission arbitrarily. (Schneider applied and was denied.) She also feels YouTube should not merely be sharing ad revenue, but also the demographic info it reaps that everyone contends is parent Google's gold mine. (Trivia: It was revealed that the vehicles cruising the world photographing houses for Google's Street View were also surfing residents' wireless Internet for tidbits they could monetize.)

Schneider was sufficiently motivated to go before the House Judiciary Committee in 2014 where she advocated for greater access to "digital fingerprinting" technology to identify pieces of music as well as the use of blocking protocols for rights holders wishing to control their intellectual property. Copyright owners have to verify legitimate ownership under penalty of perjury charges to have YouTube take action. Uploaders do not have the same standard. Schneider told the committee that takedown should mean permanent removal, not popping up again under another name. This is a common problem. Celebrity DJ Deadmau5 found a source for his music having 400 unauthorized videos, album tracks, remixes and full live shows on YouTube in 2015. He sent a cease-and-desist, the channel shut down, then reopened two days later.

As the broader music business solidifies its view that YouTube is an on-demand streaming service, the battle has mostly been of the public relations variety. YouTube touts that over its existence it has paid \$3 billion to artists. In contrast, Eagles manager and music business thought leader Irv Azoff complains YouTube's accounting standards lack transparency and do not give an accurate total of what passes for streams. Azoff asserts YouTube has 48 million unauthorized streams per day. *Billboard's* year-end issue predicted on-demand audio streams would approach 400 billion by 12/31/16. This is sufficient to prompt both sides to argue their case, possibly in court. Label hesitancy to take that action might be spurred by fears that a court fight to establish YouTube as an on-demand streamer might require legal fees equivalent to the difference between winning a licensing deal and the present ad revenue-sharing status quo. And with tens of billions of dollars in Google's war chest, they can afford a longer appeals process than the labels.

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The woes of Robert X. Sillerman's SFX dance music promotion machine reached a conclusion after a tumultuous 2015. On 2/1/16 the corporation filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Stock dropped to five cents-per-share and SFX was delisted from NASDAQ on 2/10/16. Bondholders of SFX debt engaged in a debt-for-equity swap. Sillerman was cast out of the corporate board as the bankruptcy court authorized \$80-\$115 million in debtor-in-possession financing. It was a long fall from SFX's stock launch on 10/9/13 when it had a market value of \$1 billion. An unnamed observer quoted in the 2/20/16 issue of *Billboard* summed up Sillerman's future, "He's not getting anything from Wall Street ever again. He'll disappear."

Perhaps investors should have looked at Sillerman's track record, one exhibiting a willingness to pay above market value for properties proving resistant to growth. Sillerman sold his first project, a concert promotion giant to broadcasting/outdoor advertising conglomerate Clear Channel for \$4.4 billion in 2000. The purchaser ended up writing down that value 75% two years later. Sillerman's CKX venture, which bought TV's *American Idol* and rights to Elvis Presley's intellectual property ended up sold at half its onetime value.

Unnamed former SFX executives claim the firm overpaid for everything. Those who managed dance festivals they once owned ended up bailing on the company. Their expertise left with them. Many, after the Chapter 11 process, angled to buy back their properties at a discount from the SFX-purchased price. Randy Phillips, former executive at nationwide promoter AEG Live was roped into turning around SFX Entertainment. Few observers expect him to succeed. Dance music promoters see Asia as a prospective market for dance festivals and mega clubs, but draconian drug laws in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand might make those dreams a non-starter.

It could be that electronic dance music, framed by everyone except its initiators as the latest resurgence of disco, was headed for another downturn. Lollapalooza festival co-founder Perry Farrell has a sideline as a dance DJ, but there was no mention in a 7/24/16 *Chicago Tribune* interview that his proposal for a new festival would be EDM-centric. "I hate EDM. I want to vomit it out of my nostrils," said Farrell. Likewise celebrity DJ Diplo, featured in the 6/8/16 dance-themed issue of *Billboard* noted, "It's really a lame culture. I'm sad that I'm part of it, but I play the game." Diplo had not changed his tune when he told the *Chicago Tribune* on 8/19/16, referring to television's *Game of Thrones*, "Yeah the EDM winter is here and the White Walkers are coming to eat you."

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You don't know rock music exists in this age
unless someone shows you.

--Jacob Faber of rock
band Sunflower Bean

For those who like to argue about the greatest drummer they ever saw or the most influential rapper, the year-end issue of *Billboard* offered fuel for exactly that kind of stoned dorm room exchange. In an article titled "Rock's Jurassic Year," writer Carl Wilson noted that the deaths of Prince, David Bowie and Leonard Cohen might lead an observer to think that rock was similarly moribund. The concert schedule is filled with legacy bands, some of whom are past their "sell by" date. Physical sales still constitute a considerable part of these groups' income streams, but typically their latest release debuts high in the album charts followed by an express elevator to the lower reaches of the rankings in subsequent weeks. These rock veterans are even cognizant of their elder statesman status as evidenced by a public feud between Kiss's Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley as well as outsider Nikki Sixx of Motley Crue. The trio argued about Simmons' callous reaction to Prince's death, then fell to needling each other. Sixx abandoned the battlefield, noting that it was, "like a bunch of old women fighting."

Rock's commercial diminution is partially due to the absence of a high profile young rock band drawing an audience of its peers, most of them already having a multitude of distractions. Then too, the old business model of a band being discovered, signed, nurtured and grown to high profile status has fallen by the wayside. Writer Wilson quoted Steven Hyden of podcast *Celebration Rock* that a new band coming out of nowhere would have "no infrastructure to support it." And the all-seeing eye of the smartphone camera and the tendency for people to document their every experience means that nothing stays secret for long.

Rock as a nostalgic radio format frames classic rock as a music that "was." Likewise alternative rock is built around "recurrents" and their own brand of heritage acts. Many bands do not have to comeback because they never went away. Skid Row frontman Sebastian Bach told Canadian broadcaster Tom Power that he still has a career because two of his band's songs are in the rotation on hundreds of classic rock stations. And those songs are over two decades old, dating from the Skid Row's salad days.

The slant of Wilson's article was a variation on the "dead white men" argument (though this was not specified). Rock somehow marginalized women with its macho sentiments derived from the blues, even as it stole the spotlight from people of color. One could respond that these differences offered a hook for the people marketing the stuff in the era before recommendation engines on Amazon. This writer would ask what does the pop music audience get for the ascendancy of that previously ignored minority viewpoint today? Why tattooed teenage rebel females with sexual identity issues and a succession of wardrobe changes and wigs. Right on!

Wilson's article quoted Steve Stoute, who fled the executive suites at Sony Music to found marketing agency Translation. Stoute was dismissive of the gradations of genre as something an older generation does. He stopped short of saying young people view all music as a smorgasbord from which one can sample. Still, the evidence points to the current primacy of pop music that moves millions of streams—filled with hooks, sung with processed vocals and backed by electronic instruments sounding like a chorus of electric can openers. After all, marketing uses research to better achieve the sure thing. Today's pop music is product and more people drink soda pop than aged cognac.

Surprise! Surprise! Roughly 40 pages later in the same *Billboard*, Nielsen Music statistics in its 2016 U.S. Midyear Report noted rock as a genre has the largest market share of music consumption at 26.8%. This includes album sales, streaming and downloads purchased. Sales of physical albums rank rock at 43%. Second place is R 'n' B/hip-hop at 16.3%. Additionally, rock acts held half of the 24 top grossing live engagements in 2016 amidst competition from Beyonce, Celine Dion, Jennifer Lopez and Adele as per *Billboard/ Pollstar* statistics.

Rock does not have to be uncompromising in its authenticity. Its advantage is that it has more credibility than most of the competition. Even country music, the go-to genre for those turning away from rock, finds itself beset by "bro country" with its trucks, girls and drinking subject matter. It is cartoon country. And the country chart is nowadays dotted with records using the tools of pop songwriter/producers, the ones creating "beats" over which to place vocals. Florida Georgia Line's "H.O.L.Y." was the top-selling country song of 2016. Justin Bieber rejected it.

This writer's personal experience has been that the good music he has discovered has been the result of considerable digging and not hitting pay dirt all the time. The advantage of this methodology is a kind of certainty that I like it and that it is not the result of being the victim of a sales pitch or marketing plan. Young people might be better served by this procedure.

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Long ago at the great Chicago record store Wax Trax (the one on Lincoln Avenue, not the “sequel” on Damen) there was a bin in the record section for Guns N’ Roses. One of the employees had added an inscription to the card, “FOR ALL YOU KIDS WHO MISSED OUT ON AEROSMITH.” This may have been a knock from a generation sensitive over frontman Axl Rose’s issues with black folks and gay people. Roses’s many quirks, which leaked into public view during the group’s heyday, may have made the band a non-starter for some, but it did not stop their debut from selling 20 million copies worldwide.

After flying out of the starting gate, the band slowly became a tragicomedy of drugs, divorce, firings, more drugs and more divorce. Members left angrily and were replaced as Rose soldiered on, establishing ownership of the band’s name. Rose labored so long over the recording of *Chinese Democracy* that it seemed more a rumor than an album. Its 2008 release proved anticlimactic. The record’s corresponding tour with its late starts and angry crowds left observers feeling that the preceding years had not rekindled the inspiration that had dissipated over time. All the participants were adrift, including former lead guitarist Slash, who formed Velvet Revolver with equally unstable frontman Scott Weiland before that band too imploded.

Well, time wounds all heels. Or something like that. The old jokes are the best and perhaps the hostility which kept Axl Rose and Slash from signing off on repackages of their back catalog faded as they realized there was considerable money to be made by reconciling. After all, they are not Oasis—Irish brothers nursing a lifelong sibling rivalry.

Promoter AEG Live pitched a partially reunited band for a quartet of shows—two Vegas “warm-ups” and two weekends at the annual Coachella fest in Indio, CA. The offer was said to be \$26 million. The gigs went off. No animals were harmed, though an added rehearsal show at Los Angeles’s famed Troubadour saw Rose break his foot. Subsequent sets were performed with Rose seated in Foo Fighter Dave Grohl’s famed “guitar throne,” the one he used after *his* onstage injury several years back. The band felt optimistic enough to extend the engagements into a reunion tour—all stadiums. Sales were strong, but erratic. Detroit sold out 41 thousand seats. Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, MO moved 27 thousand tickets. Chicago’s Soldier Field saw a first night sellout and a second night with an empty upper deck. Still, this evidence showed they had not burned the bridge to their audience. Rose had the performing bug and controversially substituted on some dates for AC/DC frontman Brian Johnson, sidelined due to hearing damage. Unlikely as it seems, Guns N’ Roses might have a second act.

* * *

AEG Live trumpeted mere days after finishing its April Coachella engagement that the site would host a new event. Desert Trip, scheduled for 10/7-10/9/16 would feature stadium-level acts popular with the Sixties generation. The lineup featured the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney, Roger Waters, Bob Dylan, Neil Young and the Who. The Stones, McCartney and Waters were wooed with rumored \$7-\$10 million paydays.

Skeptics variously dubbed the event Oldchella or Coachella for Geezers. The shows would start at night to ameliorate the “dry heat” emanating from nearby Joshua Tree National Park and neighboring areas too inhospitable to support much population. The outdoor venue would require stadium seating and upgrades to infrastructure for an estimated cost of \$50 million. Tickets would run \$699.00-\$1599.00 for 40 thousand general admission and 30 thousand reserved seats respectively. Padding out the take would be the usual VIP packages—selling comfort to old people. Unnamed corporate sponsorship would be targeted to the demographic. (Pills for erectile dysfunction? Drugs that list “suicidal thoughts” among their side effects?)

Despite it all, the public took the bait. Like April’s Coachella, Desert Trip scheduled a follow-up weekend (10/14-10/16/16) after the first stint sold out. At the debut event, Mick Jagger complained about a stage larger than the one the Stones toured with. Its size compelled the singer to move around and fill it. Grumpiness in a 73-year old frontman seemed poetic justice. By the second event Jagger felt free to quip, “Welcome to the Catch “Em Before They Croak Festival.”

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Between the two Desert Trip engagements, Bob Dylan was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature. It sparked a cultural debate common among the conservative press, who prefer Nobel laureates in economics who make a career out of counseling Third World strongmen to balance their countries’ debt woes on the backs of their poorest citizens. These domestic arbiters of a prize offered by a committee half the world away wished to frame the choice of Dylan as controversial, presumably part of their ongoing war against the Sixties. These pundits generated newsprint over Dylan’s hesitancy to travel to Sweden for the presentation ceremony as an act of rudeness.

For what it is worth, the poets of antiquity strummed their lyres as they sang out their epic tales. Ireland's "Minstrel Boy" of folk song was a "warrior bard" who went to war "with his wild harp slung behind him." India's Rabindranath Tagore, the first non-European winner of the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913, was a polymath whose lyric poetry led him to a sideline composing songs. The announcement of the Nobel literature honor is so often a figure unknown to the public at large that conferring the prize on a folk music legend seemed anomalous to some.

In a way, it recalled Oscar Wilde's riposte that the only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about. Bob Dylan has been written off so many times that his Nobel Prize must seem an insult to those who have dismissed him for so long. Somewhere, tonight God willing, Dylan takes a stage unsure of what he will discover. It is important enough for him that he has to look for it there and that people be there to find it with him.

Rolling Stone's 12/1/16 issue followed England's Stones to Desert Trip. Band members Ron Wood and Charlie Watts asked Dylan about the Nobel Prize. Dylan responded, "How should I feel? Is it good?" The pair said he deserved it. Dylan answered, "Do I?"

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Chicago's Jazz Record Mart closed its doors at its Illinois St. location in Chicago on 2/15/16. An increase in the cost of the lease precluded business continuing profitably mere blocks from Michigan Avenue, where even national retailers have a hard time squeezing profit after paying exorbitant rent. A call to the store on 2/14 revealed that owner Bob Koester was due to receive a sales pitch on a purchase price for the store's inventory. If the deal sounded attractive, the store would not open on 2/15. And so it did not.

The purchasing entity was Wolfgang's Vault, a company started from the holdings of now-deceased West Coast concert promoter Bill Graham, born Wolfgang Grajonca. Graham was among the pioneers in the sale of concert merchandise and manufacture of the same as a service for bands. The company sells downloads from an archive of video and audio concerts. The Vault owns the performances originally aired on radio as part of the King Biscuit Flower Hour as well. Wolfgang's Vault also sells private music collections.

The record business is hard to give up, especially for those said to have "shellac in their blood." Koester retained ownership of his Delmark record label with its catalog of jazz and blues artists. The imprint's recording studio is still open for sessions and rehearsals. Mr. Koester could be found manning the counter at a new location before the year was out. Bob's Jazz and Blues is located on Irving Park Road just west of the headquarters of insurgent country label Bloodshot Records.

Come to think of it, Bloodshot could use a retail outlet as well.

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People are still buying music, but the true mania for the physical format seems endemic overseas. The British market appears unusually susceptible to massive career-spanning boxed sets issued for the hardcore fan. *The Album Recordings 1984-2007*-Joe Cocker (PLG Records) stood as a 14-CD offering in late summer 2016 and it only covers the back half of his recorded legacy. *Who Can I Be Now*-David Bowie (Universal) emerged in September as either a 12-CD or 13-LP version. Bowie's recent death likely drove its release. More inexplicable was a 14-CD boxed set spanning the career of Scottish rocker Alex Harvey.

In the States, the declining sales of physical product have tended to transform the CD format into a commodity discounted for bulk purchase. *The Album Collection*-Elvis Presley (RCA/Sony Legacy) boxes up 60 CDs and constitutes every studio album, film soundtrack and live album. Accompanied by a 300-page book, the item went for \$349.98 before vendor discounts. Meanwhile, on another floor of Sony headquarters, the Christmas holidays brought *The 1966 Live Recordings*-Bob Dylan (Sony Legacy). The dedicated Dylanologist would likely froth at the mouth while considering professionally recorded live shows, soundboard recordings and amateur audience souvenirs of his controversial live world tour with the Hawks. Perhaps the less pristine sound quality of some of the shows was the determining factor of a lower price point: \$149.98 for 36 CDs. To some it would be a bargain to hear music having some of the magnificence found on the celebrated 1966 "Albert Hall" show. (And if you know why there are quotation marks around the name of that venue, you probably already bought this set.)

In Japan, the CD format is still commercially viable. Notably, the tech savvy Japanese music consumer is indifferent to the whole download and streaming ecosystem. Jazz fans worldwide are well aware of the obscure and rare sides unearthed for reissue in Nippon, as well as their painstaking mastering of those albums. Still, one must pause in awe at *The Complete RPM-Kent Recording Box: The Life, Times and the Blues of B.B. King in All of His Glory* from P-Vine Records, a label renowned for its focus on music of black origin. A 12" X 12" box holds 435 tracks on 17 CDs and a single LP record. King completists may tut-tut while noting that the British Ace/Kent label has been putting out the same material for years in one form or another. Even so, the P-Vine reputation is such that some B.B. King fans would welcome this redundancy with open arms. The suggested retail price in light of foreign exchange rates is unknown to this writer. Despite a weak yen, a purchaser's wallet would take a beating.

The flood of vinyl records, including new releases continues unabated. Unaddressed in most of the glowing accounts of the sales boost seen around the spring Record Store Day event is the speculative dimension of the market. Special releases designed to build store traffic can best be described as "manufactured collectables." In some ways it echoes the New Wave era of the late Seventies with its sporadic oddities of ten-inch mini-albums and full-length titles rendered as a box of seven-inch singles. These items draw quick buck artists. With purchase in hand, they dash home to see if they can make a tidy profit on eBay.

Some of this occurs in England, a country that gave us the term "trainspotting," a vernacular expression describing an obsessive interest in an often-trivial subject (something this writer knows a great deal about). Britain is the land of Northern Soul, which has given gilt-edged value to non-hit Motown-sounding records from the late Sixties/early Seventies. In America, the magazine for the record collecting hobby is *Goldmine*. Every new issue, anorexic in content and ads, seems to show increasing evidence of being on life support. In England, *Record Collector* is 120-plus pages of slick magazine, full color vitality. In short, there is money for the mark to spend and the dealer to rake in.

Whereas some American acts would be embarrassed to go the crowdfunding route to subsidize production of a new release, in England it is a different story. *Record Collector* features a brief column delineating which acts are soliciting subscribers to purchase a proposed release with the typical extras/VIP packages/premiums for an added gratuity. Frequently these sales pitches are the last resort for bands without a record contract. Then too, today's label deal is little more than a revenue-sharing arrangement and not a road to riches, considering that a cash advance is no longer common. These Kickstarter-styled campaigns often translate as a publicity channel preferable to selling CDs from the band's Website or merchandise table. After all, Webcam stars of the fairer sex leverage the visits of lonely men into subscriptions and soon are selling these clients stale panties. Money spent is an indication of the fan's level of commitment and auxiliary purchases lend the whiff of charisma to the initial buy-in.

