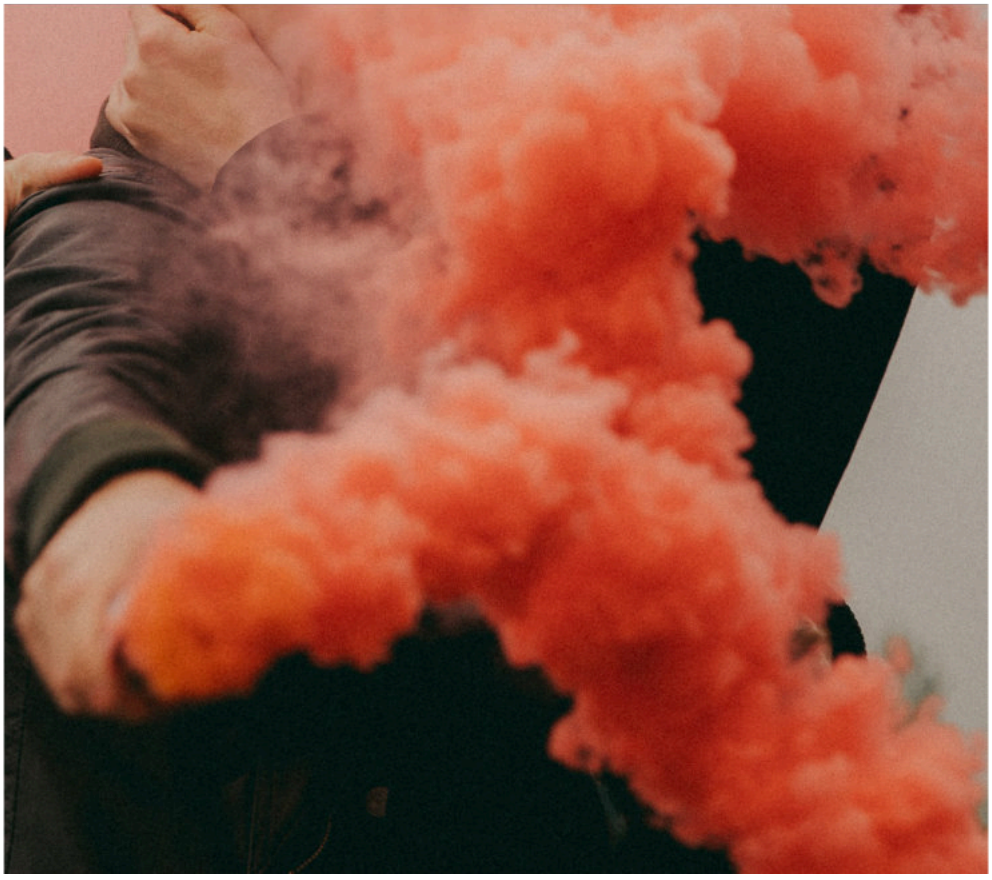
OUTCRY

HEARING AID MAGAZINE
ISSUE 23

ST ANDREWS
RADIO PRESENTS



OUTCRY

The University of St Andrews Students' Association's
St Andrews Radio Presents Hearing Aid Magazine

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OUTCRY

FOREWORD

ELI THAYER

I could listen to Mitski doing vocal warmups all day. Her devotion to practise and magnetic stage presence transform the mundanity of mono-syllabic arpeggios and nonsensical tongue twisters into a spellbinding performance of its own.

I read a chapter of a book by historian Christopher Page in which he repeatedly used "rhapsodic" as a technical term to describe songs. It made me angry.

A selection of musical (and personal) outcries:

Every time Ramsey Lewis resolves a banging, dissonant passage in 'Come Sunday' with that gospel walk up.

Whatever the next-to-last chord that Bill Frisell plays on the *Epistrophy* recording of 'In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning' is.

The perpetual wonder of Deerhoof.

Eiko Ishibashi, Tatsuhisa Yamamoto, and Jim O'Rourke turning impossible patience into a roaring crescendo on *Kafka's Ibiki*.

Myself each morning, thanking Ilene and Jack for all they do for this magazine. Appreciate you both, always.

Those entrancing exercises that enable the hellacious screams on 'Drunk Walk Home'. *That's* an outcry.

COVER

Anastasiia Mukhina

Kyiv, Ukraine

Taken January 13, 2021

FOREWORD

ILENE KRALL

When Eli, Jack, and I were discussing a title for this edition, the one thing I knew I wanted was drama. Something to grab the reader, the way music grabs our attention and refuses to let us go until the very last note. *Outcry* felt appropriate; I could picture the tendrils of the abstract thing that is 'music' reaching out in an outcry, demanding to be heard.

To me, the call of music is to connect, to understand. Art in all its forms presents an artist's lived experiences in the hope that the viewer can digest that art, relate to it, and project their own experiences to produce a new one. The articles in this edition, contributed by our amazing writing staff, seek to capture the many steps along the digestive tract of music. *Origin* (our first edition of the 2022-2023 cycle) asked, where does music start? *Outcry* asks, how far can music reach? With *Outcry*, we hope to scratch the surface of what music can become, and what it can represent.

I am so grateful to have been a part of Hearing Aid for the 2022-2023 cycle, and am so blessed to be surrounded by the people I have been surrounded by. Our passionate writers, our insanely talented designer Jack Sloop, who brings our words to life, and my co-editor, Eli Thayer, without whose unending support and encouragement there would be no foreword to write. I hope you enjoy reading this magazine as much as I've enjoyed being a part of its creation.

CONTENTS OPPOSITE

The Wild Swans (The Twelve Brothers Turned Into Swans)
Arthur Joseph Gaskin
1928

ON INVOLUNTARY SOUND

ELLA BERNARD

Why do we have an urge to make sound?

We make sounds to express those big emotions we feel when words just can't cut it. It's a universal language. Go back as far as you'd like - sound came first.

Investigating the connection between emotions and sound, I'm drawn to wailing in mourning rituals; pain so deep it can only be expressed by intrusive tones. Funerary wailing is a tradition historically present on every continent that developed independently. It's organic. When involuntary, these emotional wails are called keening. Reverend Donald McKenzie recalled hearing the beautiful haunting tradition at funerals, accompanied by banging on the coffin: "It wasn't singing, it wasn't anything you could describe..." (Cregeen, 2019). The phenomenon of keening is thought to be the origin of composed funerary performances and lamentations; Ted Gioia, former music staff member at Stanford University, would even trace the modern broken-heart anthem back to this origin. Considering the blues and breakup songs is a compelling evolution of vocalised pain. The emotional lament has a historically feminine association. These expressions of sorrow were regulated. Outlawed in fifth century BCE Athens, keening was perceived to be uncivilised and weak, and favour shifted towards the male-performed composed elegy (Gioia, 2022). Despite the ancient attempts to suppress wailing, it never died out, but perhaps took on a new form we have become familiar with. Replicating the pitch of involuntary tones in a mindful, complex creation is the origin of music as we know it.