This viewpoint helps explain Vinyl Me Please, a subscription/mail order service. For \$284.00 per year they will send a vinyl LP to your address every month, typically a reissue. (Individual records can be bought for \$27.00 each.) Pressings are limited to between 1,500-1,700 copies and subscribers are randomly selected to receive audiophile hardware and tweaks as a fringe benefit. The records come with a twelve-inch square art print and a custom cocktail (?) recipe. It should be noted that Vinyl Me Please does not master or press its own products and thus source their releases from record plants around the world. A competing company Newvelle Records issues albums on a bimonthly subscription model. Newvelle pacts with jazz acts to release six titles per year at a cost of \$58.33 each. The label licenses the record from the act for two years, but the publishing and related royalties accrue to the artists before the rights to the recording return to them.

If these pricey releases begin to sound like self-validation for adults via a conspicuous consumption strategy, confirmation could be found in the example of the UK-based Electric Recording Company. The label reissues classical music from the Fifties in limited runs of 300 copies. The remastering occurs on period equipment, restored at a cost in excess of \$1 million. The record jackets duplicate the old transfer letter typeface of Fifties liner notes. Not surprisingly, this suggestion of a "married antique" comes at a cost: 300 British pounds per record.

It is all a far cry from the latest adenoidal teenage boy YouTube sensation, singing just high enough so teen girl fans can sing along. Not that the gals would buy a CD or a download...maybe some underwear....

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The death of Prince in 2016 shocked fans and non-fans alike, both by the suddenness of the event and the surrounding circumstances. All signs pointed to an accidental overdose of prescription opiates taken for back pain. As is the custom, voices on the Internet spoke of the irony of an avowed Jehovah's Witness done in by modern medicine. Others feared someone tampered with the dosage. Both could be seen as gradations of disbelief. After all, musical artists whose outsized image and skill are above the norm can be perceived as superhuman in some way. They seem not of this world, even as one is not surprised that their bright light is not destined to shine very long. The genius who dies young is as familiar an image as the flaming youth who cannot deliver beyond his initial promise. The music business is rife with both examples.

This writer's personal experience of Prince's music came as a byproduct of boredom with the state of radio in the late Seventies. Punk rock had not transformed the broader music scene and disco was in eclipse. Commercial radio was characterized by tight playlists on the AM band rotating the same hit songs daily and FM stations playing classic rock acts in a format which forgot the music's roots in Sixties underground free form radio. Meanwhile, oldies radio had begun to ossify into the same 500 songs.

Kids in the early rock 'n' roll era found music outside the white bread confines of Fifties pop by listening to radio stations catering to the black audience. Inspired by this historical precedent, your correspondent began monitoring stations on the extreme right side of the AM dial. There one could find previously unheard oldies ("Santa Claus Go Straight to the Ghetto"-James Brown), surprises like the Tom Tom Club and black adult pop such as Frankie Beverly and Maze. Among those unfamiliar acts was Prince.

Early in his career, Prince Rogers Nelson was already an anomaly. He played more rock than the typical rhythm and blues act. His music took James Brown's early Seventies music as a starting point, but put a different spin on it. He presented the sexual ambiguity of David Bowie with the musical skills of Jimi Hendrix. It was as if Bowie's fictional Ziggy Stardust had leapt into the real world.

Like Hendrix, Prince seemed most at home in the recording studio, playing all the instruments on his albums and resorting to a band for live performances. He went so far as to build his own studio equivalent to Hendrix's Electric Lady in the Paisley Park complex near his hometown of Minneapolis. His Warner Bros. label deal gave him complete artistic control and he used that freedom to veer into filmmaking with the 1984 *Purple Rain*, a financial success as a film and a soundtrack album. Prince developed a sideline writing songs for female artists as diverse as the Bangles and Chaka Khan when he was not playing a Svengali role as impresario of Vanity 6 or the Time.

Prince's competitive nature led to a number of creative stumbles as the years passed. Part of it was due to an outsized drive ratified by his abundant talent. (The story is told how he called out Madonna in an audience once, bragging of how he could sing and dance without having to resort to miming his material. Madge made an exit like Snagglepuss.) Even his amusements were carried out with intensity—roller-skating on a pair of custom skates with built-in special effects features or hustling ping-pong opponents like a professional. The lack of success in the follow-up films to *Purple Rain* point to how much Prince's artistic drive was contingent on making mistakes. He likely viewed his paucity of hits in the late Nineties as evidence that he would have to wait until his audience caught up with him or a new one discovered him.

Carnal love was an echoing theme in Prince's body of work and it was strange to see it evaporate from his lyrics after he embraced being a Jehovah's Witness. The collapse of his marriage to Mayte Garcia, following the death of their infant son, seemed to isolate him. He demolished his residence next to the Paisley Park studio and chose to live in an apartment within that building. His last performances were as a solo act, singing while sitting at a piano, likely as a way to control his back pain.

Age and infirmity reflect the diminishing options of a life lived in the last chapters. For someone whose creative arc pushed against limits, it must have been frustrating. The medication was a way to keep going, writing another episode. Dying without a will, as Prince did, can be a manifestation of denial or evidence of looking ahead and making plans. Estimates of the value of the intellectual property he left behind vary between \$100-\$300 million.

Many of us hold the prospect of retirement at arm's length. It is not that we cannot come to terms with leisure and a different routine, it is more likely that we cannot admit how much work has given our lives meaning. We grudgingly see retirement as the home stretch of a race we do not want to win. Yet it looms omnipresent in our thoughts. If one is fortunate, the twilight years bestow a kind of quiescence. We reconcile ourselves to life and have figured out how to live it. It becomes less of a struggle. Yet for some the nagging hope is that they can keep growing and evolving. Then reality sets in. Others before us have found themselves beguiled by alcohol or the vanity of sexual adventurism or willful alienation from their family. Are these ways to assert control by choosing to lose control? Do we create an illusion to drive death from our minds?

Some people contemplate the terminally ill who commit suicide (all suicides really) as taking “the coward’s way out.” They were supposed to inspire the survivors with the ability to face death squarely. I would say it is harder than most people think to endure the declining years and not lose the bravery it requires. We can only hope for the sentiment expressed by the great psychiatrist Carl Jung, who noted in his final years, “I have the feeling I have done all that it was possible for me to do. Without a doubt that life work could have been larger, and could have been done better, but more was not within my power.”

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“Liz Phair, Steve Albini & Me”-Bill Wyman in Chicago’s *New City* 4/1/16 Wyman recalls the impact his 1993 article in rival Chicago paper the *Reader* had on the local scene. Back when indie rock was anti-commercialism incarnate and performed for an audience quick to judge, one could be too successful too fast. It was another time. Notable for Wyman recalling how he declined an invitation to meet Courtney Love for a drink because he suspected he was being set up for a beating by members of local act Urge Overkill.

“Let the People Sing? Irish Rebel Songs, Sectarianism and Scotland’s Offensive Behavior Act”-Stephen R. Miller in *Popular Music* October, 2016 (Oxford, England) The English tendency to treat anyone non-British as foreigners was apparently adopted by the Scots. Irish working class immigrants would sing rebel songs at soccer matches in Glasgow between Catholic Church-founded team Celtic and Protestant-leaning team Rangers. A 2012 law was passed to prohibit the singing of Irish songs to avert the possibility of violence. Scottish songs were not banned. The Irish remembered Scottish military units sent into Belfast to protect the Protestant Unionists in the Seventies and how singing rebel songs drew a death sentence in the days before the Irish Republic. So the old songs were recast with lyrics to insult “the Huns” and Scottish songs were slathered with new and unflattering lyrics.

“The Sound of Hate”-Alex Ross in the *New Yorker* 7/4/16 Music has been used as torture in U.S. military prisons after a Bush era edict, circa the Abu Ghraib scandal, concluded psychological torment did not constitute physical abuse. The increasing militarization of American law enforcement now sees armored vehicles and “sound cannons” blast high frequencies at levels approaching 149 decibels. This technology was used at a 2011 Occupy Wall Street rally and in Ferguson, MO in 2014, lessening the dividing line between police and police state.

“Baudrillard’s Blues”-Charles Mueller in *Popular Music* January 2016 (Oxford, England) Mueller takes the musings of French sociologist and author Jean Baudrillard regarding his visits to America and focuses on the passages describing how the horrific past is turned into entertainment. Blues expressed suffering. Now it is product.

America-Jean Baudrillard (Verso: New York, 2010) The Baudrillard aphorisms that leapt from Mueller’s article listed above led me to this work, first published in 1986. The illusion of self-satisfaction with which America sees itself as the globe’s Eden was exploited by Ronald Reagan in ways presaging the coming of Donald Trump.

Beale Street Dynasty-Preston Lauterbach (W.W. Norton & Co.: New York, 2015) A history of the legendary night life district in Memphis, Tennessee serves to frame the Sisyphean struggles of black American life post-slavery. Black entrepreneur Robert Church exemplified a handful of local “race men” advocating for their people in a time when the Republican party supported civil rights for freed slaves. Church eventually faced a series of sellouts and betrayals because white Southern Democrats (later called “Dixiecrats”) knew that the rival party could not support blacks without losing the backing of white voters. So long as he could limit black enfranchisement through the poll tax and other strategies, the white man still held the whip. And it holds true today.

The Art of the Deal-Donald Trump and Tony Schwartz (Ballantine: New York, 1987) One tale of bluster after another and, through it all, the realization that this is a man with no friends other than himself.

Burr-Gore Vidal (Random House: New York, 1973) A novel about Aaron Burr as he recounts the events of his life at the fringes of those “founding fathers”—all of whom are depicted as pursuing their own agendas. After all, they were politicians. At one point, Burr’s duel with Alexander Hamilton is told anecdotally and re-enacted. It made this reader think that civility would return to politics if the possibility of death on the field of honor were restored. Newt Gingrich would have been dead a long time ago. (“That is a base calumny! I demand satisfaction!”)

The Borrowed Kettle-Slavoj Žižek (Verso: New York, 2004) The political philosopher dissects the second Iraq war and the creative use of bullshit bringing it about. Žižek offers formal analysis and applies humor in surprise attacks. On a 2003 conference on terrorism with the attendees gathered around a buffet: “They ate, making us throw up.”

REISSUES

Reissue Event of the Year (Domestic):

El Topo (Real Gone Music) Vinyl reissue of the soundtrack to the film which presented a Zen-inspired quest as a spaghetti Western. Director Alejandro Jodorowsky doubled as composer and listeners are treated to an aural eclecticism to match the art film's visuals. Exact reissue of the 1972 Apple Records release.

Reissue Event of the Year Foreign:

At Sun Records—The Collected Works-Jerry Lee Lewis (Bear Family German import) A career-spanning collection of the Ferriday Flash would push past 50 CDs. This 18-CD boxed set covers every bit of his Sun label career including studio dialogue. (Yes, the Sam Phillips-Lewis religious debate is here.) Convincing evidence of Lewis as the greatest song stylist of the Fifties.

Other Reissues of Note:

- * *Why the Mountains Are Black: Primeval Greek Music 1907-1960*-Various (Third Man) For those who have heard the Greek equivalent to pre-war blues, rembetika, language is no barrier to being moved by this music. This release showcases a style seemingly blending Gypsy music, Jewish cantorial melodies and South Asian atmosphere. The 2-CD set's Robert Crumb cover art serves as a bonus.
- * *S/T-Milk 'N' Cookies* (Captured Tracks) The Seventies NYC band combined power pop Sixties influences with a hint of the more tuneful side of the Velvet Underground. Their inability to reach a larger audience was more attributable to bad breaks than lack of musical quality. A 2-CD set of rarities and unissued material bookends their sole LP.
- * *Ladies and Gentlemen...The Bangles!* (Omnivore) Their earliest indie label recordings dating from the Eighties and a far cry from their "Manic Monday" pop hit. Raw, rocking and driven by late Sixties psychedelia out of the Los Angeles Paisley Underground school.
- * *Hillbilly Voodoo/Cowboy Mambo*-Tom Russell & Barrence Whitfield (Rock Beat) Like peanut butter and chocolate, the unlikely pairing of singer-songwriter Russell and throwback R 'n' B wildman Whitfield is surprisingly tasty. A pair of 1993 albums combine cover songs with Russell material, including the moody novelty "Cuban Sandwich."
- * *Good 'n' Cheap: The Eggs Over Easy Story* (Yep Roc) West Coast early Seventies roots rockers found a champion in former Jimi Hendrix manager Chas Chandler. Showcase club appearances in London served as an inspiration to Brinsley Schwarz and their pub rock contemporaries. This 2-CD set gathers their two albums and Chandler-produced 1976 sessions.
- * *A Place Called Bad*-the Scientists (Numero Group) Legacy Aussie band from the punk rock era who transformed their sound via an increasing musical abstraction and a druggy perspective. A comprehensive overview of their Seventies and Eighties recordings on this 4-CD boxed set. (A condensed 2-LP set is also available.)
- * *Have You Been Good to Yourself*-Johnnie Frierson (Light in the Attic) Former member of Sixties Stax label obscuros the Drapels, Frierson made a career change to gospel following a series of personal tragedies. This seven-song collection was self-released on cassette and offers another look at the little-studied genre of black singer-songwriters whose careers paralleled that of their white brethren, only less successfully.
- * *Let's Go Down and Blow Our Minds: The British Psychedelic Sounds of 1967*-Various (Grapefruit/Cherry Red UK import) Equal parts public service for record collectors and musical history excavation project, this 3-CD boxed set surveys the wide range of psychedelic pop which aspired to success in the UK. That it often fell short was often due to an excess of experimentation and an abundance of too-English whimsy. For fans of the Sixties psychedelic compilation series Rubble.
- * *Nobody's Fool*-Dan Penn (Bear Family German import) Sixties soul songwriter and producer's 1973 Bell label album gets a vinyl-only reissue. Penn's effort came in the middle of the singer-songwriter boom and it mixes elements of commercial country music and the residue of Sixties peace and love. However, the faithful will pay the admission price to hear the voice upon which Alex Chilton modeled his Box Tops-era vocals.

- * *As I See It*-Jack Moran (Omni) Nashville songwriter's 1970 LP reflects the focus on social criticism he brought to the 1968 country hit "Skip a Rope"-Henson Cargill, which he penned. The title is Moran's joke, as he was blind.
- * *Bedazzled*-Dudley Moore (Trunk UK import) On this original soundtrack Moore's chops as a jazz pianist serve his skills as a composer/arranger, which are here in abundance. The vinyl version includes a bonus CD collecting numerous takes for the film's EP of commercials Moore recorded with the comedy's co-star Peter Cook, containing considerable cutting-up.
- * *Taxi Driver* (Waxworks UK import) An expansion of the original 1976 single album release, now a 2-LP set on colored vinyl. New album cover art, but the Travis Bickle monologues from the film remain on this soundtrack.
- * *Evening Blue*-Chris Wood (Hidden Masters UK import) Built around rediscovered tapes intended for the Traffic ex-woodwinds player's unreleased solo album. The 4-CD boxed set also offers a retrospective of Wood's contributions to Traffic, Ginger Baker's Airforce and a host of friends' solo albums. A 208-page book is enclosed.
- * *Music Barbare*-Karel Appel (Sub Rosa Belgian import) Soundtrack to a 1963 documentary about the Dutch abstract expressionist with music of an experimental bent provided by Appel himself. It serves to illustrate Appel's links to the auto-destruct school of artists such as Gustav Metzger, who influenced the Who's Pete Townshend. Appel could have called it *Art of Noise*.
- * *The Beatles at the Hollywood Bowl* (Capitol/EMI) Remix of the 1977 release augmented with four previously unissued performances. Digital technology has lowered the audience screams in the mix, but isn't that what we came for?
- * *Sings Blues & Hymns*-Cat-Iron (Exit Stencil) Vinyl-only reissue of 1958 Folkways album, a field recording by blues scholar Frederick Ramsey Jr. Ex-bluesman William "Cat-Iron" Carradine revisits his old repertoire in a mixture of gospel and blues which evokes the early recordings of Rev. Gary Davis.

Reissue Series of the Year:

The Omnivore label continues its look at the career of Scott Miller, now focusing on his Game Theory years. The 2016 entries include *The Big Shot Chronicles* (1986) and *Lolita Nation* (1987), both containing outtakes, alternates and bonus tracks.

Cross Promotional Reissue Oddity:

Of Monkees and Men-the Minus 5 (Yep Roc) With its cover parodying Sixties fan magazine *16 as 61 Magazine*, this release was pulled from the Minus 5 retrospective boxed set entitled *Scott the Hoople in the Dungeon of Horror*. All the songs on *Monkees* relate to the "pre-fab four" as evidenced by "Davey Gets the Girl" and "Boyce and Hart."

The Rhino Tin Horn for Redundancy in Reissues:

The Turtles original White Whale label albums were not available after the imprint went under in the Seventies, except when Rhino put them out in the late Eighties. And it is not as if the hits are all that hard to find. "Happy Together" again...and again and again and again.