COLLAGE 1
Camille Crozat
2022

These outbursts don't just stem from sorrow. In religious contexts, sometimes joy becomes too vibrant to be contained within the body and can only find release through rhythmic stomping and wailing words of praise. I once observed this practice in the closing numbers of a sermon, while visiting a baptist church in the Deep South of the United States. Each member of that community went off script that day, shouting out their own words of praise, some incomprehensibly belting out the elation they couldn't contain. This overload of joy in praise is reminiscent of keening, but set to words and emotionally inverted. Much like keening contrasts elegy, there is a contrast between these eruptive displays of elation and more solemn, reserved praise songs - think Gregorian chant (as an aside, if you've never listened to 'O Magnum Mysterium' while laying on the floor, I strongly encourage doing so at your earliest convenience). There is something almost torturous about the restraint of these songs. Those who practise, however, believe that this restraint is the vehicle of praise, like a musical bearing of the cross. There seems to be a back and forth between involuntary and the intentional when making sound. Intuitively, in the transition from involuntarily to intentionally making noise, the same tones and sounds recur across the same emotions. Perhaps when intentionally harnessed to convey emotion is when these sounds become music; or perhaps keening is a song we never realised we were singing.

We can distinguish the emotion of a sound. The feeling raised by laughter cannot be confused with the heart-stopping alarm of a scream. We might conventionally think of music as an evocative vehicle for emotion. But what if - in the same way as keening turned to funerary songs - musicians have learned to use music to replicate these sensations in our bodies. Even with no background in music theory, the general tone of a composition is identifiable within the first few bars.

Wailing is melismatic, hitting a range of notes within the span of one constant syllable. We are more familiar with melismatic sounds in the form of blues, as performers carry on the evocative progressions of lamentation into arranged compositions. It's likely that these melancholic styles of music expressing grievances evolved from death wailing, even if subconsciously, suggested by Gioia (2022). This may explain how many blues songs carry the same haunting feeling. Listen to Skip James' 'Hard Time Killing Floor Blues' and you'll hear what I mean. Gioia further roots even the most "macho" blues singers within the feminine keening tradition, listing the "feminine, epicene" styles of singers like Smokey Robinson, Michael Jackson, and Prince. "The keening sound simply isn't satisfying in a low register. We want to hear those high-pitched cries of grief and desire, and the baritones don't deliver the goods" (Gioia, 2022).

Music has a dual purpose, harnessing sound to both express and elicit emotion. The remarkable task of musicians is to carve out the sounds that mimic how they feel as a means of delivery to their audience. Artists are constantly inventing new ways to express the depth of a complex experience, learning how to replicate emotion with words, instruments, and harmonies. Some do this utterly effectively.

Now, I'm sure there's plenty of psychology to back this up, and if you're into that kind of thing, check it out and let me know how it goes. But you don't need a degree in neuroscience, biology, or music theory to connect with music in these ways. That skill is already within you, developed over millennia. Possibly, we might scream along to our favourite songs – whether in the shared space of a concert venue or alone in our cars – because we are experiencing a feeling so beautifully articulated for us that we can't help but join in.

FURTHER LISTENING:

Hard Time Killing Floor Blues - Skip James

Your Best American Girl - Mitski

O Magnum Mysterium - Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Pedro de Cristo, Morton Lauridson

Cherry - Harry Styles

Traditional death wails and keening songs from around the world | Europe, Asia, America, Oceania

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A FANGIRL AT HEART

ILENE KRALL

In 2010, One Direction burst onto the scene. Every lyric of 'That's What Makes You Beautiful' is permanently scarred into my brain, and I know I will always unwillingly know the full names of all five band members. I remember being in fourth grade or so, when my girl friends started to become fanatically obsessed with these five boys. One friend had a cardboard cutout of Niall Horan in her room, the memory of which still gives me shivers. Another, upon learning that Zayn Malik had left the group in 2015, had to leave school early to grieve.

The hysteria surrounding One Direction baffled me. Could I listen to their music without wanting to leave the room? Sure. Did I feel any connection to the five boys in the band? No, I didn't. I couldn't understand the frenzy of the girls in my year or the madness of the fans who bombarded the band as they landed at LAX.

Only a few years later, in 2014, did I start to understand. Stereo Kicks, who, like One Direction, debuted from The X Factor, caught my attention in a way no band or artist had before. The band quickly became my obsession from the moment I saw a "Meet the Band" video on YouTube. My obsession quickly grew to match that of my friends' with One Direction and, soon enough, I had a Twitter page devoted to Stereo Kicks, had bought merch, and was in the elite group of "original listeners".

Looking back on this obsession now, I am once again baffled. How did I become so quickly infatuated with people I had never met before? Was it even about the music? After all, by the time of their split in 2015, the group had only released one original single ('Love Me So').

COMPOSITION 1
Arielle Friedlander
2022

It's not just boy bands that have drawn in the frantic flocking of (mostly) tween-aged girls. Over the past decade or so, K Pop has steadily grown in influence in the United States and United Kingdom, with an almost unmatched intensity of fandom. Nor are fandoms or fangirls a new phenomenon. The Beatles, Queen, and Elvis Presley are among many older bands or artists that experienced the same level of listener hysteria.

Only a few decades ago, anthropological understandings presented the hysteria of fangirls as a problem to be scientifically dissected and resolved. Contemporary media often analysed the behaviours of young women towards their idols in a snide way, suggesting psychological issues to be the root cause of their enthusiasm.

Though I use the term "fangirl", male-identifying people are very much a part of many of these fandoms. "Fangirl" ultimately underlines the sexist misconceptions of fandoms and female hysteria. The term "fan", which has a generally more positive connotation, is derived from the term "fanatic", which the Oxford American Dictionary defines as "a person filled with excessive and single-minded zeal." In this sense, fangirls are the very same as any other fan, except their enthusiasm is stereotyped to be excessive, dangerous, and misplaced.

Regardless, fandom or fangirl culture continues, and today, it seems as if everyone has had an obsessed-fangirl phase. The attraction, however, does not seem to revolve around the music itself. Though the music or talent of the artists is often the initial attraction, fans who commit to the fandom level of obsession are often more concerned with the artists themselves.

Dini Cahyani and Yulia Purnamasari call this obsession "celebrity worship": young listeners admire and idolise artists based on the performers' physical attraction, eventually establishing a sense of self-identity and fulfilment that is reliant on or completed by the artist. Celebrity worship then transforms into celebrity involvement and, ultimately, parasocial relationships. The more obsessed someone is with a particular artist, the more they will engage with them until they eventually form imagined relationships between themselves and the figure of their obsession.