Breaking-up Is Hard to Do (Reunions):

LCD Soundsystem, Guns N' Roses, Temple of the Dog, Violent Femmes, most of the 1971 vintage Santana for a live Vegas album, Comic cabaret duo Kiki & Herb, Good Charlotte after a six-year hiatus, Bela Fleck and the Flecktones after a five-year hiatus, Hey Mercedes tour following reissue of their final album *Everynight Fire Works* and Seventies UK rockers Sharks

Breaking-up Is Not So Hard to Do:

Swans go on hiatus following a tour as leader Michael Gira decides on his next move, Rostam Batmanglij quits Vampire Weekend, Camilla Cabello leaves pop act Fifth Harmony, Canadian pop band Hot Hot Heat

Hardest Working Man in Show Business:

Duck Baker, the veteran solo guitarist and instructional record pedagogue, released five 2016 albums: *The County Set* (Southern Summer Records), *Shades of Blue* and *Preacher's Son* (both Fulica Records) and *Deja Vouty* and *Outside* (both Emanon Records) in styles ranging from folk blues to free jazz

Live Shows of the Year:

1. Giuda/Cozy/the Sueves 6/17 the Double Door
2. Heron Oblivion/Chris Forsyth & the Solar Motel Band/ Bill McKay & Ryley Walker 6/3 Beat Kitchen
3. Temples/Vinyl Williams 10/22 Empty Bottle
4. Night Beats/Mystery Lights/Evening Attraction 7/28 Beat Kitchen

Great Moments on Stage:

- * Watching Giuda show up the opening acts in a way I have not seen any band do in years
- * Guest star Ryley Walker tunes up and plays the intro to “Long Train Running”-the Doobie Brothers for laughs
- * Mystery Lights frontman Mike Brandon takes the show into the crowd at the Beat Kitchen
- * Temples encore with “Shelter Song” and “Sand Dance” from their debut record

Say Hello to the King:

Paul Bley (jazz pianist)	Glenn Frey (Eagles guitarist/singer)
Craig Strickland (frontman Backroad Anthem)	Big Kap (NYC rap DJ)
George Martin (producer the Beatles a.o.)	Jimmy Riley (Jamaican rock steady act)
Patty Duke (actress/Sixties pop singer)	Rene Angelil (Celine Dion manager)
Frank Sinatra Jr. (singer/bandleader)	David Mancuso (pioneering pre-disco DJ)
Doug Banks (syndicated R ‘n’ B radio host)	Richard D. Lyons (co-founder Negativland)
Merle Haggard (country music legend)	Remo Belli (founder Remo Drums)
Guy Clark (Texas singer-songwriter)	Otis Clay (Chicago soul giant)
Emilio Navaira (Tejano music star)	Nick Menza (Nineties Megadeth drummer)
Alan Vega (co-founder NYC duo Suicide)	Jerry Heller (ex-manager N.W.A.)
Phil Chess (co-founder Chess label)	Don Waller (music journalist/author)
Ricci Martin (band Dino)	Ernestine Anderson (noted jazz singer)
Bobby Hutcherson (jazz vibraphonist)	Holly Dunn (Eighties C & W singer)
Prince Buster (Jamaican ska legend)	Richard Wang (jazz scholar/academic)
Reggie Torian (former Impressions vocalist)	Bonnie Brown (Fifties C & W’s the Browns)
Kay Starr (Fifties jazz/pop singer)	Bobby Vee (Sixties teen idol)
Debbie Reynolds (stage/film musical star)	Jeremy Steig (jazz-rock flautist)
Sharon Jones (fronted the Dap Kings)	Mike Chapman (Garth Brooks’ bassist)
Isao Tomita (electronic composer/keyboardist)	Julius LaRosa (Fifties pop singer)
Louis Stewart (British jazz guitarist)	Jean Shepard (Grand Ole Opry veteran)
Steve Byrd (ex-Gillan guitarist)	Mike Casswell (British session guitarist)
Jerry Corbetta (frontman Sugarloaf)	Joe Clay (Fifties rockabilly act)
Mark Gray (Eighties C & W act)	Eddie Harsch (keyboardist Black Crowes)
Troy Shondell (1961 hit “This Time”)	Dale Griffin (Mott the Hoople drummer)
George Michael (Eighties pop star)	Carl Mastrangelo (doo wop’s Belmonts)
Aaron Huffman (bassist Harvey Danger)	Brett Smiley (cult figure glam rocker)
Susan Chilcott (operatic soprano)	Brian Asawa (operatic countertenor)
Greg Smith (noted choral conductor)	Royston Nash (led Cape Cod Symphony)
Jimmy Bain (bassist Dio/Rainbow)	Dennis Davis (Seventies Bowie drummer)
Phil Humphrey (duo the Fendermen)	Lord Tanamo (vocalist the Skatalites)
John Stabb (frontman Government Issue)	Paul Brown (jazz bassist/educator)

Robert Stigwood (founder RSO label/talent manager)
Robert Balser (animation co-director *Yellow Submarine*)
Nicholas Caldwell (founding member R ‘n’ B’s the Whispers)
Paul Kantner (Jefferson Airplane singer/guitarist)
Maurice White (founder Earth, Wind & Fire)
Dan Hicks (Charlatans Drummer/Hot Licks frontman)
Denise “Vanity” Matthews (Eighties R ‘n’ B singer)
Art “Charlie Tuna” Ferguson (veteran rock deejay)
Sonny James (Fifties/Sixties country hit-maker)
Trentavious “Bankroll Fresh” White (rap solo act)
Joey Feek (country gospel duo Joey & Rory)
John Morthland (author/music journalist)
Malik “Phyfe Dawg” Taylor (A Tribe Called Quest)
Anahid Ajemian Avakian (co-founder Composers String Quartet)
Pierre Boulez (pioneering computer music composer/conductor)

Tony Conrad (experimental musician/named the Velvet Underground)
 Benjamin Patterson (Fluxus movement musician/composer)
 Lonnie Mack (1965 hits "Wham" and "Memphis")
 Billy Paul (1972 #1 "Me and Mrs. Jones")
 Philip Kives (founder of K-Tel TV record business)
 Tony Barrow (Beatles publicist/coined term "Fab Four")
 John Berry (founding member the Beastie Boys)
 Lincoln "Chips" Moman (founder/producer American Studios in Memphis)
 Attrell "Prince Be" Cordes (singer Nineties pop's PM Dawn)
 James M. Nederlander (Broadway theater impresario)
 Sandy Pearlman (ex-producer/manager Blue Oyster Cult)
 Samisoni "Big Makk" Koroitomudi (DJ/producer)
 Chris Stone (founding partner studio the Record Plant)
 Micki Marlo (Fifties pop singer/nightclub act)
 Carlos "Shawty Lo" Walker (rap act D4L)
 Pete Burns (frontman UK act Dead or Alive)
 Curly Putman (C & W composer "D-I-V-O-R-C-E" a.o.)
 Tony Martell (music business philanthropist)
 Joe Esposito (member Elvis's "Memphis Mafia")
 Fred Stobaugh (oldest person to appear in Hot 100 chart)
 Sean McKeough (co-founder punk festival Riot Fest)
 Leon Russell (songwriter/solo act/producer)
 Billy Miller (co-founder *Kicks* magazine/Norton label)
 Lou Pearlman (disgraced former "boy band" impresario)
 Oscar Brand (veteran folksinger/broadcaster)
 Nana Vasconcelos (jazz berimbau percussionist)
 Joe Harris (be bop era drummer)
 Leandro "Gato" Barbieri (jazz tenor saxophonist/bandleader)
 Bill Henderson (jazz vocalist/film actor)
 David Baker (jazz cellist/educator/bandleader)
 Joe Temperley (baritone sax Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra)
 Dave Pike (hard bop jazz vibraphonist)
 Don Friedman (hard bop jazz pianist)
 Randy Jones (longtime Dave Brubeck drummer)
 Pete Fountain (swing/Dixieland clarinetist)
 Mose Allison (jazz pianist/vocalist/composer)
 Milt Okun (music publisher/producer)
 Obrey Wilson (Tennessee soul singer)
 Jerry Beach (wrote "I'll Play the Blues for You")
 Aron Burton (Chicago blues bassist/bandleader)
 Toots Thielemans (veteran jazz harmonica player)
 Rudy Van Gelder (legendary jazz recording engineer)
 Bob Cranshaw (frequent Sonny Rollins bassist)
 Victor Bailey (ex-Weather Report bassist)
 Alphonse Mouzon (drummer Larry Coryell's Eleventh House)
 Signe Anderson (founding singer Jefferson Airplane)
 Harrison Callaway (trumpeter/arranger Malaco label band)
 Long John Hunter (veteran blues singer/guitarist)
 L.C. Ulmer (Mississippi blues multi-instrumentalist/singer)
 Charlie Fite (Nashville blues/R 'n' B vocalist)
 Clarence "C.L. Blast" Lewis Jr. (soul songwriter/performer)
 Amy van Singel (co-founder *Living Blues* magazine)
 Elmo Williams (Fat Possum label blues act)
 James "Boo" Hanks (Piedmont-style bluesman)
 Leo Graham (co-wrote 1980 hit "Shining Star"-Manhattans)
 L.T. McGee (West Side Chicago bluesman)
 Stanley "Buckwheat Zydeco" Dural Jr. (zydeco bandleader)
 Sir Mack Rice (soul act /wrote "Mustang Sally")
 Clifford Curry (Beach Music classic "She Shot a Hole in My Soul")
 Big Jesse Yawn (Nineties Baltimore blues vocalist)
 Scotty Moore (early Elvis guitarist/record producer)
 Bob Elliott (comedic recording duo Bob and Ray)

“Birmingham George” Conner (Fifties Chicago blues guitarist)
 Ruby Wilson (veteran Memphis blues vocalist)
 Charles “Barrelhouse Chuck” Goering (Chicago blues pianist)
 Jack Mulqueen (created Chicago Sixties TV’s *Kiddie-A-Go-Go*)
 Francis Akos (violinist/asst. concertmaster Chicago Symphony Orchestra)
 Lennie Baker (vocalist/saxophonist Sha Na Na)
 Bobby “Top Hat” Davis (Chicago Maxwell Street bluesman)
 Gary Loizzo (frontman American Breed/veteran Styx producer)
 Clarence Reid (Sixties soul man/disco parodist Blowfly)
 Keith Emerson (organist the Nice/Emerson, Lake and Palmer)
 Louis Meyers (co-founder Austin, Texas SXSW festival)
 George Nichopolos (Elvis’s physician “Dr. Nick”)
 Nikolaus Hamoncourt (veteran Austrian symphony conductor)
 Peter Maxwell Davies (Queen Elizabeth’s master of music)
 Juanita Passmore (co-founder Chicago Gospel Music Festival)
 Leon Haywood (Seventies R ‘n’ B hit-maker)
 Les Waas (wrote “Jingle and Chimes,” the Mr. Softee truck song)
 Karen Carroll (Nineties Delmark label blues singer/guitarist)
 Jules “Papa Wemba” Kikumba (“King of Congolese rumba”)
 William Zayas (co-founder Chicago radio show Mambo Express)
 Candye Kane (porn star-turned blues vocalist)
 Michaels Mariotte (punk rock drummer/anti-nuclear activist)
 Dennis Kelly (Nineties Broadway musical actor)
 Muhammad Ali (ex-heavyweight boxing champ/recording artist)
 Rich Rajewski (Chicago jazz trumpeter/instrument repairman)
 Henry McCullough (former Greaseband/Spooky Tooth/Wings guitarist)
 Morris “Moe” Jennings (ex-Chess studio drummer)
 Christina Grimmie (ex-contestant talent show *The Voice*)
 Ralph Stanley (renowned bluegrass singer/banjo player/bandleader)
 Wayne Jackson (trumpeter the Memphis Horns)
 Bernie Worrell (veteran keyboardist Funkadelic)
 Rob Wasserman (respected jazz bassist/session man)
 John McMartin (Broadway musical star *Follies* a.o.)
 William Gaines (journalist/ Jelly Roll Morton biographer)
 Maggie Atcher (starred on *WLS National Barn Dance* radio show)
 Einojuhani Rautavaara (foremost Finnish classical composer)
 Gloria DeHaven (Forties Hollywood musical star)
 Marni Nixon (famed Hollywood musical “voice double”)
 James Woolley (former Nine Inch Nails keyboardist)
 Glen Yarbrough (Limelighters folk singer/solo act)
 Daniela Dessi (Italian operatic soprano)
 Matt Roberts (founding guitarist 3 Doors Down)
 Headley Bennett (veteran Jamaican session saxophonist)
 Juan Gabriel (Mexico’s legendary mariachi singer)
 Fred Hellerman (co-founder folk legends the Weavers)
 Gustavo Lopez (veteran Mexican bolero singer)
 Vince Campbell (guitarist Chicago Eighties act Eyegouger)
 Johan Botha (noted South African operatic tenor)
 Charles Witz (founder Seventies concert promoter 22nd Century)
 Elliot Tiber (helped finance the 1969 Woodstock festival)
 Bernard Izzo (Fifties bass-baritone with Chicago’s Lyric Opera)
 Ann E. Ward (drummer/vocalist AACM School of Music)
 Bill Bumgardner (drummer Chicago band Mantis)
 Nick Russo (veteran Chicago lounge pianist)
 Kashif Saleem (Eighties R ‘n’ B hit-maker)
 Neville Marriner (violinist /classical music conductor *Amadeus* film)
 Richard Trentiage (wrote “I Wish I Were an Oscar Mayer Weiner”)
 Rod Temperton (wrote “Rock with You” a.o. Michael Jackson hits)
 Jeff Windisch (guitarist Chicago’s Emperors and Elephants)
 Robert “Big Sunny” Edwards (founding member the Intruders)
 Ted Harvey (onetime drummer for bluesman Hound Dog Taylor)
 Herb Kent (legendary Chicago R ‘n’ B radio deejay)

William "Billy" Pierce (popular Chicago lounge pianist)
 Albert "Diz" Russell (baritone vocalist doo wop's the Orioles)
 Greg Lake (bassist/vocalist with King Crimson and ELP)
 Alan Thicke (TV actor/ sitcom theme song composer)
 Joe Ligon (frontman gospel's Mighty Clouds of Joy)
 Bob Coburn (host syndicated radio show *Rockline*)
 Dick Latessa (veteran Broadway musical actor)
 John Chelew (produced *Bring the Family*-John Hiatt)
 Bryan Snow Jr. (hip-hop producer Space Snow)
 Izerrick Aigbokhan (hip-hop producer Smylez)
 Andy "Thunderclap" Newman (1969 UK #1 "Something in the Air")
 "Big John" Thomas (guitarist Seventies rockers Budgie)
 Lee Andrews (lead vocalist doo wop's Hearts)
 Gogi Grant (1956 #1 "The Wayward Wind")
 James Jamerson Jr. (West Coast session bassist)
 Tommy Brown (drummer/vocalist the Griffin Brothers)
 Dave Adams (keyboardist for early UK rocker Heinz)
 Nik Green (keyboardist UK Eighties act Blue Murder)
 Joe Ascione (peripatetic UK jazz drummer)
 Emile Ford (early Sixties UK pop star)
 Phil Ryan (keyboardist Sixties UK act Eyes of Blue)
 Ned Miller (1963 C & W hit "From a Jack to a King")
 Dave Swarbrick (violinist Fairport Convention)
 Nathaniel "Nate" Neblett (drummer R 'n' B act New Birth)
 Trent Gardner (keyboardist/vocalist Eighties act Magellan)
 Marshall "Rock" Jones (bassist the Ohio Players)
 Paul Smoker (jazz trumpeter/composer/arranger)
 Bill Ham (frequent ZZ Top co-writer)
 Charles Davis (jazz baritone saxophonist/veteran sideman)
 Michael De Koningh (reggae historian/authority)
 Bob Garner (bassist/vocalist Sixties UK act the Creation)
 Padraig Duggan (co-founder Irish band Clannad)
 Gary Paxton (produced 1962 #1 "Monster Mash")
 Royce Albrighton (guitarist Seventies band Nektar)
 Allan Barnes (jazz multi-instrumentalist/session man)
 Richard Fagan (Nineties C & W songwriter)
 David Camon (wrote "Homewreckers"-Tyrone Davis)
 James Levine (Motown songwriter)
 Richard Field (co-founder Sixties UK act the Springfields)
 Dan Klein (frontman Daptone label act the Frightnrs)
 Gilli Smyth (co-founder psychedelic veterans Gong)
 Derek Smith (jazz pianist Sixties TV's *The Tonight Show*)
 Leonard Haze (founding drummer rock act Y & T)
 Dave Hendley (reggae photographer/expert)
 Larry Roquemore (frontman Sixties garage act Larry & the Blue Notes)
 Hubert "Hoot" Hester (fiddler Nashville's Time Jumpers)
 Edward "Dwight" Fields (R 'n' B act the Manhattans)
 Keith Gemmell (Audience/Stackridge saxophonist)
 Nigel Gray (engineer/producer the Police a.o.)
 Fred McFarlane (R 'n' B composer/producer/musician)
 John D. Loudermilk (wrote Sixties hits "Abilene," Tobacco Road" a.o.)
 Don Ciccone (Crittters/Four Seasons vocalist)
 Earl "Spanky" Smith Jr. (Chicago house music act Phuture)
 Angus Roderick Grant (Scottish fiddler Shooglenifty)
 Robert Bateman (co-wrote 1961 #1 "Please Mr. Postman")
 William "Sonny" Sanders (Chicago soul arranger/producer)
 Mike "Taffy" Taylor (frontman early metal act Quartz)
 Chris Adams (co-founder String Driven Thing)
 "Killer" Ray Allison (Chicago blues drummer/guitarist)
 "Little Royal" Torrance (Sixties soul act)
 Joan Johnson (co-founder girl group the Dixie Cups)
 Al Stewart (Fifties trumpet session man)

Trisco Pearson (rap/vocal group Force M.D.s)
 Joe Jeffrey (1969 hit "My Pledge of Love")
 Larry "Bingo" Marcus (Nineties R 'n' B act Rude Boys)
 Al Caiola (session guitarist/mood music act)
 Raynoma Gordy Singleton (ex-Motown producer/co-founder Shrine label)
 Robert Paiste (CEO cymbal manufacturer Paiste)
 Alan Zavod (TV/film/theatre composer/Frank Zappa collaborator)
 Herb Hardesty (Little Richard/Fats Domino saxophonist)
 Martin Stone (Action/Mighty Baby/Chilli Willi guitarist)
 Martin "Bap" Kennedy (UK singer Energy Orchard/solo act)
 Billy Franks (Nineties UK solo act)
 Craig Gill (drummer UK act Inspiral Carpets)
 Colonel Abrams (Eighties R 'n' B's 94 East/solo act)
 Pauline Oliveros (noted electronic music composer)
 Jimmy Williams (vocalist disco act Double Exposure)
 Bobby Wellins (British jazz tenor saxophone veteran)
 Doug Edwards (co-wrote 1973 hit "Wildflower"-Skylark)
 Rod Wayne (Nineties frontman R 'n' B act Blue Magic)
 Al Brodax (produced 1968 film *Yellow Submarine*)
 Harry Balk (ran Motown's Rare Earth label)
 Mentor Williams (wrote 1973 hit "Drift Away"-Dobie Gray)
 Thierry Reinhardt (woodwinds in UK jazz-rock's Catapilla)
 Marianne Ihlen (early muse of Leonard Cohen)
 Wes Phillips (*Sterophile* magazine editor/reviewer)
 Jimmy Haskell (Rick Nelson/Grassroots arranger)
 Phyllis Curtin (respected new music soprano)
 Bobby Caldwell (keyboards Terry Knight & the Pack)
 Mic Gillette (founding trumpeter Tower of Power)
 Jon Bunch (vocalist Sense Field/Further Seems Forever)
 Pete Tolson (ex-Pretty Things/Eire Apparent guitarist)
 Tom Kirby (drums garage act Tonto & the Renegades)
 Gib Guilbeau (fiddler the Flying Burrito Brothers)
 Marlene Marder (Kleenex/Liliput guitarist)
 Brian Rading (bassist Five Man Electrical Band)
 Teddy Rooney (bassist Rooney Bros./the Yellow Payges)
 Lewie Steinberg (founding bassist Booker T & the MGs)
 J.D. Martignon (ran Midnight Records store and label)
 Denise Duval (French operatic soprano)
 Steven Edward Stucky (Pulitzer Prize-winning composer)
 Gilbert Kaplan (institutional investor/amateur conductor)
 E.J. Jordan (British loudspeaker designer)
 Joseph Savarin (founder/executive Blues Foundation in Memphis)
 Larry Johnson (blues guitarist in Scorcese's *Lightning in a Bottle*)
 Franklin Kennedy (doo wop's Frankie & the Spindles)

And:

Prince, David Bowie and Leonard Cohen

Songs that Helped Me Survive 2016:

- * "Goofin' Off"-Macy Skipper: an early Stax label novelty that sounds like a collaboration between Sixties soul deejay John R. and Goober Pyle. Cornball country humor delivered to a rollicking rhythm track. I had not revisited it in a long time and I dug it anew.
- * "Need Your Love So Bad"- Little Willie John: In a musical setting equal parts James Brown and Bobby Bland, the gone-too-soon Fifties R 'n' B vocalist longs for a woman who will tell him when he's lying. So "write it on a paper so it can be read to me." Illiterates need love too.
- * On *Little Steven's Underground Garage* on 7/24/16, host Steve Van Zant said he would play what he wanted as a change of pace. Out popped "I'm Comin' Home"-Delaney & Bonnie, "Soldier of Love"-Arthur Alexander, "The Mouse"-Soupy Sales and "Midnight to Six Man"-the Pretty Things. Radio should always be like this.

How Did I Ever Get Along Without?:

- * *El Pampero*-Gato Barbieri (RCA Victor France) CD version of an album from the early Seventies capturing the jazz tenor saxophonist at the Montreaux Jazz Festival in 1971. I once saw part of this set televised in a PBS jazz special and it is as cool as I remember it. No pledge premiums were offered.
- * “Seven Spanish Angels”-Ray Charles and Willie Nelson: The last moments of a cornered bandito and the woman he loves, recalling one of Marty Robbins’ gunfighter ballads. Modern sounds in country and western.
- * “Rockin’ Chair Daddy”-Harmonica Frank: Bootleg Sun 45 from a 1951 session for one of the first attempts by Sam Phillips to find a white man with the “Negro sound.” Frank Floyd anticipates both rockabilly period Charlie Feathers and the Legendary Stardust Cowboy.
- * *Tragic Songs of Life*-the Louvin Brothers: Their debut album for Capitol in 1956 is a collection of British folk ballads, Twenties old time country and (above all) those brotherly harmonies. Country music authority Bill C. Malone’s favorite album of all time.

R.I.P.:

- * Other Music, East Village NYC record store, closes after two decades.
- * Chicago hip-hop/black arts showcase the Shrine closes in February 2016, a victim of South Loop gentrification.
- * Shake Rattle & Read, Chicago’s Uptown source for used vinyl, wrestling magazines and pop culture ephemera closes its doors 5/21/16.

It’s About Time:

- * *The Diary*-J Dilla (Mass Appeal) arrives ten years after the rapper/producer’s death. It was the project he was working on when he died.
- * *Wildflower*-Avalanches (Astralwerks) coming sixteen years after *Since I Left You* (Sire/Modular)

Back from the Dead:

Streaming audio site Rhapsody changed its name to Napster (remembered as the first filesharing site).

Quotes of the Year:

If it goes well, we'll do it again.
If it goes horribly, we'll do it
again sooner.

He was a big icon when he was
alive. Most young people don't
even know who Prince was.

There is no amount of money you
can wave in front of my face that
will make me understand depriving
people of human rights.

They were willing to say who they
were yesterday is not necessarily
who they are today.

Fuck Donald Trump; we voting for
Bernie Sanders because we want to
smoke weed.

Xabi has been out very late rocking
and rolling. Please excuse him if he
is tardy.

I Can't Remember Anything

I'm a Nineties folk lesbian in
my heart.

Prince's music taught me how
to suck titties.

--Dave Hill, host of Speed Metal
Dating at NYC rock club St. Vitus

--Jazz pianist Robert Glasper on
Everything's Beautiful, his
tribute to Miles Davis

--Pop singer Halsey on entering
a higher tax bracket

--Trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire
on Joni Mitchell and Miles Davis

--Arquil "Slim Jxmmi" Brown
of Rae Sremmurd

--Text of Bruce Springsteen note
for fourth-grader Xabi Glovsky,
an attendee at a concert at L.A.
Memorial Sports Arena.

--ex-Oasis guitarist Noel
Gallagher's proposed title for
his autobiography

--Gay singer-songwriter Justin
Tranter

--Comedian Tracy Morgan

Thank you Chris Stapleton for
not being a group.

It's me talking as someone who's
alive in 2016. We're all getting
phone-tapped.

I really don't have any concern
for little small minds that get frustrated
when they get blown.

I mean, go and see karaoke with Axl
Rose? Give me a break.

Being Irish, you learn very early that
it's important to thank the parish
priest for the loan of the hall.

This is the best social media
because there is no comments.

My biggest fear is people feeling
like, "You know what? That wasn't
worth it."

I just know if I have to pee, I'm
going to pee. I don't care where it's
going to be.

Everything happens for a reason, but
sometimes the reason is you're stupid
and make bad decisions.

--Little Big Town's Kimberley
Schlapman's acceptance speech
after Stapleton's sweep at
the Academy of Country Music
Awards

--Himanshu "Heems" Kumar of
south Asian immigrant rap act
Sweet Shop Boys

--Flea of the Red Hot Chili Peppers
on criticism of his bass solo take on
the national anthem at Kobe Bryant's
last game with the Los Angeles Lakers

--Roger Daltrey of the Guns N' Roses
singer fronting AC/DC on their
European tour

--U2's The Edge thanking Pope Francis
for allowing his band to be the first
rockers to perform in the Sistine Chapel

--Tegan Quin of Tegan and Sara
extolling Snapchat

--Dan Berkowitz of CID Entertainment,
which assembles festival VIP packages

--Dolly Parton tells *CNN Money* her
read on North Carolina's anti-
transgender bathroom bill

--Ash Pournouri of dance act
management firm At Night

I'm not a big fan of halftime-at-the-Super-Bowl music.

--Paul Simon on personal taste

It's funny, I wanted to be a cop—until I started running from them.

--Rapper Schoolboy Q

Springsteen probably won't be covering any of *your* songs ever.

--Singer/monologist Henry Rollins notes the Boss's live concert tribute to Suicide's Alan Vega

She's telling our people to be proud of our wide nostrils—something Michael Jackson was so ashamed of, he changed his face.

--Producer Mike Will Made It breaks down "Formation"-Beyonce

I don't want to see you catching any Pokemons up in this bitch.

--Rihanna urging a concert audience in Lille, France to put away their phones

I smoked too much and forgot.

--Miley Cyrus spaces out while singing "My Way" to Bill Murray, recipient of the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor

It's simply the most rigid and thinnest veil of masculinity over a mess.

--Bruce Springsteen to England's *The Guardian* on Donald Trump

It's October 30th and there's baseball at Wrigley Field for the first time in history.

--Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder intros "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" during Game 5 of the World Series

If a billion people steal that record and it translates into a million tickets next year, then that's good business for me, unfortunately.

--Adam Leber of talent firm Maverick, touts touring over physical sales

Music is a disease.... You die with it, so you might as well give it everything you've got.

--Jerry Bergonzi, jazz saxophonist

It's as obvious as balls on a tall dog.

--Steven Tyler of Aerosmith on nothing in particular.

Don't ask for a million dollars. Ask for stuff that'll *get* you a million dollars—your health, your brains, sanity, wisdom...

--Rapper Future on what to pray for

If the ACM wants to actually celebrate the legacy and music of Merle Haggard, they should drop all the formulaic, cannon-fodder bullshit they've been pumping down rural America's throat for the last 30 years along with all the high school pageantry, meat parade award bullshit and start dedicating their program to more actual country music.

--Sturgill Simpson on the Academy of Country Music's "Merle Haggard Spirit Award"

There are certain other things I want to do now before I conk out.

--Iggy Pop rejecting more shows with the surviving Stooges

"They" don't want you to have a bowl of Cinnamon Toast Crunch with almond milk.

--DJ Khaled on avoiding negativity

Faces are for friends only.

--Justin (Bon Iver) Vernon refusing to have his picture taken

A tape harder to find than a police dashcam video

--Tom Keneally, Torture Love drummer, on *An Exploration in Humanity*-the Uranium Club

I call it Larry.

--Adele names her postpartum facial hair

And so I stretched every single day for a year until I could do a split. Somehow I feel better knowing that I can.

--Taylor Swift to *Vogue* about setting goals

Most of my knowledge about the United States came from *South Park*. And to me it turned out to be spot-on.

--Johannes Eckerstrom of Swedish metal act Avatar

He's acting like the typical 27-year-old with more money than God.

We are fortunate. People like our existence more than they like our music. I don't always like our music either.

Why, when people are starving, am I on a carpet that's red? That's not how I roll. It's like a, shit—it's like *Zoolander*.

No one writes a song about a lonesome car alarm going off.

I had no idea James Taylor was on heroin. He seems more like an "I bake bread" or "I'm really into essential oils" kind of guy.

Art in all its iterations is suffocated by Twitter mayhem, crushed in essence by Kim Kardashian's massive derriere or some equally inane fashion moment.

"You're a fucking young guy, you're great and handsome, but you'll never be as fucking cool as me."

"You could have been Rihanna if you'd just shut up."

--Beverly Hills criminal defense lawyer Mark McBride on Chris Brown's 8/30/16 arrest for threatening a woman with a gun

--Mekon Sally Timms on her band's longevity

--Miley Cyrus tells *Elle* magazine her life is like a Ben Stiller comedy.

--Billy Bragg justifies his *Shine A Light: Field Recordings from the Great American Railroad* (Cooking Vinyl)

--Singer-songwriter Lydia Loveless on first hearing *Blue*-Joni Mitchell

--Lion Productions label exec Vincent Tornatore on how the Internet conceals unusual music

--Noel Gallagher of Oasis talks to his sons

--M.I.A. recounts the career advice she has always ignored

Spokesman of the Year—Chef/Rapper Action Bronson:

If I would have become famous at
that time, it wouldn't have worked—
I would have Bieber'd it up.

--How the years in the kitchen
shaped his outlook

I'm a cheesecake away from
fucking up a refrigerator.

--On his permanent bulk from days
as a weightlifter

I'm not in love with the
Spanish mackerel. The rankness
of the fat—something about it
turns me the fuck off.

--On things he will not eat

How Tweet It Is:

Cruz, Trump, Rubio, Rubba dub
dub—3 insecure, treacherous, arrogant,
indifferent, insincere, aggressive,
sociopathic narcissists in a tub...

--Cher on the Iowa caucus

Did y'all ever expand your gene pool
or are you still nailing your immediate
family members?

--Blake Shelton on the anti-gay
Westboro Baptist Church

If she says sorry, sure!

--Katy Perry on a fan-proposed
collaboration with Taylor Swift,
who insulted Perry in "Bad Blood"

Oh, look, Hillary invited her friends
Sanity and Experience to the debate.

--Bette Midler on the Clinton-Trump
debate on 9/26/16

Law and Order was once a TV show.
Now it's a threat from a tyrant.

--Chance the Rapper

The next four years are gonna just be
a never-ending loop of *Duck Dynasty*.

--DJ Diplo

The Critics Raved:

- * "The whole thing sounds like it was recorded by a guy he hired off the side of a freeway exit."
(Jeff Treppel reviews *Skeletons*-Danzig in *Decibel* 2/16)
- * "That he subtitled it "The White Album" is the cherry on top of a quadruple scoop shit sundae.
This album is brown." (Noah Bonaparte Pais reviews Weezer's latest in *Magnet* #130)
- * "It's a perfect shitstorm of declamatory, see-through time vocals and permanently deployed fuzz
pedals, often hidden by loon pant hems." ("Oregano Rathbone" praises the boxed set *I'm a Freak Baby:
A Journey Through the British Heavy Psych & Hard Rock Underground Scenes 1968-1972* in
Record Collector 9/16)
- * "These are not 'alternate tunings.' These are 'unsuccessful tunings.'" (Pete Fornatale reviews yet
another reissue of *Philosophy of the World*-the Shaggs in *Shindig* 10/16)

- * "...lavishly appears herein with a welter of new stereo mixes and even a 5.1 Surround mix so you can shit not just yourself, but everyone within arse-shot when a Mellotron suddenly rears up at you from behind the laundry basket." (Marco Rossi on the expanded version of *Everyone Is Everybody Else*-Barclay James Harvest in *Shindig* 9/16)
- * "They just sound as if they could have been composed using a Van Morrison Song Generator." (Jamie Atkins dismisses the Irish bard's *Keep Me Singing* in *Record Collector* 11/16)

Self-Criticism:

"If I had done it right, more people would have been annoyed." (Grace Slick recalls her lyrics to "White Rabbit" in the *Wall Street Journal* 6/3/16)

Critical Amateur Hour:

- * "That's why I can't listen to a whole record of Adele's.... People must have convinced her they just want to hear love songs." (Lukas Graham frontman Lukas Forchhammer in *Billboard* 4/16/16)
- * "SSOS are homeopathic punk—so diluted there's hardly a trace of snarl." (Zoe Barry on Aussie boy band 5 Seconds of Summer in *Village Voice* 7/13/16)
- * "Would love to see what would happen if Kanye applied his genius to writing about something other than himself." (MSNBC host Joy Ried on *The Life of Pablo*-Kanye West in *Billboard* 8/20/16)
- * "There are only two kinds of music: bad music and soul music." Country rebel Sturgill Simpson in *Rolling Stone* 10/20/16)
- * "Love him dearly. Incredible. He ruined guitar. That whistling saw sound." (Keith Richard on Jimi Hendrix in *Rolling Stone* 12/1/16)
- * "Kendrick is what Kanye would have been if the Kardashians didn't get him." (*Daily Show* host Trevor Noah tweets following Kendrick Lamar's performance on the 2/15/16 Grammy Awards)
- * "This is the sort of record you reverse-engineer to learn an entirely new palette." (Christian Mader of Brass Bed describes *Overgrown Path*-Chris Cohen in *Magnet* #131)
- * "Like Tim Buckley, that song of his, "Sweet Surrender." That's one of the best songs ever.... It's wonderful the human voice can do something as great as that." (John "Johnny Rotten" Lydon interviewed by Tim Peacock in *Record Collector* 12/16)

Raise Your Hand If You Smell Bullshit:

- * "We're not creating band-plus-brand campaigns. Our programs are collaborating with artists to create culture." (Dominic Sandifer, president of Greenlight Media and Marketing, on Intel's involvement with Lady Gaga's tribute to David Bowie at the Grammys in *Billboard* 3/19/16)
- * "I believe their souls chose us as their parents—that they chose this life." (Kim Kardashian on North and Saint, her children with Kanye West in *Billboard* 10/8/16)

Album Titles:

- * *I Like It When You Sleep for You Are So Beautiful, Yet So Unaware of It*-the 1975
- * *We Are the Halluci Nation*- A Tribe Called Red
- * *Stranger Heads Prevail*-Thank You Scientist
- * *Do Hipsters Like Sun Ra?*-the Dining Rooms
- * *Femisjism*-Deap Valley
- * *I'm a Piece of Shit*-Father
- * *The Theory of Reggaetivity*-Assassin
- * *Music for Listening to Music To-La Sera*

Album Title and Artist Combination:

- * *Necronomidonkeykongimicon*-Goblin Cock
- * *Cum Inside Me Bro*-Finished
- * *Epic Jammers and Fortunate Little Ditties*-Bonnie "Prince" Billy and the Bitchin' Bajas
- * *It's a Big, Joyous Celebration, Let's Stir the Honey-pot*-Teen Suicide
- * *Shrines of Paralysis*-Ulcerate
- * *Confirmation Bias*-Yeesh
- * *Extra-Deluxe-Supreme*-Hazmat Modine

EP Title and Artist Combination:

"Another Angry Woman"-Emily Blue

Song Titles:

- * "I Took a Pill in Ibiza"-Mike Posner
- * "Trans Day of Revenge"-G.L.O.S.S.
- * "Terrorist Suicide Hang Glider"-Neil Young
- * "If This Tour Doesn't Kill You, I Will"-Pup
- * "Preantepenultimate"-Boneshaker
- * "Drugs Help"-Telstar Sound Drone
- * "Stick Your Hand up If You're Louche"-Monochrome Set
- * "Drug Braggin'-the Lovely Eggs
- * "Is This Man Bothering You"-Fernweh
- * "Rick Wakeman's Cape"-the Fleshtones

Country Song Title:

"Win-Win Situation for Losers"-Dave Insley

Mix Tape Title:

Trap History Month-Designer

Song and Artist Combination:

- * "The Disrespected, Misunderstood Peanut Butter & Jelly Sandwich"-Johnny Talbot & De Thangs
- * "Everything Sucks and My Life Is a Lie"-Oozing Wound
- * "Medical Marijuana Card"-Macka B
- * "I Even Love You More Than Emma Peel"-Curlee Wurlee
- * "Where the Fuck Are My Hard-Boiled Eggs?!"- Max Graef & Glenn Astro 27
- * "Jan Hammer of the Gods"-the Bongolian

Special Award (Jazz Division):

Everybody Has a Plan Until They Get Punched in the Mouth-Charlie Hunter (Groundup/Universal) includes "(Looks Like) Somebody Got Ahead of Schedule on Their Medications," "(I Wish I Was) Already Paid and on My Way Home," "The Guys. Get. Shirts." and others

Group Names:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| * Vaginapocalypse | * Jessica & the Fletchers |
| * the Pretties | * Free Cake for Every Creature |
| * Unicorn Hard-on | * Infant Annihilator |
| * Giraffe Tongue Orchestra | * Gatecreeper |
| * Crazy & the Brains | * Cold Bearded Killers |
| * Hong Kong Blood Opera | * Ninja Sex Party |
| * Bev Rage & the Drinks | * the Dozen Buzzin' Cousins |
| * Fartbarf | * Self High Five |
| * Electric Dylan Controversy | * Jocephus and the George Jonestown Massacre |
| * Necro Deathmort | |

Solo Project Name:

Michelle Zauner as Japanese Breakfast

Rap Collaboration Name:

Cash Cash & Digital Farm Animals

Confusing Rap Name:

James the Mormon

DJ Name:

DJ Jeffertiti

A Capella Group Name:

Vocal Harum

Cool Rock Chick Name:

Jucifer guitarist Gazelle Amber Valentine

Record Label Name:

We Release Whatever the Fuck We Want

A Plaque with the Inscription from Little Richard, “Never Try to Put a Tuxedo on the Funky Blues” to:

Melissa Etheridge for *Memphis Rock and Soul* (Stax) A soul covers set that, considering her posturing style of delivery, guarantees a trip to Michael Bolton territory.