Though any form of obsession can eventually become harmful, in my experience, the greatest benefit to being a part of a fandom was the community created by a shared interest in and love for a particular artist. I never made friends more quickly than I did with other people who loved Stereo Kicks. There's a certain understanding between people who have lived through the blinding haze of fandom and parasocial relationships.

Though perhaps to an extreme, fans, fangirls, and fandoms ultimately allow artists to continue making and sharing their music. If music holds the power to connect people or create an understanding over a relatable feeling or experience, does fangirl culture not fulfil this very intention? I might not be able to look back at my old Twitter page without cringing, but in the end I'm glad to say I submitted to the fangirl culture, at least once in my life.

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FLOWER
S. W. Evie
2019

MORBIN TIME: MEMORY AND DEATH IN THE MUSIC OF KEVIN MORBY

RORY GIBB

"MUSIC WHEN SOFT VOICES DIE,

VIBRATES IN THE MEMORY"

—Percy Bysshe Shelley

Kevin Morby first emerged on the music scene as the bassist in folk-rock band Woods, before forming The Babies with Cassie Ramone of Vivian Girls. Since going solo in 2013, he has released seven full-length albums, garnering renown for his Dylanesque vocal affectations and an instrumental palette as much indebted to country as it is to slacker rock. 2022 was a successful year for Morby. He threw the first pitch for his beloved Kansas City Royals; his song 'Beautiful Strangers' was featured in an Airbnb advertisement; *Morbius* memes boosted his popularity; and, crucially, he released the best album of his career. *On This Is A Photograph*, Morby manages to seamlessly combine the two main thematic concerns of his career: memory and death.

COLLAGE 2
Camille Crozat
2022

The spectre of death haunts Morby's records from the outset. His debut closes with the slide-heavy 'The Dead They Don't Come Back', in which Morby passes a cemetery on his way to work and wonders what will be written on his grave. "As sure as I was born", he says, "I will die". An album later he pleads with someone to put his "body on display" in 'Parade', while 'Amen' finds him telling a friend, "I'm not dead, but I'm dying so slow". On City Music, Morby ponders "what song [he'd] be humming in line for the pearly gates". It's here that Morby begins to draw connections between music and death, establishing song as a means through which the transition from life to death can be made easier. "In my time of dying", he says, "you know the choirs will be crying/Little girls with long hair throwing songs into the air". Fast forward one album, and on Oh My God Morby musically reenacts these lyrics, as upbeat jam 'OMG Rock n Roll' suddenly pivots to a chorale. 'If I die too young, oh if that gunman comes—" Morby sings, before being interrupted by a heavenly choir.

Such an obsession with death is perfectly set up to be fused into a photographic concept album. Every photograph, according to Annette Kuhn and Kirsten Emiko McAllister, contains a "trace of something lost", which "confronts us with the fleeting nature of our world and reminds us of our mortality." City Music's 'Pearly Gates' contains a brief foreshadowing: "everybody's taking pictures inside St John the Divine," but This Is A Photograph expands on the connection between death and memory exponentially.

Perhaps the only thematic concern more prevalent in Morby's songwriting than death is memory. The interrelation between music and memory is by no means a radical insight. Reflecting on the bebop scene in 40s Harlem, Ralph Ellison said that "music gives resonance to memory." French writer Annie Ernaux wrote that "the starkness and paucity of music allow me to recall a whole episode of my life and the girl I used to be." Morby's own ideas about memory, however, seem to align more closely with those of the philosopher Jean-Marie Guyau, who in the 1880s proposed that sound is etched into a phonographic disk as memory is etched into the brain. For Morby, it is not simply that memories provide inspiration for songwriting, but that the act of songwriting itself functions as a method of memory creation.

Nonetheless, Morby's early music was less direct in its evocation of reminiscence. While each album memorialised the particular environment from which its songs were birthed, it was not until the 2016 single 'Dorothy' that memory became a subject worthy of exploration in and of itself. The eponymous Dorothy contains a threefold significance. Firstly, it refers to Morby's grandmother; memories of whom, as in the films of Alain Resnais or the novels of Marcel Proust, are triggered involuntarily by specific sounds and images. Just as an "airy and redolent phrase" on the violin reminds Charles Swann of the "unfamiliar delight" of Odette's love, so too does the smoke from a cigarette transport Morby back to "a song that [he] heard when [he] was young". But unlike in Proust, where music begets memory, Morby finds memory begetting music. On a second level, Dorothy refers to Morby's guitar, a red Fender Jaguar. The song, however, is by no means an innuendo-filled example of the all-too-common feminisation and fetishisation of the rock guitarist's instrument. Instead, 'Dorothy' displays Morby's fascination with how chords from his guitar have the capacity to evoke memory, and likewise how memory has the capacity to inspire chords on his guitar. It is an ode to how one Dorothy can invoke the other.

But there is a third Dorothy: Judy Garland's character from the 1939 film, *The Wizard of Oz*. It is no coincidence that in the song's music video Morby dons a pair of red boots. The harmonic structure of 'Dorothy' presents a curious inversion of *The Wizard of Oz's* ending, where Dorothy's return to Kansas is facilitated through repetition of the words "there's no place like home". The equivalent mantra in Morby's song is one of chords. The majority of the song features an incessant alternation between chords I and IV. Only the chorus offers any variation: a brief, but refreshing, turn to the ii chord. Tellingly, both times Morby lands on this chord, he sings the words "baby" and "Dorothy", evoking the comfort of grandmotherly love in childhood. While the mantra in *The Wizard of Oz* enables Dorothy to return from an ephemeral fantasy to the present, the mantra in Morby's song allows him, and the listener, to return from the present to an ephemeral past.

Morby's most recent album is based upon a similar relationship between memory and music. *On This Is A Photograph*, however, Morby also structures his songwriting around the running metaphor of photography. Photography, whose "Muse", according to John Berger, is "Memory herself", allows Morby to synthesise his explorations of death and memory.