Where Are They Now:

- * Raymond Pettibon, the California artist known for his work for the Seventies/Eighties hardcore label SST (as well as the logo for the band Black Flag) was part of an artistic duet-of-sorts with Marcel Dzama. “Forgetting the Hand” at the downtown NYC David Zwirner Gallery brought together the two gentlemen in February 2016 via the “jam” style of the Sixties underground cartoonist era. Pettibon and Dzama’s collaborative works on paper combined text and images referring to pop music ephemera.
- * Miroslav Vitous, founding bassist of Seventies jazz fusion giants Weather Report, released his latest album *The Music of Weather Report* (Deutsche Grammophon). This is the musician’s second tribute to his former aggregation, the first being the 2009 *Remembering Weather Report* (ECM). The Czech native maintains a fondness for the music of the group that fired him, a topic he plans to address in an upcoming autobiography.
- * Seth Kaufman, whose lo-fi *Ting* (HighTone Records) popped up in the 2006 *Jukebox Awards* Top Twenty, guest stars on former Chicago solo act Angel Olson’s *My Woman* (Jagjaguwar)
- * *The Last Days of Oakland*-Fantastic Negrito (Blackball Universe) marks the return of Xavier Dphrepaulezz, who went by Xavier on the 1995 album *The X Factor* (Interscope). Alienated by the music business, Mr. D. disappeared, performed under pseudonyms and eventually returned to Oakland, CA and domesticity. Music became a hobby until he won a contest for a slot on NPR’s *Tiny Desk Concert* Web series. The appearance created a new audience for the performer as he approached his 49th birthday.
- * Ann Magnuson performed on 10/17/16 at New York’s Museum of Modern Art, accompanied by guitarist Dave Rich and drummer David Licht. The event was designed to herald the arrival of the self-released *Dream Girl*. However, the MOMA show was promoted as the comeback of Bongwater, her artsy downtown band from the dawn of the Nineties. Conspicuously absent was Kramer, Magnuson’s partner in the band’s salad days before their acrimonious split. Magnuson went on to an acting career on TV and in film.
- * James Chance and the Contortions returned with *The Flesh Is Weak* (True Groove), their first U.S. release since the 1980 *Buy*-the Contortions (Ze Records). Chance has continued to perform, but shunned the idea of releasing music in the face of label indifference to his free jazz-inspired “no wave” style.
- * Adam Schlesinger, known for his work in Fountains of Wayne, writes the melodies for the songs used in the musical sitcom *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* on the CW Network. The majority of the lyrics are supplied by the show’s star and co-writer Rachel Bloom.
- * Charlene Keys released *Charlene* (eOne Music) under her more familiar name, Tweet. A prominent vocalist in the hip-hop scene at the dawn of the new century, Ms. Keys offered a song-oriented set this go-round. Her last release was the 2005 *It’s Me Again* (Gold Mind Inc./Atlantic).
- * Cymande, the UK funk and reggae band, established a strong cult following in their Seventies heyday. The group made sporadic live appearances after a 1975 split, but hastened to the studio in 2016 for *A Simple Act of Faith* (Cherry Red UK import). The record reunites six band members with their original producer John Schroeder and finds their laidback vibe intact.
- * The Violent Femmes comeback subtracted founding member Victor DeLorenzo, on the outs since 2013. Gordon Gano and Brian Ritchie released *We Can Do Anything* (Pias Records) capitalizing on the momentum from their 2015 tour. Their preceding album was the 2000 *Freak Magnet* (Beyond Music).
- * William Bell, the Sixties Stax label solo act-turned-songwriter, released *This Is Where I Live* (Stax/Fantasy). Bell performs in his understated style a number of new songs and a rendition of the song he co-wrote for Albert King, “Born Under a Bad Sign,” notably covered by Cream.
- * *Magellan Was Wrong* (Big Beat UK import) marks another chapter on the comeback trail for Bob Lind, whose “Elusive Butterfly” was a Top Ten hit in 1966. Lind’s melodic songwriting skills are unabated despite a midlife stretch of substance abuse. His pal Arlo Guthrie encouraged him to write again, but it was a struggle before his 2012 *Finding You Again* (Ace UK import) hit the racks.
- * Producer Jim Steinman and vocalist Meat Loaf were responsible for the multi-platinum 1978 release *Bat Out of Hell* (Cleveland International/Epic) A sequel, as is often the case, did not hit the same sales targets. This did not discourage the duo from their latest, *Braver Than We Are* (Savoy). Album participants include ex-Seventies solo acts Ellen Foley and Karla DeVito adding their feminine touch to the song “Going All the Way.” Both Foley and DeVito appeared on the 1978 album.

- * Rick Astley, the fresh-faced British singer whose 1987 worldwide hit “Never Gonna Give You Up” epitomized everything that was wrong with Eighties UK pop music, re-emerged with *50* (BMG). Astley was a star at 21 and retired at 27 on the eve of promoting his fourth album in 1993. He spent the ensuing years living off his royalties. The 2016 album’s title refers to Astley’s 50th birthday and his decision to record the project in his home studio as a birthday present to himself.
- * Ivan Julian, rhythm guitarist in punk era act Richard Hell and the Voidoids, had been an ongoing NYC fixture since the Seventies downtown scene. Julian appeared in October at Brooklyn venue Bell House, marking a nearly yearlong battle against cancer fought with chemotherapy and radiation. A May 2016 benefit at City Winery brought ex-employer Richard Hell back to the stage after a two decade-absence. (Hell is currently an author.) Like many musicians, Julian did not have health insurance and had to resort to record industry charities such as MuisCares and crowdsourcing sites such as GoFundMe to pay his bills. Julian was cancer free at year’s end.
- * Emmitt Rhodes, the early Seventies solo act whose debut album caused curious fans to assume the Californian was Paul McCartney in disguise, came out of retirement with *Rainbow Ends* (Omnivore). Rhodes’ contract with ABC/Dunhill lapsed amidst litigation over his inability to generate more product. Dropping out of live performance, Rhodes turned to audio production, engineering and studio management. Rhodes’ many musician fans contribute to the record, including members of Wilco, Aimee Mann and Jon Brion. Ex-Bangle Susanna Hoffs makes a notable appearance. Her old band performed the Rhodes-penned “Live” on their Columbia label debut.
- * Jazz trumpeter Valery Ponomarev fronts the Jazz Big Band on *Our Father Who Art Blakey* (Zoho Records). Ponomarev was in the later Seventies cast of Blakey’s Jazz Messengers, preceding the arrival of Wynton Marsalis. Ponomarev has since led his own bands.
- * Tom DeLonge has spent time during his forced exile from punk act Blink-182 preparing *To the Stars*, a multimedia source for curiosity-seekers hungry for information on UFOs and extraterrestrial life forms—obsessions of the guitarist.
- * Veteran R ‘n’ B producer and arranger H.B. Barnum serves as Aretha Franklin’s musical director, assembling ad hoc backing bands for her personal appearances.
- * King Missile, the Nineties act whose trademark was comic recitations/monologues with musical accompaniment, have carried on through numerous incarnations. The constant in the various generations of the band is frontman John S. Hall, whose day job is a lawyer in private practice.
- * Tortoise, the Chicago post-rock veterans, released *The Catastrophist* (Thrill Jockey) following a six-year break. Pressures due to outside commitments hindered a creative reunion. Bassist Doug McCombs has a side project Brokeback and guests with Windy City psychedelic mainstays Eleventh Dream Day. Drummer John McEntire is a producer with guitar-for hire skills. Jeff Parker has a parallel career as a solo jazz act.
- * Sportscaster Bob Costas and *USA Today* sports reporter Christine Brennan tracked down James Darren in order to satisfy their mutual love for the Sixties TV series *The Time Tunnel*, a science fiction show in which Darren co-starred. Before he donned the same turtleneck sweater he wore in every episode, Darren was a teen idol. His “Goodbye Cruel World” was a #3 hit in 1961. Darren still performs in Las Vegas.
- * Steve Young, the Seventies singer-songwriter whose “Seven Bridges Road” was covered by the Eagles, appears on the Shooter Jennings album *Countach (for Giorgio)* (BCR Records). The release collects film soundtrack compositions by Giorgio Moroder, best known for his disco productions yielding hits for Donna Summer in the Seventies. Young has been living in Nashville, where Jennings exploited the performer’s connection to his dad, country legend Waylon Jennings. Young’s “Lonesome On’ry and Mean” was once recorded by the elder Jennings.
- * Billy Ray Cyrus, whose “Achy Breaky Heart” eventually relegated him to one-hit wonder status, veered off into acting. Most famously he played the dad to real life daughter Miley Cyrus in her title role on Disney’s *Hannah Montana*. Mr. Cyrus sporadically returns to grace the stages of the odd casino concert, but his latest screen portrayal sees him starring on the CMT show *Still the King*. He plays a former Elvis impersonator who bluffs his way into a job as a preacher.
- * Ken Kurson, former bassist with Eighties Chicago band Green, is now the editor of the *New York Observer*, a newspaper owned by Donald Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner. Kurson also served on Rudolph Giuliani’s staff during that New York politician’s unsuccessful 2008 presidential campaign.
- * Scott Bennett fronted Eighties Chicago band the Obvious before moving to Los Angeles. A second career writing music for ads culminated in a 1998 stint as sideman-for-hire with the Beach Boys. Bennett was found guilty of “rape by instrumentation” and sexual battery on 4/29/16 in Tulsa, OK. Bennett’s conviction drew a five-year prison sentence, which he is appealing via seeking a new trial.

- * Herb Alpert, the bandleader once dubbed “the Glenn Miller of the Sixties,” donated \$10.1 million to Los Angeles City College to endow free tuition and other services for music majors in attendance. Alpert toured with wife Lani Hall, the former Sixties vocalist for Brazil 66, to promote *Human Nature* (Herb Alpert Presents Records). In addition, Alpert’s fine art endeavors yielded an installation outside the south entrance of Chicago’s Field Museum of Natural History. Bronze pillar-like sculptures evoked the totem poles of Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest viewable inside the Field.
- * Kate Fagan, who fronted Eighties Chicago ska band Heavy Manners, appeared 8/11/16 at the Windy City’s Debonair Social Club. The occasion was an expanded reissue of the band’s first single “I Don’t Wanna Be Too Cool” b/w “Waiting for the Crisis,” accompanied by two unreleased tracks. The show also served as a benefit for Yoga for Recovery, a charity helping female prisoners in Chicago jails.
- * Bun E. Carlos, the drummer for Cheap Trick during their years of peak success, released *Greetings from Bunezuella* (Entertainment One). Carlos acrimoniously split from the band in 2010 amidst rumors of conflict regarding his wish to maintain Cheap Trick’s Vegas residency despite bandmates’ pressing family responsibilities. *Greetings* is packed with guest stars (Guided by Voices honcho Robert Pollard for one) and cover songs. Notably, a 7/9/16 appearance at Evanston, IL venue Space featured the surprise stage appearance of Xeno, Cheap Trick’s founding vocalist.
- * Kal David, who formed the nucleus of the Illinois Speed Press with later Poco guitarist Paul Cotton, is still performing. He lives in Palm Springs, CA where his late Sixties Windy City contemporary Peter Cetera, the ex-bassist/vocalist of Chicago, tracked him down. One peculiar entry in David’s resume was a 1984 stretch as the guitarist in Sha Na Na.
- * Heather Leigh, whose unorthodox pedal steel guitar stylings enhanced the atmospheric drone psychedelia of Charalambides at the turn of the century, appears on *Ears Are Filled with Wonder* (Not Two/Trost). The project is a duo with German “outside” jazz reedman Peter Brotzman.
- * Mike Mills, onetime bassist for REM, composed *Concerto for Violin, Rock Band and String Orchestra*, his first attempt at the modern classical music genre. The work was performed at Chicago’s Harris Theater on 11/7/16.
- * Alisan Porter won the top prize on the May 2016 finale of NBC-TV’s talent show *The Voice*. This was not Porter’s first high profile gig in show business. She played the title role in the 1991 John Hughes movie *Curly Sue*. Porter had a brief career doing bit parts on television before her switch to musical performance.
- * Beth Liebling, bassist from the late Nineties Seattle group Hovercraft, now performs with her current outfit Transporter. In her Hovercraft days she went by the cognomen Sadie 7, a way to distance herself from being acknowledged as the then-wife of Pearl Jam’s Eddie Vedder.
- * Alice Bag, a figure in the early Eighties Los Angeles punk scene, never developed the career momentum to match the respect from her peers. Bag released her 2016 self-titled solo debut on the Don Giovanni label, offering the timely perspective of a Latina feminist in an age of anti-immigrant hostility.
- * Colin Towns, the keyboard mainstay of Ian Gillan’s Seventies band, has veered away from a hard rock direction. *Drama* (Provocateur UK import), recorded with his Mash Orchestra, offers selections of jazzy moodsong.
- * Andy Partridge, the frontman of late Seventies pop wunderkinds XTC, issued *Fuzzy Warbles 7-8* (Ape UK import), part of a continuing series collecting XTC demos and unreleased musical experimentations. Partridge’s withdrawal from the stage, which finished the band as a touring entity in 1982, has compelled the group’s devotees to be content with these recorded offerings.
- * Red Sleeping Beauty, the Swedish pop band popular in their homeland in the Nineties, returned with *Kristina* (Labrador Records Swedish import) after a twenty-year hiatus.
- * Southern California rockers Descendents reunited in the studio for *Hypercaffium Spazzinate* (Epitaph), some twelve years after their *Cool to Be You* (Fat Wreckords). The band joins the seemingly endless stream of groups who once did business in the wake of pop punk’s explosion on MTV in the Nineties, now playing for older, but wiser fans exposed to the act during their first go-round.
- * Richard Davies is known for his Nineties orchestral pop collaboration with Eric Matthews as Cardinal. Davies reconvened his band project the Moles, though *Tonight’s Music* (Fire) is best considered a solo record in light of the over-two decade gestation period following the Moles’ 1994 *Instinct* (Flydaddy). Davies offers an eclectic mix of brief pop songs and more elaborate compositions reflecting Cardinal’s arty leanings.
- * Scottish late-Eighties act Trashcan Sinatras released *Wild Pendulum* (Red River), seven years after their *In the Music* (Lo-Five/Fontana). The band have been an ongoing fixture in the UK since their inception, save an eight-year hiatus on either side of the millennium’s start, purveying their trademark indie-leaning guitar pop.
- * Leeds, England’s Eighties act the Wedding Present soldiers on as the ongoing project of frontman David Gedge. *Going, Going...* (Scopitone UK import) combines a twenty track CD concept album about an American road trip with an accompanying DVD of short films corresponding to the music.

- * Swiss alternative/dance act Yello returned with *Toy* (Universal UK import). It has been seven years since *Touch Yello* (Polydor). Their “Oh Yeah” figures prominently in the 1986 film *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*.
- * Barbara Dane, once lauded in the pages of *Ebony* magazine as an exceptional white blues singer, issued *Throw It Away* (Dreadnought Music), a collaboration with San Francisco jazz pianist Tammy Hall. The folk music veteran, whose 1973 album *I Hate the Capitalist System* never loses relevance, returned after a sixteen-year break. Her last release was the 2002 *What Are You Gonna Do When There Ain’t No Jazz?* (GHB Records)
- * Klaus Voorman, Sixties Beatles associate (He did the cover art for their *Revolver* and was bassist in an early iteration of the Plastic Ono Band.), oversaw release of a 1971 demo of his song “Lu La Le Lu.” The 45-RPM release is backed with a 1972 version of the song by the group Wishful Thinking. The 2016 Apco label single is a charity effort for the Intereuropean Human Aid Association, a non-governmental organization designed to assist refugees from the war in Syria. Voorman was a war refugee in his youth.
- * David Pajo, the co-founder of late Eighties instrumental combo Slint, went on to subsequent solo albums under the name Papa M. *Highway Songs* (Drag City) marked a 2016 return after a harrowing series of personal setbacks. The 2015 collapse of his romantic relationship led to a suicide attempt, followed by an early 2016 motorcycle accident. *Songs* presents an eclectic summary of Pajo’s career shifts, notably his stay in Chicago’s Tortoise.
- * Thijs Van Leer, Focus keyboardist, was knighted in 2008 with the Dutch Order of Orange-Nassau. Though Focus split several years after their “Hocus Pocus” hit, Van Leer reformed Focus in 2002 as the only holdover. The knighthood was for his creative endeavors, similar to the way Britain bestows its Order of the British Empire honorary knighthoods. He continues to tour.
- * Kansas ended a sixteen-year drought of new recordings with *The Prelude Implicit* (InsideOut). The only stalwarts from their hit-making days are bassist Billy Greer and drummer Phil Ehart, but the band’s progressive rock stylings remain.
- * Frankie Miller, said by some to be the soulful Scotsman Rod Stewart could have been, saw his performing career derailed in 1994 by a cerebral hemorrhage, which almost ended his life. Miller’s skills as a songwriter share the stage on *Frankie Miller’s Double Take* (Universal UK import), a tribute album with a difference. Miller’s demo archive provides the template for duets with guest artists/fans, many of whom have recorded versions of his songs. Appearing on the album are Elton John, Bonnie Tyler, Kim Carnes, Willie Nelson and Stewart himself.
- * Immersion, the side project of Wire’s Colin Newman and his wife, Malka Spigel (bassist in Eighties electronic/world beat band Minimal Compact) recorded *Analogue Creatures Living on an Island* on their own swim label. The duo continues their experimental music in a mélange of ambient and dance styles. Immersion had not issued any music since their 1999 self-released *Low Impact*.
- * Veteran punk act UK Subs concluded a project begun in 1979—and album for every letter of the alphabet, beginning with *Another Kind of Blues*. The 2016 *Ziezo* (PledgeMusic UK import) was a crowdfunding project. Down to founding member Charlie Harper and 1980 recruit Alvin Gibbs, the Subs hew to their pub/punk approach.
- * Shirley Collins, famous for her traditional folk music duet albums with her sister Dolly in early Sixties Britain, released *Lodestar* (Domino). Collins has been inactive for 38 years due to a combination of health issues and personal dissatisfaction with the quality of her voice. The 2016 album sees her return to the well of songs hundreds of years old, delivering them with a careworn voice of experience.

Fun Facts:

- * Bruce Springsteen in his 2016 memoir *Born to Run* (Simon & Schuster: New York, 2016) says “the most useful lines I have ever written” are nestled in “Rosalita,” the live finale of his early touring years. When he sings the line (with saxophonist Clarence Clemmons dueting with him as a kind of voice of experience), “Someday we’ll look back on this and it will all seem funny,” Springsteen delineates its superiority in the decision to use the word “seem,” not “be.”
- * The Bronx address 1520 Sedgwick Ave. received special designation as the birthplace of hip-hop. It was there on 8/11/73 that DJ Kool Herc (born Clive Campbell) held a birthday party for his sister during which he used “breaks” of percussion lifted from identical records on multiple turntables. Rappers subsequently used this type of rhythmic backing for their recitations.
- * Herb Alpert seemingly had a lock on his music being appropriated for Sixties TV game shows. However, the theme song for *The Match Game* was written by German bandleader/composer Bert Kaempfert. The instrumental’s title is “A Swingin’ Safari.”
- * That’s Jimmy Page banging out the metallic chords on the 1964 hit “Tobacco Road”—the Nashville Teens.

- * Aretha Franklin is enough of a veteran in the realm of black show business that she insists on being paid in cash before she performs.
- * Comedic actor Jack Black has a sideline gig as record spinner Tenacious DJ.
- * A late summer 2016 exhibit at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts summarized the careers of two musically influential Armenian immigrants. “Music for Moderns: The Partnership of George Avakian and Anahid Ajemian” recounted the married couple’s exposure to American culture and how it spurred Avakian to produce his first jazz record at age twenty. Ajemian, a violinist, performed works of contemporary classical music as her Composers String Quartet commissioned challenging works from the likes of Elliott Carter and Samuel Barber. Among the documents on display was the text of a George Avakian interview conducted by a then-teenaged/future Beat literary figure Jack Kerouac.
- * Nude drawings of Iggy Pop went on exhibit in November 2016 at the Brooklyn Museum. To be specific, these were not “by” the onetime Stooges frontman, but drawings depicting him. The singer, born James Osterberg, posed for a life drawing class at the New York Academy of Art in February and 21 artists tried to capture him in all his scarred glory.
- * *A Gun Show*, a multimedia presentation, played Brooklyn’s Academy of Music 11/30/16-12/3/16. Music was supplied by So Percussion, who performed rhythm on homemade instruments fabricated from Russian sniper rifle parts purchased online. *Show* offered an examination of America’s gun culture.
- * Paul Allen, the Microsoft co-founder, seems to have a lot of time on his hands. In addition to his music museum and sports team interests in Seattle (not to mention his full-sized submarine), Allen fronts the band the Undertakers.
- * Martin Bandier, the head of the mammoth Sony/ATV music publishing house, is assumed by many to be French. Bandier is a native New Yorker. Once, when introducing Smokey Robinson at the MIDEM music business confab in Cannes, France, Bandier lip-synched his speech while a French colleague spoke into a live microphone.
- * Costumes for the 2016 Hank Williams biopic *I Saw the Light* were provided by the reborn Nudie brand. Nudie Cohen was the tailor to country music royalty for years, crafting his signature beaded and embroidered figurative work. (Perhaps his most famous creation was the Fifties gold lame suit owned by Elvis.) Nudie’s North Hollywood clothing emporium closed in 1994, some ten years after his death. The new firm is a partnership between his granddaughter Jamie Nudie and Mary Lynn Cabral.
- * When is a VIP experience not a VIP experience? When the customer has a meet-and-greet with a hologram. Rob Thomas, former singer of Matchbox 20, offered fans the opportunity to sing a karaoke duet with a Thomas hologram on his summer 2016 tour—for \$100.00 per.
- * Celebrity masseuse Dorothy Stein, doing business as Dr. Dot, has a gimmick. She bites her clients to stimulate blood flow. Ms. Stein’s visibility was heightened during the mid-Nineties as a perennial staffer on the Rolling Stones’ tours. The biting is offered as an option for those squeamish about blood borne pathogens. (Don’t eat rock stars! You don’t know where they’ve been!)
- * Dr. Teeth & the Electric Mayhem, better known as the band from TV’s *The Muppet Show*, appeared at the Outside Lands festival on 8/6/16 in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. The Muppet combo performed a five-song covers set. Their finale was “With a Little Help from My Friends” off the Joe Cocker version.
- * Song hit compilation series *Now That’s What I Call Music* dropped its 60th volume on 11/4/16. *Now* has sold more than 100 million units over its eighteen-year history. The series’ head of A & R Jeff Moskowitz attributes this to the average American car being ten years old and still having a CD player.
- * Renowned Blue Note label recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder did not really take-on the gig until after the Fifties. He spent eighteen years as an optometrist, doing his studio work part-time.
- * Indian film music could teach anyone the delights and pitfalls of its wide-open eclecticism. The Bollywood cinema soundtracks freely plunder from popular music from around the globe. Among the latest examples is *Aki Goes to Bollywood* -Aki Kumar (Little Village Foundation), in which the Indian expatriate sings in Hindi, utilizing his native melodies over backing tracks played in the style of the Chicago blues. American blues musicians such as ex-Robert Cray keyboardist Jim Pugh help season the proceedings.
- * Paul McCartney claims the guitar lick for “FourFiveSeconds,” his 2016 hit collaboration with Kanye West and Rihanna stems from Picasso. In 1969, while looking at a reproduction of the artist’s nearly 120-year old painting, *The Old Guitarist* (on display at the Art Institute of Chicago), the onetime Beatles bassist wondered what chord the man was playing.
- * *XTreme Now*-Prince Rama (Carpark Records) is a concept album depicting a future in which extreme-sports—as seen on cable television and promoted as a component of youth lifestyles—becomes a lauded, highly respected art, which is documented and collected. The duo responsible for the project, Taraka and Nimai Larson were raised in a Hare Krishna commune.

- * Paul Simon lifted the title of his 1972 hit “Mother and Child Reunion” from a Chinese menu item combining chicken and egg.
- * Cathy O’Neil, author of *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* (Crown Publishing Group/ Penguin Random House: New York, 2016), writes how computer algorithms used by hedge funds help wealthy investors make money at the cost of small investors’ nest eggs. Ms. O’Neil moonlights as a fiddler in the bluegrass ensemble Tomtown Ramblers.
- * Justin Howard, a Chicago resident who performs in air guitar competitions under the name Nordic Thunder, recently acquired the URL nordicthunder.com with the help of Dark Matter, a specialty coffee roaster. The nordicthunder site had been used by an eponymous white supremacist rock band. Dark Matter named a coffee blend after the air guitarist in 2013 and moved to buy the domain name in 2015. (To add to all this endorsement/branding confusion, Mr. Howard has a deal with soft drink Dr. Pepper, which bars him from endorsing other beverages.)
- * Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins has two side projects. Chevy Metal is a classic rock cover band. Birds of Satan is a progressive rock band offering original material.
- * A proposed Amazon TV series has the tentative title *Time Out of Mind*, named after the 1997 Bob Dylan album. The program has permission to use any of that performer’s songs in the series. The likelihood of the original tracks being used is slim in light of the expense of licensing them from Sony’s Columbia label. More veteran songwriters and publishers are inclined to license songs for television and film use. Past hitmakers have seen oldies and classic rock formats shift their programming to hits of more recent vintage, leading to a decline in song royalties.
- * Singer and TV comedienne Zooey Deschanel told Conan O’Brien on the 5/9/16 airing of his talk show of Prince’s appearance on her *New Girl* series. Deschanel claimed Prince insisted that he would not appear if recurring guests and self-promotion experts the Kardashians were in the same episode. (See? He was a genius.)
- * Chicago tourist stop Navy Pier utilizes an app called RockBot. Described as a “social jukebox,” the app allows users to program the music played over the Pier’s 300 speakers. Pier officials reserve the right to ignore visitors’ musical requests.
- * The Matador label issued the first recall in its 27-year history. *Teens of Denial*-Car Seat Headrest, the solo project of Will Toledo, utilized part of the song “Just What I Needed”-the Cars. It had the conditional approval of the song’s publisher, Lido Music. However, Toledo had changed one line of the song in his own composition “Not What I Needed.” This violated the terms of the agreement. A total of 5,800 vinyl records and 7,700 CDs of the initial pressing ended up being destroyed to avert punitive legal action. The few copies of *Teens of Denial* escaping the recall are now considered collectible rarities.
- * On 6/15/16 CBS-TV announced it would broadcast the Grammy Awards show through the year 2026. That year would mark the 54th consecutive appearance of the program on the network.
- * Capitol Records test marketed a variety of Pocket Discs in the late Sixties. Similar records were called “soundsheets” and could often be found in magazines in the style of those blow-in cards offering subscriptions or attached to cereal boxes as a cross-promotion for musical performers. Capitol’s project with the company Americom yielded two-sided records 3.75 inches in diameter and designed to sell in vending machines for 50 cents. (These were distinct from consumer electronics firm Philco’s late Sixties flexi-discs marketed under the name Hip Pocket records and stickered at 69 cents. These items were just under 4 inches in diameter. A dedicated playback device was available separately.) Three Apple label Beatles titles saw issue, including an edited version of “Hey Jude,” understandable in light of the song’s seven minute-plus duration. A former, unnamed Capitol executive turned up a vinyl record prototype of the “Hey Jude” release with a longer edit than the Pocket Disc official version. The item was sold privately through Rockaway Records in Los Angeles to an unknown buyer for an undisclosed price. It is presumably the only copy in existence.
- * Tchotchke merchant The Bradford Exchange offered The Beatles Express, a toy train set sold on a subscription basis, one car at a time. An initial payment of \$79.98 obtained the locomotive lead car with subsequent cars depicting each of the group’s American albums. Committing to those follow-up purchases entitles subscribers to a set of railroad tracks and controls. Billed as a “limited time offer,” The Bradford Exchange was still soliciting subscribers in early 2017.
- * On 9/4/16 the International Astronomical Union’s Minor Planet Center renamed a hitherto numbered asteroid “Asteroid 17473 Freddiemercury,” in honor of the deceased frontman of rock group Queen.
- * R ‘n’ B songwriter Ben Raleigh, known for his Sixties work for Lou Rawls, co-wrote the theme song to the 1969 animated cartoon series *Scooby Doo, Where Are You?*
- * Neil Sedaka’s early Sixties hits are noted for his vocals in which he sings harmony with himself via overdubbing. However, witnesses recount that he always laid the harmony part down first.

- * The Comfort Station, a venue located in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood, hosted "Scopitone Party 2," an event highlighting a Sixties music video technology. The Scopitone was a successor to the Panoram, a Forties hybrid of the jukebox and film projector. The Panoram played films of song performances, projecting them on a small attached screen. The song hits were offered in takes unique to the Panoram (their soundtracks later appeared on bootlegs in the vinyl record era). Panoram production was halted as World War II manufacturing switched to a war footing. The format returned in the mid-Sixties under the auspices of French manufacturer CAMCA. When American business interests imported the Scopitone format, the machines were marketed to bars, drawing scrutiny due to organized crime's involvement in the jukebox trade. The balky nature of the technology soon saw the format fade in popularity. The Logan Square event featured a trove of museum-quality color film Scopitone performances rendered in 16 millimeter projection onto the units' 26-inch screen. The handful of pop performers included Neil Sedaka and the Hondells.
- * TouchTunes, the digital jukebox company, offered venues carrying their equipment an upgraded version offering real time local transit information provided by a separate business, TransitScreen. Patrons in a bar can get facts on ridesharing services as well as the estimated time of arrival for the next bus. Of course, this keeps them in the bar drinking instead of waiting outside for transportation to arrive.
- * The latest wrinkle to the crowdfunding phenomenon comes from corporations. RockManiaLive solicited investors for its plans to stage touring symphonic versions of rock music in a style fusing Cirque du Soleil and TransSiberian Express. The firm will perform the material of bands which no longer tour due to the death or retirement of personnel. The target audience is Baby Boomers. A 60-show tour is planned for the States and Europe featuring the music of Led Zeppelin's 1973 *Houses of the Holy* album.
- * Despite the rise of streaming audio and downloaded music files, counterfeit CDs have proliferated. An August 2016 Record Industry Association of America study bought 194 CDs off Amazon or from third parties who use Amazon. Of that number, 44 were counterfeit product—designed to look like the legitimate release. Amazon specifically sold fewer than half that amount. The RIAA sought Amazon's help in being more discerning about the sources from which they obtain their music software. Many come from a plant in China, leading some to suspect dumping of overstock as more Chinese consumers adopt non-physical formats.
- * Steve Goodman, the Chicago singer-songwriter who died in 1984, never heard his song "Go Cubs Go" sung at the team's Wrigley Field home. Goodman died mere weeks after recording the item. Now that "Go Cubs Go" has seen a resurgence with the Cubs victory in the 2016 World Series, Goodman's heirs are making no money from the additional exposure. They sold the publishing to the performer's catalog in early 2016.
- * There should be a British expression, "The posh are different from us, except when drunk." At a Royal Lodge in Windsor party, a mixture of royals and commoners engaged in a different kind of drinking game in late fall 2016. Pop singer James Blunt asked Princess Beatrice of York (daughter of Prince Andrew) to "knight" him. Utilizing a nearby sword pulled from a wall display, the princess brandished the sword and accidentally sliced the cheek of nearby innocent bystander, singer Ed Sheeran. The red-haired pop sensation required medical attention. (As moms all over the world have observed, "Sure, it's fun until someone loses an eye....")
- * Robbie Basho, the mystical solo guitarist who was an early labelmate of John Fahey on his Takoma imprint, died following a visit to a chiropractor. The practitioner cracked the performer's neck, a blood vessel ruptured and caused a fatal stroke.
- * *X-Ray Audio: The Strange Story of Soviet Music on the Bone* (Strange Attractors Press/MIT Press: Cumberland, RI, 2016) collects stories of bootleg "singles" presenting prohibited Western music to fans in Communist Russia. The material appeared on X-rays stolen from hospitals and etched in the manner of flexi-discs. Stephen Coates edits the compendium.
- * The derelict sailor depicted on the cover of the 1969 album *A Salty Dog*-Procol Harum is an artistic interpretation of the band's lyricist Keith Reid.
- * Canadian rapper Drake's 2016 *Views* contains 81 minutes of content. This means that Nineties technology could not burn the entire album to a CD-R.
- * Tom and Tina Grusecki of Park Ridge, IL represent that variety of suburbanite who goes all-out to decorate their home for the Christmas holidays. Their 2016 display was more than a bit off-center since it was a tribute to deceased musical performer Prince. The prominent chimney on the Tudor-style home was layered with video panels, the better to show what is typically referred to as "Love Symbol #2." An illuminated mock-up of Prince's signature guitar served as a backdrop to a winter white drum set emblazoned with another of Prince's love symbols. Hidden speakers played a medley of Prince's hits, which could also be heard via a low-power FM station broadcasting in the immediate vicinity. The Grusecki family asks visitors to their front yard for donations to charities helping military veterans and those with developmental and physical disabilities.

- * Duluth, Minnesota was Bob Dylan's home until the age of six, when his family moved across the state to Hibbing. Duluth is much more laudatory in their ties to the Nobel Prize-winning performer. Duluth has a street named in his honor (Bob Dylan Way) and it is decorated with functional cast iron manhole covers, each inscribed with references to Dylan's repertoire.
- * Veteran British music journalist Chris Welch says pop singer Dusty Springfield once struck the notoriously contentious jazz drummer Buddy Rich at the climax of an altercation between the pair. Rich's band later presented Ms. Springfield with a pair of boxing gloves.
- * Phil Ochs was offered the lead role of Max Frost in the 1968 teen film *Wild in the Streets*. He declined.
- * Bob Dylan's song "Lay Lady Lay" was intended for use in the 1969 film *Midnight Cowboy*, but it was not submitted before the film company's deadline.
- * Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistani prime minister assassinated in 2007, was once a member of the Mott the Hoople fan club.
- * The late architect Zaha Hadid designed the statue to be presented to recipients of the 2017 BRIT music awards in England.
- * Masked DJs are an emerging force in the dance music realm. UZ, Malaa and Marshmello are the latest high profile acts to offer disguised competition to the highly successful Dangermau5. (You would want to conceal your identity if you played lame music.)
- * Among country legend Merle Haggard's last requests was that he die in the bed located on his tour bus. And so he did.
- * Reclusive R 'n' B performer Erykah Badu has a parallel career as a doula or midwife. Her Twitter "handle" is Erykah Badoula.
- * The 2016 Santana reunion is missing original member David Brown, who died in 2008. Percussionist Jose Chepito Areas once served a prison sentence for child molestation and was rejected for participation. Keyboardist/vocalist Greg Rolie described him as "difficult."
- * Bob Dylan, the Band and Tiny Tim played together at some point during the casual recording sessions for what later became known as *The Basement Tapes*. Film footage of the historic collaboration is at the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma. Dylan sold the institution 6,000 items from his career-spanning personal collection for somewhere between \$15-\$20 million. The collection is intended for scholarly research.
- * The Selmer Mark VI tenor saxophone has not been manufactured since 1974. It was considered the premier Fifties instrument in an era when saxophone players dominated rock 'n' roll and jazz. Now collectors snap-up the Mark VI the way rich hobbyists still buy rare electric guitars they are unable to play.
- * "A Lot of Sorrow," by Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson, is a six-hour music video of the rock band The National performing their song "Sorrow" repeatedly. The group pauses, plays, segues into a transition, then begins anew. Kjartansson periodically walks onstage to serve them food and drink. The video had a late summer 2016 engagement at the Art Institute of Chicago.
- * Tagomago is the name of a privately owned Spanish island near the tourist destination of Ibiza. The island gave its name to Krautrock proponents Can's 1971 album. The band's Jaki Liebezit once tried to commit suicide by leaping from the isle's rocky cliffs.
- * For a variation on the tribute album genre, check out *Sir Henry at Rawlinson End*-Michael Livesley & Brainwashing House (Guilty Dog UK import), a recreation of a 1978 album. Growing from ex-Bonzo Dog Band frontman Vivian Stanshall's portrayal of a crusty British nobleman, the characterization took on a life of its own. Frequent appearances of "Sir Henry" on legendary deejay John Peel's BBC show fostered that debut record, a 1980 feature film and a 1984 audio sequel. Mr. Livesley felt the character was too entertaining to be forgotten and he turned it into a touring theater piece in 2010. It is now immortalized on shiny polycarbonate-sheathed disc.
- * The retail chain Amoeba Records in Berkley, CA received a license to sell medicinal marijuana on 9/27/16. The store will convert the jazz section into a dispensary, which will do nothing to dissuade people from continuing to link jazz with drug use.
- * Brazilian musical legend Jorge Ben began calling himself Jorge Ben Jor because he discovered inept performing rights organizations were sending his royalties to pop/jazz guitarist George Benson.