The album opens with the title track, on which Morby recounts the evening his father collapsed at dinner and had to be rushed to the hospital. Waiting at home, Morby and his family consoled themselves by looking through old boxes of photographs, one of which seemed to be "having a conversation with the event that just took place". This "window to the past" of Morby's "father on the front lawn with no shirt on" reaches forward in time and gives life to a sickened man. In response, Morby's song attempts to reach backward in time with the same intention. More than just easing death, music now prevents it, just as a photograph can "oppose the passing of time". Morby previously played with the idea that music could revive the dead. In 'Drunk and on a Star', his guitar sings "as it rises from the Earth". But from Sundowner onwards, Morby's musical explorations of death and memory widen in scope. As with many singer/songwriters, Morby's lyrics contain a tension between a desire to express the intensely personal, and a need to appeal to a wide audience. This pull between the internal and the external is evidenced on Singing Saw's title track, in which Morby oscillates between purging his "songbook" or immortalising it. And whereas Sundowner found him dealing with the deaths of Anthony Bourdain, singer Jessi Zazu, producer Richard Swift, and childhood friend Jamie, the tragedies still feel very personal, owing to the intimate, campfire atmosphere of the record. With This Is A Photograph, the metaphor of photography finally facilitates a transition from internal to external. A photograph over time moves from private to public, both in its preservation of memory and in its "ghostly quality" of death. What were once family snapshots become historic documents, no longer merely capturing personal moments, but memorialising cultural codes and practices.

This is immediately apparent on 'Bittersweet, TN', a duet with Erin Rae which, according to Morby, is a "universal song about someone who gets diagnosed with something terminal." While songs like 'Jamie' no doubt resonate with anyone who has lost a friend, the fact that the subject in 'Bittersweet, TN' is nameless grants it a wider appeal. Elsewhere, Morby takes on the deaths of cultural figures, such as on the Jeff Buckley tribute, 'A Coat of Butterflies'. 'Five Easy Pieces', meanwhile, sees Morby paying homage to actress Karen Black by taking on the persona of her character from Bob Rafelson's film of the same name. "And how do you make a bad time last?" Morby/Rayette asks. "Get a camera, put it in a photograph." Here Morby is the camera, the photograph his song.

This triumvirate of song/memory/photograph is continued on 'Stop Before I Cry'. Directed towards Morby's girlfriend, fellow songwriter Katie Crutchfield of Waxahatchee, Morby delivers one of the album's most heartfelt lyrics: "Baby, if we part/Katie, if I hide/Then I can live in your songs forever, and you can live in mine". Tellingly, Morby goes on to tell us Katie "taught [him] how to shoot", playfully deploying a verb shared by both firearms and cameras. 'Stop Before I Cry' is an open acknowledgment of how music can forge memories and allow people to transcend separation, whether that separation is one of geography or one of death. It is reminiscent of an idea Pascal Quignard explores in his book, *The Hatred of Music*. Rhythm and harmony, according to Quignard, are primeval in their significance. Vibrations may create "intimacy between juxtaposed bodies", but they also allow people "to be touched from afar". The following track extends this idea. 'It's Over' recounts the shutting down of the music industry during the coronavirus pandemic. "I miss my life up on the bandstand", Morby sings, lamenting the loss of expression and community. "One of my favourite things about being alive", he would later comment in an interview, "is performing music for people." 'It's Over', then, represents the logical endpoint of Morby's explorations of death – the death of music itself. It is as if by invoking memories of music past – singing "songs from a motorcade", performing with Cassie Ramone "for the poor souls passing through our gallery" – Morby hopes, like a newly discovered photograph from some forgotten corner of history, to bring the artform back to life.

In the end, what Morby's music seems to reach towards is a liminal space outside of time from which memory can be transferred to both future and past, a reciprocal exchange where, like the disembodied hands in Bresson's Pickpocket, the distinction between giver and receiver is blurred. Dorothy and Dorothy. Young father and old. Karen Black and Kevin Morby. All exist in a mysterious limbo: the instant a camera shutter opens or a string is plucked.


CLOSING
Party
OCT.5
Sábado
VILLALOBOS B2B LUCIANO
A-Z ORDER
CAMPARI

CULT OF PERSONALITY: THE LANGUAGE OF COMMUNITY

GRACE ROBERTS

The cult of personality. It's how rockers like Axl Rose and Bon Jovi amassed a following and it's what won Living Colour a Grammy. For the song, not the saying. Between band names, song titles, and status symbols, "cult" has come to symbolise fierce community and a kind of underground reverence, separate from its more unsavoury connotations. But even though the term "cult classic" is most often used in reference to films, what can its application to the music world tell us about the etymology of community?

The language of the music community shifts and moulds to meet the needs of its members, fanbases adopting names to align themselves publicly with their revered bands; The Grateful Dead's "Deadheads" and Aerosmith's "The Blue Army" among them. Songs have been labelled "one hit wonders" and albums have "gone platinum." But what about the groups that take to the darker corners of the internet, the late-night slot on their college radio station? Their language is that of the cult.

The term "cult classic" surfaced sometime around the early eighties, first in reference to a number of low budget films that had lost traction on a commercial scale but had amassed a number of fiercely devoted followers. Performances of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* garnered such a dedicated following that fans all over the globe continue to perform it. Arguably one of the most well-known communities, the cult of *Rocky Horror* is a testament to the community and cooperation devoted to the show even decades down the line. Especially for music, the eighties symbolised a time of rebellion, leading to the formation of communities based on shared passions.

COLLAGE 3
Camille Crozat
2022

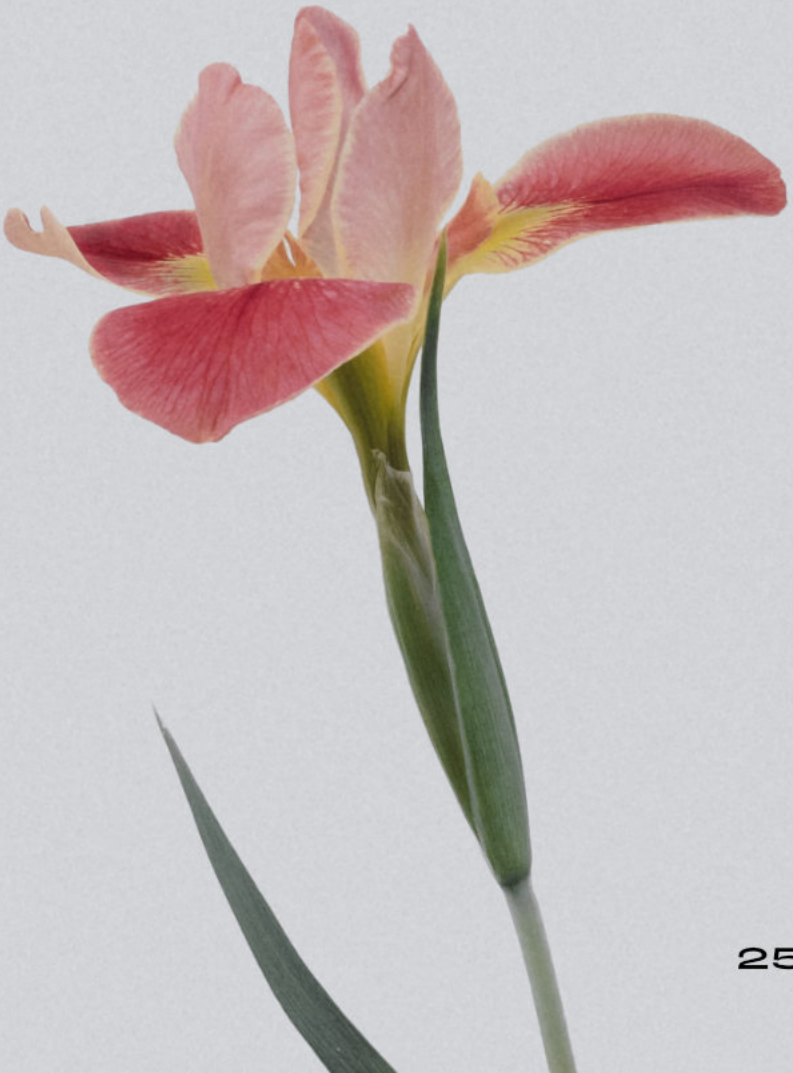
The origins of the word "cult" can be traced back to the Latin "cultus," meaning cultivation or care, which in turn influenced the French "culte," meaning worship. Even the term's roots in religion draw back to the earliest forms of societal grouping, seeking out methods of bonding and creating colonies. Cult and culture have the same etymology, rooted in religion and branching out from the idea of cultivation. Is it any wonder that both words have come to mean so much in the music community? Music is culture. It cultivates a following, a feeling. Humans are constantly seeking meaning, seeking a sense of belonging, and have often turned to music. What is a cult following than just a more devoted version of this?

The word "cult" slowly came to be redefined within the context of the music industry, moving away from the political and social upheaval of the seventies and adopting a more colloquial tone. For something to be considered a cult classic was to adorn it with status; people would devote themselves to a song or group as if it was a religion or way of life. For something to achieve cult status, then, said something about its lack of mainstream popularity, not its lack of fans. The thrash-rock band Slayer boasted hundreds of thousands of fans, but never achieved the same mainstream popularity that Metallica or Black Sabbath enjoyed. Some would say that Slayer has some of the world's most die-hard fans, but at the crux of their devotion, the sense of community they found within the music is what keeps them coming back for more.

Cult status is defined by the sum of its parts. The music acts as an initiator, but it stands the test of time because of those who appreciate it. The beauty of a cult following is that the power lies in the people, not the producers. The charisma of a lead guitarist or the magic in a drum solo certainly helps, but the audience holds the control over what becomes popular and what doesn't. The eighties churned out perhaps the most one hit wonders of any music decade thus far, the majority of which were hailed as wildly popular. However, cult classics like 'The Politics of Dancing' by Re-Flex, 'The Promise' by When in Rome, or most of New Order's discography, have remained hidden gems with devotees peppering the globe. Haven't we all experienced that feeling of finally finding someone who has heard of that song or that band? The instant sense of kinship?

A collective of listeners who are so passionate about music that they have formed a small, insular group with whom to enjoy it is a window into the tastes, niches, and micro trends of music. It tells a different story from the one perpetuated by *Billboard* Top 100s and pop charts, and changes the narrative on what music audiences can look like. Community can mean anything, from a group of three college students who idolise a local band, to a group of hundreds of thousands who obsess over a rock band still unrecognised by mainstream music media. Both are examples of cult followings, and both are valuable in their own right.

There is something poetic about the strength of the word "cult" combined with the elegance of the word "classic," and the combination of the two feels fittingly comprehensive for the scope of the music world. The lengths people will go to be a part of something, whether it be a fanclub or an audience, tells us that the music community operates on a language of inclusion. Cult followings are symbols of something beyond popularity and beyond normal appreciation, something closer to worship, chosen by the people. A community where the common denominator is their devotion to a sound. If that's not the purest form of community, what is?



TURN LEFT AT THE JUNCTION:

A DISCUSSION OF DRAMATIC HEEL TURNS IN POP

TOMMY MACGILIVRAY

There's nothing quite like the feeling of sitting down to listen to a new release from your favourite band or artist. You've waited for months and survived the agonising album roll-out, sustaining yourself only on the meagre serving of radio singles and maybe a promotional single. and finally the day of the record release arrives. And it's nothing like what you expected.

This was the experience of many Lil Yachty fans this year when, instead of the 'bubblegum trap' that he'd become known for, they were greeted with Let's Start Here, an album which can only be described as Yachty's take on psychedelic rock. This kind of dramatic turn into a new genre is becoming less and less common in the modern era, but has always been one of the most exciting and fresh things an artist can do.

When we think of the legends of pop and rock, so many of them have attempted this kind of dramatic about-face in their discography. It is often the ones who stick the landing that manage to cement their status as icons by doing so. David Bowie is a master of genre-shifting, once describing his creative process as "crashing your plane and walking away." Bruce Eder writes of his 1973 album Pin Ups that "after enjoying a string of fiercely original LPs going back to 1970's The Man Who Sold the World -- weren't able to make too much out of Pin Ups' new recordings of a brace of '60s British hits." Artists such as Stevie Wonder and Prince were no strangers to switching up their style. In Prince's case, he would often set a trend, grow out of it, and watch the rest of the industry produce imitations of his previous works well into his new eras.

COMPOSITION 2
Arielle Friedlander
2022

Women in pop are also no strangers to reinvention. Madonna and Cher practically wrote the book on it throughout their storied careers. Perhaps one the most iconic comebacks in recent music history is Cher's 'Believe'. The song was a complete departure from anything that came before in Cher's almost 40-year career and would become the blueprint for a new electronic wave of dance music that began in the 90s and continues to influence pop today.

Starting off as an almost run-of-the-mill power ballad, the song underwent an arduous journey to become the record that we know it as today. The chairman of Warner at the time, Rob Dickins, asked the production studio Dreamhouse to work on it; their goal was to make a dance record that would not alienate Cher fans. In many ways this is reflective of why the artist needed to make such a bold move to shake up their discography and reawaken interest in their music. Cher's career was already decades old at this point, and in order to maintain interest, a new breath of life was needed to rejuvenate her career. Many argue that had she not taken the risk that she did by including the foreign, cutting edge production choices available to her, her career might have stagnated before the turn of the century.