Neologism Update:

- * "Fuck up some commas": means, "spending lots of money" as used by rapper Future
- * "hand machine": a befuddled Kris Kristofferson's term for a smartphone

Odd Couple:

Domestic arts maven Martha Stewart and rapper Snoop Dogg co-host the VH1TV series *Martha & Snoop's Potluck Dinner*. Opposites distract.

No More Fat Jokes:

- * A photo of producer and record executive Rick Rubin in the 7/1/16 issue of *Rolling Stone* offers the man boob version of a wet t-shirt contest. Yipe!
- * In a *Billboard* interview *zaftig* songwriter/vocalist Meaghan Trainor proclaimed, “I shit hits.” This begs the question of just how much you must eat to generate a #1.

What a Night at the Theatre!:

- * *The Wildness: Sky-Pony's Rock Fairytale* at Ars Nova, a theater in midtown Manhattan, combined rock concert and dance to evoke the spirit of a deceased mythmaker named Michael via the ritual of performance.
- * *The Total Bent* reunites musical collaborators Stew and Heidi Rodewald of 2008 Broadway hit musical *Passing Strange*. The show tells of the generational conflict between songwriter Martin Roy and his father, “Papa” Joe Roy, a gospel music legend—a clash echoing Al Jolson’s film *The Jazz Singer*. *Bent* had a month-long engagement in June at New York’s Public Theater.
- * The play *Marie and Rosetta* depicts the formation of the pop/gospel duo of Marie Knight and Sister Rosetta Tharpe in 1946. The pair’s music was interwoven with the narrative during the month-long engagement at the Atlantic Theatre Company
- * *Hadestown*, a recasting of the Orpheus myth based on an eponymous 2010 record album by Anais Mitchell and set in a slum village, played downtown’s New York Theatre Workshop in summer 2016.
- * *Can I Get a Witness? The Gospel of James Baldwin*, sourced from the black author’s 1963 novel *The Fire Next Time* played New York’s Harlem Stage 12/7-12/11/16 as a multimedia stage work prepared by veteran bassist/vocalist Meshell Ndegeocello.
- * *Bright Star*, a bluegrass musical written by Edie Brickell and Steve Martin played Broadway’s Cort Theatre in March 2016. It tells of a love affair in North Carolina from the Twenties to the years after World War II. Terry Teachout in the 3/25/16 *Wall Street Journal* wrote, “The plot is trite, the dialogue humorless and stiff, the lyrics stupefyingly banal....”

What a Night at the Opera!:

The Exterminating Angel is Thomas Ades’ adaptation of the 1962 film by Luis Bunuel about a dinner party where guests discover that an unexplained force keeps them from leaving. *Angel* had a 7/28/16 premiere at the Salzburg Festival in Austria. The opera features 22 singing characters, eight of them in starring roles.

Spare Change:

- * A private listening party while lounging around the hi-fi will set you back a little over \$25 thousand at Spiritland in London’s King’s Cross. Music is played on a Kuzma XL Stabi XL 2 turntable and a pair of custom built speakers said to cost \$500 thousand. A trend among vinyl-loving youth and people with too much money, private listening venues include corporate showcases such as World of McIntosh in New York’s Soho, where listeners can indulge in music played over the legacy audio equipment manufacturer’s gear near a heated indoor pool, in a living room or rooftop space. Cost for a McIntosh private event is also \$25 thousand.
- * The Nick Jonas/Demi Lovato tour offered The Ultimate VIP Dressing Room Package, which included the purchaser’s own dressing room backstage and “rider” (i.e. what the occupant wanted for drinks, snacks and extras), as well as a visit and autograph session with the onetime Disney stars. Price: \$10 thousand. Noted Kevin Lyman, the Warped Tour founder, “I would hate to be the father that writes that check.”

Collectables Update:

- * David Bowie’s art collection was auctioned at Sotheby’s London outlet 11/10-11/11/16, following a “tour” of showings at the auctioneer’s New York, Hong Kong and Los Angeles locations. The sale netted \$41.1 million.
- * The manuscript of Gustav Mahler’s Second Symphony sold for \$5.6 million at Sotheby’s London rooms on 11/29/16.
- * Julien Auctions hosted a Music Icons auction at the Hard Rock Café in New York on 5/21/16. Lady Gaga’s childhood piano was in the spotlight to raise money for her Born This Way Foundation. Though expected to raise \$100-\$200 thousand, the item was withdrawn when the piano failed to hit the “reserve” or lowest agreed-upon price.
- * A March 2016 Omega Auctions sale offered a ten-inch 78-RPM recording booth disc containing two early Beatles performances. One side featured “Hullo Little Girl” sung by John Lennon. The flip side had Paul McCartney singing “Till There Was You.” Intended to help get a record contract, notes written by Brian Epstein accompanied the item. The rarity was hammered for roughly \$80 thousand at Omega’s Warrington, UK rooms.

- * The complete version of Prince's unreleased 1986 album *Camille* had somehow evaded bootleggers since it only had a limited promotional pressing passed among the upper executive echelons at the recording artist's Warner Brothers label. In late 2016, a copy of one of those pressings went out as part of a lot of nineteen albums auctioned by former Warner publicist Karen Krattinger. The lot was won for a bid of \$29 thousand, which included the buyer's premium.

Just in Time for the Holidays:

- * *A Very Kacey Christmas*-Kacey Musgraves (Mercury Nashville) The rising country thrush duets with Willie Nelson on "A Willie Nice Christmas." exemplifying an avalanche of new holiday albums from country acts including *Tennessee Christmas*-Amy Grant (Amy Grant Records), *To Celebrate Christmas*-Jennifer Nettles (Big Machine), *The Greatest Gift of All*-Rascal Flatts (Big Machine) and *White Christmas Blue*-Loretta Lynn (Sony Legacy) marking 50 years since the country legend's previous holiday set.
- * *The Christmas Album*-Tony Hadley (Omnivore) The Spandau Ballet frontman has the advantage of ransacking the Christmas chestnuts of England, where newly written seasonal songs chart every year and replace old ones. Includes a cover of British act Keane's "Somewhere Only We Know."
- * Neil Diamond released his fourth holiday record *Acoustic Christmas* (Capitol), but was one-upped by a *capella* ensemble Pentatonix with their fifth seasonal offering *A Pentatonix Christmas*.
- * *'Tis the Season*-Jimmy Buffett (Mailboat Records) Twenty years after his first Christmas album
- * *I Love Christmas*-Tommy James (Aura Records) Then why don't you marry it?

Unchained Parodies:

- * Test Pattern, a Talking Heads parody featuring comedians Maya Rudolph, *Portlandia*'s Fred Armisen and Bill Hader
- * *77 Rusty Trombones*-Blowfly (Saustex Records) Disco era nasty man's swan song featuring "If You Don't Blow Me by Now," "The Big Gay Crack" and others
- * *Samba Esquema Nova*-Clara Moreno (Traffic Entertainment Group) Ms. Moreno's cut-by-cut remake of Brazilian legend Jorge Ben's debut LP. She even sits in an "invisible chair" on the cover like *Senhor Ben* on the cover of his 1963 album.

Unchained Self-Parodies:

The cover photo of the 2016 album *The David Grisman Sextet* (Acoustic Disc) echoes the cover of the 1977 album *The David Grisman Quintet* (Kaleidoscope).

Random Thoughts:

- * As rapper Pitbull ages he begins to look (and dress) more like TV bandleader Paul Shaffer.
- * Money makes for strange bedfellows. Dan Auerbach of the Black Keys was once outspoken in his contempt for Chrissie Hynde for abandoning their common home city of Akron, Ohio. Now that he is based in Nashville and working more as a producer than a musician, the old resentments did not keep him from overseeing the Pretenders frontwoman's 2016 solo record-turned-reunion disc *Alone* (BMG)
- * You don't know who to feel more embarrassed for, Mick Jagger (already a great grandfather to his oldest daughter Jade's grandchild, Assisi) or the Stone's son born 12/8/16. Pops will be attending the youth soccer game in a wheelchair accompanied by a nurse.
- * The winner of the eleventh season of NBC-TV's *The Voice* was a guy named Sundance Head. Okay.
- * *Joanne*, Lady Gaga's 2016 release is not a tribute to ex-*Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* cast member Jo Anne Worley.
- * *Lemonade*-Beyonce, an achievement so great that she only needed 100 co-writers, arrangers and producers to pull it off.
- * Graham Nash has stopped talking to David Crosby, his friend for most of his adult life, after an unspecified falling out. (Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young—four guys who could not get along with their bandmates 50 years ago, fought repeatedly when they were together and still cannot play well with others.)

Generation Gap:

- * Greta Kline of Brooklyn-based band Frankie Cosmos (daughter of actors Kevin Kline and Phoebe Cates)
- * Cameron Graves, jazz pianist son of Carl Graves, Seventies R 'n' B act.
- * Shane and Tyler Fogerty of Hearty Har, sons of Creedence co-founder and solo act John Fogerty
- * Aubrie Sellers, country ingénue daughter of country act Lee Ann Womack
- * Doris Brendel, rock singer daughter of classical pianist Alfred Brendel

Ozzy's a Boob:

“‘And they both lived happily ever after.’ I’d like to find the person who wrote that and poke him in the eye with a burning stick.” (Ozzy Osbourne talks to the hosts of ABC’s *Good Morning America* about his marital woes on 7/25/16.)

Courtney Love, Superstar:

Love showed up at a celebration for the film *Freeheld* in Los Angeles on 1/15/16. She sang “Creep”-Radiohead and observed, “I feel like I’m on *American Idol* or something.”

The Further Adventures of Billy “The Brain” Corgan:

- * A 2/4/16 posting on the Smashing Pumpkins frontman’s peopleandtheircars.com announced an upcoming road trip. “For newer sights I look towards ruinous America and her open road. Or something approximating the mightiest byway of the 1800s, the grand Mississippi and that closest urbane chimera, Route 66.” (Giving new meaning to the term “verbal abuse.”)
- * A 2/4/16 Chicago *Reader* photo promoting a Pumpkins show set for 4/14/16 at the city’s Civic Opera House showed Corgan draped in a black and white spotted cloak worthy of Cruella De Vil from the 1961 Disney animated film *101 Dalmatians*.
- * The 3/24/16 issue of *Rolling Stone* featured Corgan talking about a film project and that road trip. Riding down Route 66 in the American Southwest, he noted, “I’m trying to rekindle my understanding and appreciation for the core American values.” (Or he could be driving down to see the Cubs in spring training in Mesa, Arizona. Or a listening tour prior to a run for president.)
- * A New York City stint 4/4-4/6/16 at the Beacon Theatre featured a twin bill of Smashing Pumpkins and Liz Phair in a bit of Wicker Park Nineties nostalgia.
- * At a 3/26/16 show in Los Angeles, ex-Pumpkin James Iha performed as a special guest on his 48th birthday.
- * Longtime Chicago Cubs fan Corgan made stops at Wrigley Field during the team’s World Series run. He griped about bandwagon jumpers, “I don’t talk to other Cubs celebrities. In fact, I’m anti-Cubs celebrity.”
- * Corgan showed up at Desert Trip in Indio, CA on 10/16/16 for a posed photo with the Who’s Pete Townshend. No word on whether they discussed their fellow oldies acts.

Kanye West, Genius Unhinged:

- * “I have no interest working with anyone who is too important or too good or too traditional to take a call at 3 a.m.” (West comments in *Billboard* 1/23/16)
- * West debuted his new album, *The Life of Pablo* at Electric Lady Studios, one day before a 2/11/16 combination listening party/launch of the latest iteration of his clothing line in a fashion show held at Madison Square Garden. West claimed he wanted to be the creative director of fashion house Hermes around this time. Paying customers at the venue and pay-per-view theater audience for the fashion show were to receive a free download of *Pablo*. He played the album at high volume for attendees, then scotched plans for the download. Instead West returned to the studio to further tweak the mixes. An appearance on *Saturday Night Live* 2/13/16 saw a backstage rave out (“By 50%, more influential than any other human being. Don’t fuck with me.”), but the television exposure triggered the *Pablo* release as an exclusive stream on Tidal and a \$20.00 download from KanyeWest.com—until it was pulled within hours for additional tweaking. Website TorrentFreak claimed 500 thousand downloads of the album were pirated within the first 24 hours despite the presumed exclusivity outlined above.
- * West’s Twitter feed became a roiling ego fest following the album’s release. He said he would not attend the Grammy’s unless he was guaranteed Album of the Year honors. West compared himself to basketball stars Michael Jordan and Stephen Curry.
- * September saw the start of the Saint Pablo tour and a series of increasingly erratic actions. The performer utilized a stage that floated over the crowd like a large magic carpet, but left those directly beneath the platform unable to see. At a 10/22/16 tour stop in Oakland, CA, West told the crowd, “A crazy person can’t make this floating stage.”
- * West interrupted the tour to fly to Paris after his wife Kim Kardashian was robbed in her hotel room on 10/3/16. The thieves made off with a purported \$5 million in jewelry. He exited halfway through a performance at the Meadowlands Music & Arts Festival in Queens.
- * Following the November election, West grew increasingly incoherent. At a 11/18/16 Los Angeles concert, “I told y’all I didn’t vote. But if I voted, I would’ve voted on Trump.” The next evening onstage in Sacramento, “This is the way to make America great again.... It’s a new world Hillary Clinton, it’s a new world.” He broke off the show four songs in, spouting a rant about Beyonce and Jay Z, a shout out to the news media and a dropped microphone.

- * West was admitted to Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center on 11/21/16. The tour was cancelled and the rapper's representatives announced he was suffering from exhaustion. West was hospitalized for eight days.
- * An 11/27/16 article in the *Chicago Tribune* quoted Chicago rapper Twista, "A clown gets paid to make other people happy, even if that clown might be going through a mental breakdown, that clown can't let the public see him cry or else he might (lose) the only job that helps him take care of his family." (At this point Kanye West got up in bed yelling, "Funny how? Like I'm a clown? I amuse you? I make you laugh? How am I funny?!"—writer's embellishment)
- * Kanye West met with Donald Trump on 12/13/16. Days after leaving the hospital, West sported dyed blonde hair when exiting the meeting at Trump Tower in New York. West's Twitter feed that day said they spoke about education, bullying and violence in Chicago. He tweeted, "I feel it is important to have a direct line of communication with our future President."

She Lives Off Dead Beatles:

- * *Yes, I'm a Witch Too*-Various (Apple/Astralwerks) dropped on 1/22/16. A sequel to the 2007 Ono album *Yes, I'm a Witch* saw guests remix that previously released music.
- * September saw completion of Yoko Ono's public sculpture *Sky Landing*, consisting of a dozen twelve-foot stainless steel blades evoking lotus petals. The piece is located on Wooded Island in Chicago's Jackson Park, the site of Japan's Phoenix Pavilion during the 1893 Columbian Exposition.

Madonna, Woman of the Year:

- * Madonna entered the month of March in the middle of a court fight. Her son Rocco, aged fifteen and staying with his father in the UK, had refused to return to America. Film director Guy Ritchie endorsed his son's decision and the former spouses had gone to court in December 2015. Madonna concentrated her legal strategies in the States. On 3/2/16 New York State Supreme Court Justice Deborah Kaplan declined to issue a warrant to make Ritchie appear in a New York courtroom. The action moved to British High Court in London on 3/13/16 where Justice Alistair MacDonald told the former couple they should try to reach an amicable settlement. However, Madonna was off to Australia for a tour stop. Rocco stayed with his father.
- * A 3/16/16 concert in Brisbane, Australia started two hours late, forcing hundreds to leave the event early to catch the final public transportation home. Madonna announced from the stage, "You should have taken your time doing your hair and makeup. Then I wouldn't have been late."
- * *Strike a Pose*, a 2016 documentary film, discusses the male dancers who accompanied Madonna on her 1990 *Blond Ambition* tour. Madonna was into her voguing period, influenced by the gay ballroom scene in Eighties New York. The film raises the usual questions about Madge's tendency to appropriate fringe cultural and racial artistic expression to enhance her modest creative skills. The dancers today claim Madonna was bringing gay performers to the world.
- * Madonna rose from a purple throne to sing "Nothing Compares 2 U" in a tribute to deceased star Prince at the 5/22/16 *Billboard Music Awards* telecast. She wore a purple Lurex pantsuit and carried a black walking stick. Online reviews were divided.
- * Son Rocco celebrated his sixteenth birthday on 8/13/16, when his mom took him to the Icelandic volcano Thrihnukagigur (though not as a human sacrifice).
- * At *Billboard* magazine's 12/9/16 Women in Music event, Madge was feted as Woman of the Year. Introduction honors fell to TV host Anderson Cooper who quipped, "The last time I shared a stage with Madonna, she humped me from behind." In her acceptance speech, the honoree spoke of her 34 years in the business and her struggle against "blatant misogyny, sexism, constant bullying and relentless abuse." She said you can dress like a slut, but won't be allowed to own your sluttiness—as if that was something desirable. Madge decried ageism in the business directed against women performers when consensus holds that the scalpel and airbrush are her closest friends.
- * Guesting on CBS-TV's *Late Late Show* on 12/7/16, Madonna appeared with James Corden in his "Carpool Karaoke" segment. She claimed she once made out with Michael Jackson after plying him with wine. This was after she declared, "I don't smoke. I don't drink. I don't party.... I go home and I'm Julie Andrews. I mean give me a nun's habit." (There is probably one left over from her last tour.)

Bob Marley Inc.:

For the Rasta on the 2016 gift list, a 12/6/16 Kohl's department store circular touted the Marley Get Together Bluetooth portable audio system. Suggested retail price: \$219.99.

The Story So Far:

Joseph Cone, son of Sex Pistols Svengali Malcolm McLaren and fashion designer Vivienne Westwood, announced he would burn his collection of punk rock memorabilia on 11/26/16. That date marked the 40th anniversary of the release of "Anarchy in the UK"-the Sex Pistols. "Punk rock doesn't exist," noted Mr. Cone adding, "Let's celebrate it properly and burn it all." The collection included many items of clothing related to the Sex Pistols and other artifacts of the period. On the date in question, a bonfire was lit on a boat in the Thames River in London. Local fire safety officials had been alerted and put out the blaze while the constabulary arrested Cone and his mother.

The background to the protest was more than a bit complicated. Mr. Cone had previously owned this same collection and sold it to launch his underwear company Agent Provocateur. He later sold that business for over \$70 million. Cone took some of those proceeds and bought back the memorabilia. It led some to believe the publicity for the now-damaged items would add charisma to their provenance and possibly enhance their perceived worth prior to another sale.