However, these artists were making music in a wildly different way than the artists today are, not only creatively but logistically too. These logistical changes afford artists flexibility to drop more music quicker, but they have also shrunk the length of album cycles significantly and shifted the focus towards singles rather than the traditional album rollouts of previous eras. These were not albums that were dropped out of nowhere on Spotify or automatically downloaded onto every iPhone in existence (thank you, U2). And I would argue that due to the changing face of the music industry, the dramatic genre switch-up is becoming ever more a thing of the past. The way in which we consume music and media in the modern era hardly affords artists the opportunity to make such a shift. The attention span of the consumer is shrinking every year, and the shift away from selling records to selling singles is making committing to a dramatic change for an entire LP-length project harder than ever. Album consumption is at an all-time low, and the industry has been shifting towards the search for a viral single as the white whale rather than a cohesive body of work for a long time. According to MRC Data's latest year-end music report, album sales (both physical and digital) in the United States dropped to 102 million units in 2020, down from 501 million in 2007. At the same time however, overall music consumption is rising, which means that people aren't listening to music any less than they used to; they are just listening differently. Many stars seemingly burn out before achieving the kind of longevity that is required to facilitate a dramatic right turn in their careers, let alone the kind of fan base strong enough to weather the storm should this experiment be unsuccessful.

The megastars of the 2010s seem to have comparatively played it much more safely than their 20th century peers. The mind turns to Adele and Ed Sheeran, two of pop's heaviest hitters, who have done everything they can to avoid this sort of heel-turn. Both Sheeran and Adele have released four albums with a common naming theme, Adele's being her age at the time of release, and Sheeran's 'function' albums composed of Plus, Multiply, Divide, and Equals. They've carved a niche for themselves in the market, chosen a lane, and put their foot on the accelerator, being careful not to crash their plane along the way.

There are, however, a few remnants of the 'new album, new me' approach in the 2010s, and they've resulted in some of the most critically and commercially successful albums of the decade. I am of course referring to those of Taylor Swift. The miraculous way in which Swift backbends from aesthetic and style between projects cannot be understated. I would argue the most dramatic left turn in her career is her whole-hearted embrace of pop in 2014 with 1989. In a move that could have proved catastrophic for her career, she left her cowboy boots and guitars behind, and tried her hand at making a Depeche Mode-influenced synthpop album. Swift stuck the landing incredibly. The album went on to become one of the all time best selling projects of the decade and spawned some of her career-defining hits such as 'Shake it Off', 'Blank Space', and 'Bad Blood'. This would by no means be her final turn at following Bowie's advice of 'crashing her plane', as in 2020, she followed up her bright cheery pop album Lover with the wildly different, introspective, and alternative project, Folklore. I suppose her plane crashed in the woods this time?

Despite the success of Swift, it does feel like many of her contemporaries are treading much more carefully with their album cycles. One could examine the career of Lady Gaga in a similar lens, who took time away from her club pop roots to pursue jazz, acting projects, and... the Joanne album before returning to the dancefloor. These projects, however, were not met with nearly the level of success that Swift's were.

Overall, in today's day and age, it is seemingly becoming a genuine concern that the artistic heel-turn might become a thing of the past. The truth is that it appears artists in the modern era lack the feeling of security in their careers to risk a shift that might not pay off. While it could be argued that it might be a way to reinvigorate a career as it did in the case of Cher, it's also a possibility that artists begin to feel so trapped in their own boxes they fear they might not be able to break out. As artists, the itch to create something new is always there, and this is the reason Bowie gave for his constant switch-ups. He didn't do it for commercial success, but rather because he felt artistically compelled to do so. The worry is that artists no longer feel confident in their fan bases enough to take these risks. Hope, however, can come from the strangest places. Even Lil Yachty albums.

LITTLE SIMZ: A FORCE FOR THE FEMININE

ANISHA JAYA MINOCHA

Hip hop beats, piercing lyricism, and the warmth of choral songs. Little Simz, stage name for British Nigerian Simbiatu Ajikawo, uses concision and control to demonstrate both the hard concrete of the city and some place of ethereal utopia. A rapper who ingrains influences of hip hop, jazz and western Africa... it might be easier to describe what she doesn't do. The sounds Little Simz evoke Docs stomping down pavements in angst, whilst also providing softer turning points to reflect, uplift and elevate out of personal and political pain.

I first came across Little Simz in her 2018 feature in Mahalia's 'Proud of Me.' Since then, Simz's mission has stayed consistent. "Calling it quits is not in my calling," she starts to rap, offering a clear cut over Mahalia, starting to unpack and impart her big sister mantras of solidarity, support, and headstrong ambition. Releasing tracks since 2014, Simz's steady climb to fame and recognition can be tracked throughout her musical journey. As an independent artist with no major record label backing her up, Simz stands upon her own word. Alongside her professional struggles as a woman in the hip hop industry, Simz highlights the ways her relationship to wider political and social turmoil is ingrained within her personal poetics.

FLORAL WOMAN
Arielle Friedlander
2023

Despite rejecting the term 'female rapper' in many interviews and her tweet stating she is "not that," Simz's presence and works not only paves the way for other women in hip hop, but actively demonstrates female solidarity in her varied collaboration with other performers. One of her particular favourites is UK based artist Cleo Sol, who provides reinforcements to Simz in the form of heavenly verse of soft soul. Appearing in two of her most recent, and most successful, studio albums with the tracks in 2019's GREY Area 'Selfish' and 2021's Sometimes I Might Be Introvert 'Woman,' the pair work seamlessly with each other. Sol's softer tones complement Simz's confident lyrical prowess perfectly.

The force of feminine rap is fierce. Simz evidences the mastery of track openings in almost all of her studio released albums. Take the track 'Venom' from 2019's GREY Area, which opens with thirty seconds of lethal, high pitched, and fast paced violins. With barely a moment to catch a breath, you're hit with crashing symbols and the punching, plosive vocals of Simz. She spits and hisses like a snake, "never given credit where it's due 'cause you don't like pussy in power." Angrily identifies the injustices faced by women in the music and rap industry, she fights back. Her outspokenness, confidence and assertive ambition is easy to pinpoint, but shouldn't necessarily take us by surprise, considering the normalised arrogance from her male counterparts within the rap industry.

And then, Sometimes I Might Be Introvert came out, and blew the world to pieces. Winning 2022's Mercury Prize, the judges claimed that Simz's fourth studio album was, "as sophisticated as it is varied." With all the components which make it a Simz album, her lyrical sharpness and the flux of heavy drums with light guitar strums, this variation strives towards one pointed focus: as destructive as it is transformative.

In the opening track 'Introvert,' Simz's lyrics cover political corruption, gender and racial inequality. These themes emerge from the onset, with a blaze of trumpets and marching drums. Simz sings in the first verse, "parts of the world still living in apartheid (there's a war, there's a war.)" The whole track is a battle. It is, perhaps, her insights towards the social injustices faced by the black community which makes her lyricism so poignant.Simz obliterates obstacles and forges a path for her voice, and through this, a voice for other women of colour.

Simz's striving, striding, and marching continues throughout her discography, and her 2021 album is no exception. The low bass lines appear again, but this time with the rhythm of Nigerian afro beats such as in 'Point and Kill.' The title and rhythms demonstrate the steadiness, control, and measure of her work. Each of these components are evident in her tracks as she remains dignified and determined: "if I want it, it's mine." Simz takes on her heritage in this track, allowing her past to loosen her verse as she mixes beats and bars. This steady and self controlled elevation mirrors her patience and success to stardom, which paid off with this 2021 acclaimed album.

Simz's beats, like the consistent and heavy bass plucks in 'Gorilla,' stress how the sounds she uses match her controlled lyricism. Yet, no track ever sounds the same. Whilst music critic Alexis Petridis sums up Simz with the adjectives 'subtle and classy,' I feel that the bold trumpets within the first twenty seconds, which are soon drowned out by the bass and tapping of drums to introduce the vocals, is anything but subtle. Her speech is fluid, sharp and eloquent. The track ends with a chorus of female voices, uplifting and elevating her mission: "higher, going higher... yeah we are." Simz perfectly understands what it is she wants to say, and executes it in her piercingly prominent vocals.

The 'Woman' music video shows Simz with her entourage of women of colour, taking up residence in the luxury of a traditionally British mansion. Posing on tables and dancing down regal stairs, Simz claims a space for all the women of colour who have been oppressed , in the arts and elsewhere, for centuries. She demolishes boundaries which have held back women, particularly black women, from musical fame. Her poeticism, helped by the hands and voices of the chorus of women (her "angels" which so often float into her tracks) reconstruct an image of a reformed world.

Her most recent album, *NO THANK YOU* released in December 2022, perfectly defines the global and personal boundaries Simz aims to dismantle. Each album contains a mix of slower, lo-fi beats with hard lyrics, and we see this converge exquisitely on one of the softest songs on her recent album, a track straight from heaven, 'Angel.' Simz reflects on broader political frameworks which hinder the progress of herself and others like her ("how you go against the same system you were colonised by?") and reflects on moments from her personal life, such as mourning her friend, and model, Harry Uzoka who was stabbed by a fellow model. Simz looks back on the past as a stepping stone to create a relentless force for the future.

Simz knows how to pause as much as she knows how to move on. She demands vengeance and calls attention to issues which have been simply swept under the rug for far too long. More than this, however, she gathers what is left in her arms. Not just those who have stood by and supported her, but summoning and creating a global community of female solidarity.

Each track is an act of transformation. Within every album, perhaps even every track, if you dig deep enough, there is a tribute to the past. Whether this is her personal struggle in her journey to become a recognised rapper, artist, and creator, or the global fight for racial and gender equality. Little Simz is a rapper who truly encompasses rising from the ashes.

RHYTHMICAL RESISTANCE

HOW JAZZ HELPED UNITE WHAT THE APARTHEID TRIED TO DIVIDE

LAUREN KOSKY

The soft ambience created by the tinkling of piano keys as you enter a café, the background music study playlist, Ryan Gosling in a three-piece suit by a piano. Whatever comes to mind when you hear the word jazz – calming, improvised, instrumental – the word political might not be at the forefront. Yet, jazz music has a history of voicing injustices and enacting change. The genre often considered "background" music has been anything but in the history of protests and politics, especially giving a voice to those discriminated against during South African apartheid.

Wynton Marsalis, an American trumpeter Spotify crowns "the most famous musician in contemporary jazz" stated that, "Jazz is democracy in music." This statement creates a juxtaposition between the simplicity of jazz's truth and the complexity of its nature. Marsalis' five words encapsulate the duality of jazz and politics, rhythm and protest. Marsils' statement is loaded with history and the weight that jazz and its musicians have had on free speech, civil rights and liberty.

One such musician who exemplifies the influence jazz can have is Miriam Makeba. She is known affectionately as Mama Africa and she used her position as a successful performer to speak out against South African apartheid. The Apartheid ran from 1948 until 1994 and meant the segregation of races in an attempt to limit power, freedom, and communication between anyone in the "non-white" category. This meant black citizens were heavily discriminated against through the displacement of people from homes, denied access to education, and physical violence.

CRYSTAL RENAISSANCE
Arielle Friedlander
2023

Makeba's influence and anti-apartheid views resulted in her being viewed as a threat. She faced backlash by the South African government, including being effectively exiled in 1960 when the government refused to renew her passport when she was performing in New York. In 1963, her citizenship was revoked along with her right to return. Despite this, the South African government couldn't stop Mama Africa from spreading her message of freedom across international stages. Songs such as 'Pata Pata' were labelled insignificant but helped to launch Mabeka's career, providing her with opportunities where she could voice her anti-apartheid views. One of her most political songs, however, is a cover of Vuyisile Mini's 'Ndodemnyama we Verwoerd!' Although Mini's original version is difficult to find, Makeba's version is, "part marabi and part jazz." Makeba's version builds up its instruments and vocals throughout the song and develops a call and response, calling to listeners to respond in protest against Apartheid. The beat, soulful vocals, and light strumming of the guitar makes the song playful and positive, cultivating a sense of hope for the fight against apartheid. It is a song that demands enjoyment from its listener, as your head automatically bops along to the beat in a physical expression of enjoyment and nodding in agreement to the message of the song. The lyrics call for the then Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd, labelled the "architect of the apartheid" to "watch out" because the "black people were coming."

The song has an even more complicated history beyond being a political cover. Hours before Vuyisile Mini was executed in 1964 for political crimes, Ben Turok, a fellow prisoner, recalled hearing the "excruciatingly beautiful music" in the official ANC journal. He went on to describe the last hours of Mini's life and said:

"[Mini's] unmistakable bass voice was enunciating his final message in Xhosa to the world [Mini] was leaving. In a voice charged with emotion but stubbornly defiant, [Mini] spoke of the struggle waged by the African National Congress and of his absolute conviction of the victory to come."

The song Mini sang before he died was 'Ndodemnyama we Verwoerd!' Labelled a martyr, he died continuing to defy the apartheid regime. This final act of a condemned man highlights the significance of music in the politics of South Africa. Mariam Makeba carries through the message of resistance in her cover, reflecting on a regime people sacrificed their lives to end.

The music created during this turbulent time by South African artists helped draw international attention to the injustices of the Apartheid. In 1963, Miriam Makeba addressed the United Nations General Assembly on the apartheid. She asked, "would you not resist if you were allowed no rights in your own country because the colour of your skin is different from that of the rulers?" This speech ultimately led to Makeba having her citizenship revoked by the South African government.

Makeba is considered by *South African History Online* as the first black musician who was exiled due to the apartheid, but she certainly was not the last. It was the attention that was raised internationally through these performers who were denied entrance to their own country that pressured the South African government to begin the process of ending apartheid in 1990, with the legislation officially repealed in 1991. It was only after the end of the apartheid in 1990, after 31 years in exile, that Miriam Makeba returned to South Africa and became the representative for South Africa as goodwill ambassador for the United Nations. Hugh Masekela also returned to South Africa around this time and both him and Makeba continued to be politically active until their deaths in 2018 and 2008 respectively.