Lyrics to Live By:

The riots started slowly
With the homeless and the lowly.
Then they spread into the heartland
Towns that never get a wristband
Kids that can't afford the cool brand
Whose anger is a shorthand
For "You'll never get a wristband."
--"Wristband"-
Paul Simon

You said I'm full of diseases.
Your eyes were full of regret.
And then you took a picture of your salad
And put it on the Internet.
--"A Change of Heart"-
the 1975

Brown breaks his back
Brown takes the flak
Brown gets cut 'cause his papers are whack
Brown sits down
Brown does frown
Brown's up in a hospital gown
Brown has not
Brown gets shot
Brown got what he deserved 'cause he fought.
--"Mexican Chef"-
Xenia Rubinos

We will destroy all the life on the planet
Before we admit that our life is insane.
--"Escape Capsule"-
Morgan Delt

Then you had to go and spoil it
In the gender-neutral toilet
--"Do Whatever"-
Martha

We played, but nobody came
'cause we didn't tell anybody.
What a shame.
--"We Don't Need You"-
Geek Maggot Bingo.

NOT A REISSUE

Moving up a Little Higher-Mahalia Jackson (Shanachie) Twenty unreleased recordings highlight this collection of predominantly live performances. The most famous female gospel singer of the mid-twentieth century is heard going from strength-to-strength. Compiled and annotated by gospel authority Anthony Heilbut.

Waxing the Gospel: Mass Evangelism and the Phonograph 1890-1900-Various (Archeophone) Reissue label specializing in the dawn of recorded sound gathers cylinder recordings of religious meetings, sermons, home performances and a smattering of commercial releases to show organized Christianity's attempts to embrace a then-new technology. Noted here more for its historical importance than its musical value.

Music of Morocco: From the Library of Congress Recorded by Paul Bowles-Various (Dust-to-Digital) Late Fifties field recordings captured by peripheral Beat literary figure via a grant from the U.S. government. Bowles feared the evaporation of traditional music in his adopted country and was driven to preserve native styles. Most of this 4-CD boxed set has not seen legitimate release and comes with a 120-page book.

Close to Me: More Fame Recordings-Dan Penn (Ace UK import) A fresh collection of demos from the Southern soul songwriter's days at Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. There is only a slight drop in quality from Ace's 2012 initial batch of Penn's early work. However, this writer is still waiting for a hypothetical *Dan Penn Sings the Hits*, consisting of unreleased demos of his songs which dotted Atlantic, Atco and other labels' soul albums in the Sixties.

Lady Give Me Your Key-Tim Buckley (Future Days Recordings) Solo acoustic demos prepared prior to the recording of Buckley's classic 1967 LP *Goodbye and Hello*. The tracks were conceived as pop singles to lure an audience for Buckley's more exotic album fare. The performances here are actually no more commercial than what the singer was doing at the time. Thirteen unissued demos and five previously unheard songs are the selling point.

Unheard Bird: The Unissued Takes-Charlie Parker (Verve/UMG) You would think everything would have been released by now for rabid Parker enthusiasts. This 2-CD set offers 58 alternate takes and partial solos for those who can never have enough. The Bird is the word.

Petals from a Sunflower: Complete Recordings 1967-69-Tales of Justine (Grapefruit/Cherry Red UK import) Before they became giants of the rock opera stage musical, Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber were on the make in Swinging London's music business. Rice's A & R job at the EMI label got studio time at Abbey Road for this trio from the suburbs north of London. Rice and A.L.W. managed the group, impressed by the talents of teenaged songwriter/guitarist/vocalist David Daltrey. Yet, with all these factors working in the band's favor, only one 45 saw release. This collection comprises 21 of the group's recordings, their complete output, and offers a snapshot of British psyche pop just as the musical underground which would steal the spotlight was starting to make its impact felt.

Machine Gun: The Fillmore East First Show 12/31/69-Jimi Hendrix (Experience Hendrix/Sony Legacy) Warts-and-all set which provided part of the fodder for the 1970 Capitol album *Band of Gypsies*. This release is not of the same musical quality as the 1999 *Live at the Fillmore* album, which also used the New Year's Eve shows as its source. Still, fans will put up with blown cues, forgotten lyrics and "technical difficulties" to hear the man work his magic.

TOP TWENTY

1. GOLDEN SINGS THAT HAVE BEEN SUNG-Ryley Walker
2. DISTANCE INBETWEEN-the Coral
3. EYES ON THE LINES-Steve Gunn
4. EMILY'S D+EVOLUTION-Esperanza Spalding
5. PRELUDE-Wytch Hazel
6. RUINS-Wolf People
7. S/T-Heron Oblivion
8. DEATH OF THE COOL-Cotton Mather
9. STIFF-White Denim
10. KINGSIZED-Dressy Bessy
11. THE HERETIC'S BARGAIN-Rangda
12. HOUSE IN THE TALL GRASS-Kikagaku Moyo
13. PLAZA-Quilt
14. REQUIEM-Goat
15. MOSEY-Daniel Romano
16. LADY IN GOLD-Blues Pills
17. IV-Black Mountain
18. THE UNBORN CAPITALIST FROM LIMBO-Cory Hanson
19. BLACKSTAR-David Bowie
20. HEAVY AIR-Lavender Flu

"THIS JUST IN...":

WAKE UP BEFORE YOU DIE-Vibravoid
TIME WILL PASS-the Urges

CAPSULE REVIEWS

1. **GOLDEN SINGS THAT HAVE BEEN SUNG**-Ryley Walker (Dead Oceans) Chicago guitarist/bandleader continues his relentless artistic growth. Backed by several local jazz-leaning musicians, Walker delivers a record with a vibe out of Van Morrison's classic *Astral Weeks* and themes of urban restlessness. The lyrics are brooding and delivered in an often incantatory fashion. The CD version of this release includes a 41-minute (!) read on the album's "Sullen Mind," with the band establishing a meditative jazz vibe for twenty minutes before Walker comes in. Not every performer could hold your attention or maintain his own in the manner of the Sixties greats. The punch line comes at the song's conclusion when he asks if they should try it again.

2. **DISTANCE INBETWEEN**-the Coral (Ignition Records UK import) Ian Skelly was jointly responsible for *Serpent Power* (2015 *Jukebox Awards* Top Twenty). Here he incorporates Paul Molloy, his partner on that project, into his old band. Back in 2002, the Coral's debut went out to near-universal acclaim in England. Follow-up recordings saw the group lose direction, but they have now figuratively renewed their vows. This comeback offers many of the earmarks of *Serpent Power*, though the production/engineering is not as flashy. There is the odd reference to Randy California's Spirit and early post-Syd Barrett Pink Floyd, offering the possibility of better things to come.

3. **EYES ON THE LINES**-Steve Gunn (Matador) Modern acoustic guitarist working in the American Primitive tradition of John Fahey delivers an ensemble effort abetted by Chicago guitarist and the scene's peripatetic musical enabler James Elkington. Gunn's stint in Kurt Vile & the Violators serves him well. The frequent moody exuberance of the tracks evokes the solo works of onetime Television guitarist Richard Lloyd, surprising in light of previous Gunn efforts.

4. **EMILY'S D+EVOLUTION**-Esperanza Spalding (Concord) After winning a 2011 Grammy for Best New Artist in an upset (and thereby working Justin Bieber's fans into a lather), Ms. Spalding did a rethink of her jazz-pop career. Taking a break, she signed onto a teaching position at Boston music school Berklee before leaping back into the fray. The Emily in the title is partially framed as the artist's alternative identity derived from her middle name, allowing her to create outside her usual expectations. The result is a mixture of jazz, funk, rock, hip-hop and even folk with the judicious application of some Sixties Joni Mitchell vocal licks. Elements of Seventies "protest soul" offer snaps at moralists and The Man. I love the intake of breath about eleven seconds into the rapped intro of "Ebony and Ivy," while a read of "I Want It Now" from *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* brings a mania worthy of one of Stephen Sondheim's more overdriven characters. For those who enjoyed the multiple genres of *The Epic*-Kamasi Washington (2015 *Jukebox Awards* Top Twenty), it is time to let a woman come in and do the popcorn.

5. **PRELUDE**-Wyth Hazel (Bad Omen/Prosthetic Records) Stealth evangelism from a band mixing *Game of Thrones* battle imagery with an amorphous depiction of a nebulous past era in the style of previous Top Twenty faves Midlake. The lyrics are Christian-slanted, but these guys do a better job than legacy Jesus-leaning rockers such as Stryper or Petra. Musically, they sound like early Seventies Wishbone Ash playing through Thin Lizzy's equipment with harmony guitar passages galore. Recommended even for atheist rockers able to tune out the lyrics. I feel guilty for liking it. I am so confused.

6. **RUINS**-Wolf People (Jagjaguwar) Folk/rock band with the emphasis on the right side of that slash return with a sequel to their *Fain* (2013 *Jukebox Awards* Top Twenty). Their commitment to those folk leanings is dispelled within the first fifteen seconds by fuzz bass and a dose of heaviosity. This writer liked their old direction since it espoused a more coherent sense of the genre conventions in which it was working. *Ruins* does not coalesce in the way an old school album does via a unified vision and flow. Perhaps the guitar distortion is a way to camouflage those moments when what is presented is more hook than song. The seeming lack of continuity may have been a byproduct of being recorded at four different studios. Still, this album has its moments.

7. **S/T**-Heron Oblivion (Sub Pop) More exciting on paper than in the execution, this debut brings together frequent visitors to previous *Jukebox Awards* Top Twenties Ethan Miller of Howlin Rain and solo folk goddess Meg Baird. The band is a four-piece with two guitars and Ms. Baird on drums and vocals. The music eschews both the cusp-of-the-Seventies rock of Howlin Rain and the melodic leanings of Baird's solo work. The feedback-laden wall of guitars recalls the electric work of Six Organs of Admittance, though this only enters storming rocker territory on "Oriar." The vocals are a bit buried in the mix, so the enclosed lyrics help. I had high expectations, which were only somewhat rewarded, but the record's ragged charms are gradually revealing themselves.

8. DEATH OF THE COOL-Cotton Mather (The Star Apple Kingdom Records) Austin, Texas band who imagined an alternative universe power pop version of the Beatles on *Kon Tiki* (1998 *Jukebox Awards* #2) return under the leadership of vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Robert Harrison. Lauded in England back then, a major label deal was not forthcoming and the lost momentum led to their disbanding. Harrison is currently in the process of reassembling most of the old personnel. Here, their previous skills are reprised and their pop instincts remain intact. Opener “The Book of Too Late Changes” blasts pre-*Tommy* Who guitar chords amidst Keith Moon drum fills before dashing to a conclusion filled with a rocked-up Bach chorale. Beatles references abound throughout and, though the overall effect is one of taking their bearings, it gives an inkling of better things to come on the next go-round.

9. STIFF-White Denim (Downtown Records) Texas band whose *Corsicana Lemonade* (2013 *Jukebox Awards* Top Twenty) offered a modernization of the Seventies stylings of Little Feat, adjusts to some personnel changes. The loss of two members to the band of retro-soul act Leon Bridges had the possibility of weakening their sound, but it has surprisingly underlined their jazz-inflected Southern roots signature. Of course, name-dropping Archimedes and Nostradamus will make you sentimental favorites in this man’s land, but talent will out. “Holda You (I’m Psycho)” will make you think how much better the Allman Brothers would have been if they had made it to rehab in the early Seventies. The song starts intensely, there is a breakdown, and then it rocks even harder.

10. KINGSIZED-Dressy Bessy (Yep Roc) Junior members of the Elephant 6 collective of late Nineties psychedelic revivalists have existed as the long running side project of Apples in Stereo member John M. Hill. However the show here is all frontwoman Tammy Ealom, whose spirited vocals (often in double-tracked harmonies) show a close familiarity with the new wave armory of female acts such as Liliput, obscuros the Cosmopolitans and Girls at Our Best. Fun in the same way latter day frequent *Jukebox Awards* denizens the Veronicas are, Dressy Bessy’s lyrics consist of catch phrases, sentence fragments and banter between potential love interests. It might remind you of that time you saw Pylon in the early Eighties.

11. THE HERETIC’S BARGAIN-Rangda (Drag City) Trio consisting of guitarists Ben Chasny and Sir Richard Bishop backed by drummer Chris Corsano offers a menu of instrumentals which swerve from rock to a kind of raw jazz fusion spiced with global ethnic music. It is a worthy successor to their *False Flag* (2010 *Jukebox Awards* #1), but seems more of-the-moment in the sense that they seem to wrestle with their ideas in order to make them reach fruition. Album finale “Mondays Are Free at the Hermetic Museum” stretches out over eighteen minutes and you are grateful for the trip.

12. HOUSE IN THE TALL GRASS-Kikagaku Moyo (Guruguru Brain Records) Japanese band works a neo-psychedelic middle ground between the improvisatory excesses of fellow countrymen Acid Mothers Temple and into-the-void experimentalists Ghost (the Japanese veterans, not the Swedish metal group). Leadoff track “Green Sugar” uses a pulsing base line and twin guitar licks to recall late Sixties UK acts such as Man. The lo-fi production values, swathed in reverb, often evoke a pastoral vibe, even as the explosion of feedback on “Silver Owl” offers something entirely different. Several instrumentals raise the question of whether these present a way to fudge song composition. Or it could be untrustworthy English language skills. Anyway, a band to watch.

13. PLAZA-Quilt (Mexican Summer/Kemado Records) Boston quartet increases their stylistic breadth from the earlier wyrd folk leanings of their *Held in Splendor* (2014 *Jukebox Awards* Top Twenty). Ofra Haza-by-way-of-Grace Slick vocals courtesy of Quilt’s Anna Fox Rochinski on opener “Passerby” offer a bit of neo-psychedelic seasoning. Frequent instrumental and production references to *Revolver*-the Beatles are an added selling point.

14. REQUIEM-Goat (Sub Pop) Masked Scandinavian ethno-rockers return with a more folk-leaning set. The music here combines the rave-ups on the previous *Commune* (2014 *Jukebox Awards* Top Twenty) with a feel recalling the contents of the soundtrack for 1973 pagan horror film *The Wicker Man* and its traditional British ballad fodder. The production funk can prove a bit wearying and the sporadic instrumental interludes can come across as filler, depending on the listener’s mood. Still, one can imagine them to be quite the spectacle live. Accompanying gatefold photos imply that Goat’s children are given masks early. Perhaps there is an initiation ceremony.

15. MOSEY-Daniel Romano (New West) What is it about Canadians that their love affair with country music can be so fickle? First k.d. lang, now Daniel Romano, whose *If I've Only One Time Askin'* (2015 *Jukebox Awards* Top Twenty) presented a recreation of the Sixties Nashville sound that was both knowing and ironic, but recognized country music's considerable verities. Apparently, this was all just a bit of Beatlemania—the tribute band, not the cultural phenomenon. *Mosey* pays homage to Bob Dylan, featuring a hazy cover photo of Romano sporting a *Highway 61 Revisited* hairdo and voice characterizations of the Nobel Prize-winning legend dotted throughout the programme. Being a musical chameleon usually means you have no firm sense of your own style, as evidenced by the hundreds of stylistically agnostic young bands who change flags with every album. That said, Romano's talents for melody and songcraft make this outing entertaining despite your host's objections. Romano's attempts to evoke middle Dylan's verbosity are sometimes at war with the music in which they are embedded, while those horn charts that seemingly evoke Sixties Brazilian pop played by Eighties British studio musicians are either spot-on or a real stretch. A return to the country influence can be heard in "Toulouse," a duet which might remind you of Lee Hazelwood and Nancy Sinatra or Rod Stewart and Britt Ekland—or all of the above. Still, just because Romano could do all this does not mean he should have. Hank Snow from Nova Scotia never made a jazz album.

16. LADY IN GOLD-Blues Pills (Nuclear Blast) Power trio revisits Sixties hard rock, fronted by lead singer Elin Larsson, on whom most of the spotlight shines. Ms. Larsson is adept at selling her lyrics of wronged women and the struggle to overcome adversity, coming across as a more Sixties soul-oriented belter than Joe Bonamassa associate and comeback kid Beth Hart. However, the almost congenital ability of the Swedes to craft pop music comes close to torpedoing the "rockist" ambitions of the band. One wants more guitar here in the same way one wants more gangland killings in *The Godfather Part III*. Still, this is enjoyable for the work of a young band with a fondness for older musical forms.

17. IV-Black Mountain (Jagjaguwar) Vancouver, Canada band seems to have a musical identity problem. They present a kind of early Seventies hard rock, but there is also an Eighties UK indie rock influence as well ("Cemetery Breeding" for one). Throw in the occasional Pat Benatar flourish from vocalist Amber Webber and things get mighty bewildering. The presence of keyboard synthesizers becomes an anachronism that dissipates the power of the guitars.

18. THE UNBORN CAPITALIST FROM LIMBO-Cory Hanson (Drag City) Wand guitarist goes the singer-songwriter route using "chamber folk" settings backed by a string quartet. This translates into a preponderance of atmosphere over the unified presentation of the typical solo effort. One distraction is Hanson's voice, a bit mannered in the way Zager and Evans were on their 1969 #1 hit "In the Year 2525." The lyrics overflow with outlandish images of love and death, conveying a haunting emotional friction.

19. BLACKSTAR-David Bowie (Columbia) Farewell album from the veteran English performer recorded while in treatment for the cancer which would eventually take his life. Listeners have been transfixed by the numerous lyric references to death and transition, as well as the skills of the backing band of young jazz musicians. However, it must be said that this is not breaking new ground. The Anthony Newley imitations are still here, framed by the moody weirdness in Bowie's music—the kind of ground Scott Walker plowed before he became a sound artist making figurative hothouse flowers in studio experiments. This is the Bowie you have heard on *Scary Monsters* or seen in his arty videos for years. As such, this is a eulogy delivered to the already converted.

20. HEAVY AIR-Lavender Flu (Holy Mountain) Home recordings done the old fashioned way—on Tascam tape deck—by Charles Gunn and his pals over a period from 2009-2014. Experimentation not as weirdly realized as Elephant 6 outlier Julian Koster or noise mongers such as artsy cult band Destruction Unit. The 30 cuts here stand as songs interspersed with brief instrumentals. It nets out as screwing around with moments of accidental lucidity.

WAKE UP BEFORE YOU DIE-Vibravoid (Stoned Karma Records German import) Veteran German neo-psychedelic band offers up a studio album, thereby running counter to Vibravoid's recent years' tendency to confine themselves to issuing live shows and archival work. The tracks mix visits to late Sixties covers and distortion box-fueled jamming out of the heavy underground sound delivered by students of Cream and Hendrix back in the day. Four bonus tracks are live, including "Ballspeaker," which runs 25 minutes, heads into the void and back again.

TIME WILL PASS-the Urges (Merisol Records Irish import) Irish quintet brings a throwback garage sound seasoned with a strong Doors influence circa *The Soft Parade*. Guitarist/vocalist Jim Walters penned this all-originals set and initial listens will confirm it as a must for fans of the best revivalists of the musical past, particularly those able to bring a personal stamp to their love of this era.