The music of this time has been called "Rhythmical Resistance", a title befitting of the striking patterns and beats that were reflected in the jazz created by these political reformers who gave up their lives and homes to fight injustice. They are a model of how influential music can be and are a reminder to take a second look at the unexpected history of the genres we think we know. Rather than Ryan Gosling or study playlists, take another look for artists such as Mama Africa, Hugh Masekela, and Vuyisile Mini. Jazz is far more than a background ambience, it is the sound of resistance itself, breaking the norms and assumptions of music to create dissonance both musically and politically. The "Rhythmical Resistance" is still very much alive and playing. Community programmes such as Jazz in the Native Yards created by Koko Kalashe have aims to bring social cohesion to cities such as Cape Town which are still informally divided spatially by racial groups. The programme puts on performances in local spaces such as gardens and is designed to bring people who feel un-welcomed and ignored into different spaces in the city, as well as to introduce them to local musicians and different genres within jazz. Jazz in the Native Yards has had great success in providing musicians spaces to play and funds so they can continue to. In an interview for Jazz in the Native Yards website, Kalashe encourages individuals to start their own performances in their own spaces, encouraging anyone to dispel the divide created by the apartheid which still lingers today. In the future he hopes to host a jazz festival in Cape Town, for everyone in and around the city to come and appreciate local music.

Community programmes such as these are attempting to repair and unite what the apartheid left divided. They show that music is still effective at providing social cohesion and connection between communities, even with turbulent histories and government tyranny. The hope of Kalashe and others is for the "rhythmical resistance" of the people to continue, from their own native yards to the rest of the city, transcending borders and prejudices in musical connection. The path paved by artists such as Makeba is continuing to be worked on, and if you listen closely enough you can hear the 'Pata Pata' of the feet running to lead the way to the free future jazz is constantly working towards.

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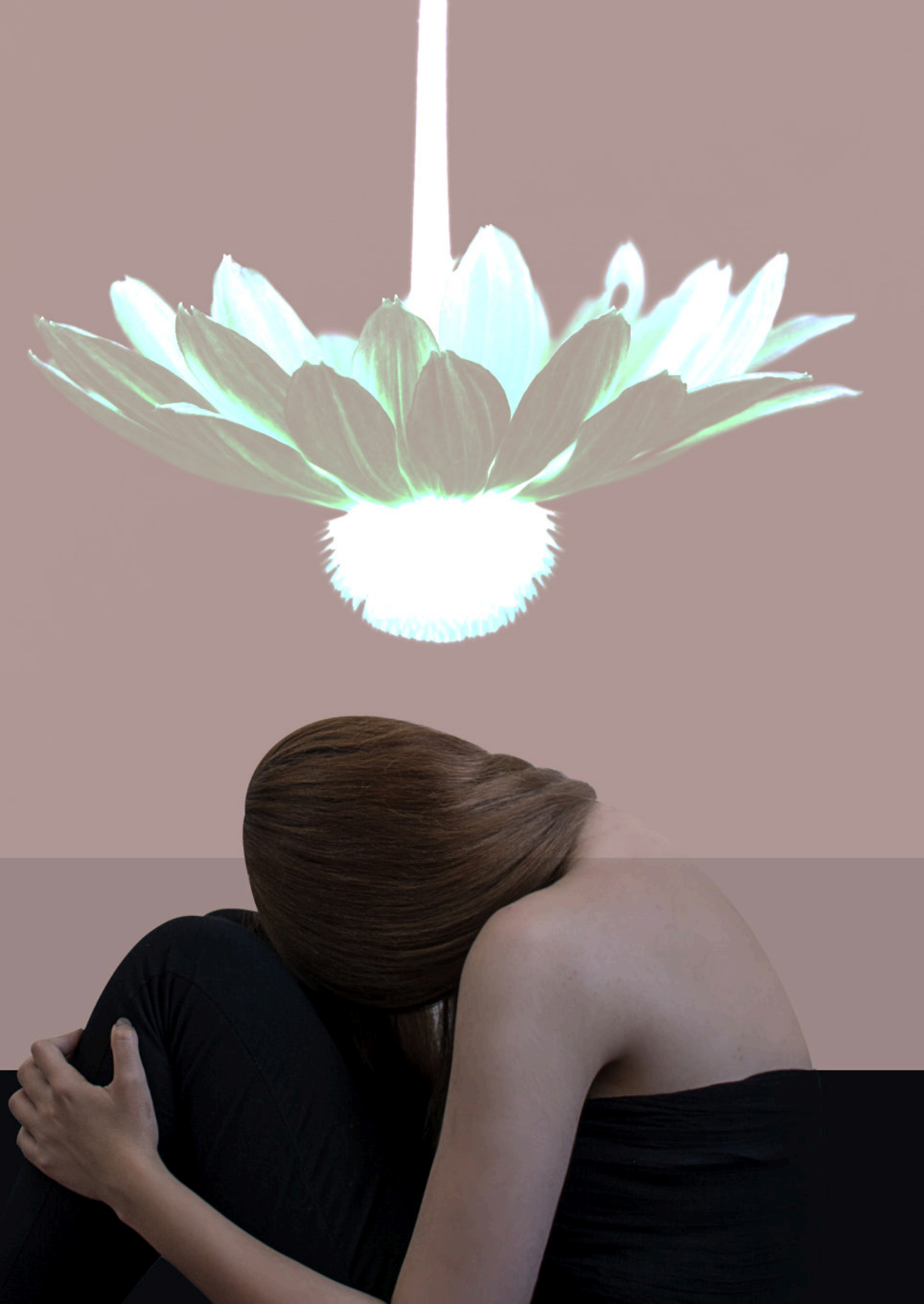
CRYSTAL BLACK
Woman: Jessica Felicio
Crystal: Irina Iacob
Taken October 16, 2018



SCREAMING: A FEMININE VISION OF THE APOCALYPSE

ENYA XIANG

In the nineteenth century, the white coat explanation for uncontrollable female behaviour was hysteria. Signs of this disorder included screaming, crying, mental instability, anxiety, and erratic fits of rage. Once a symptom of fragility, modern female singers have incorporated the scream into their craft. In refusing to sound pretty or presentable, these vocalists declare that women have a right to their emotions. In each song explored below, the scream plays a key part. These outcries tell us how the female psyche expresses anger and existential fears: by screaming to articulate agony clearer than any precise word.

Bikini Kill's 1993 hit 'Rebel Girl' was the ultimate lesbian anthem for the Riot Grrrl movement, a 90s subculture combining punk and feminism. Amid blaring drums and guitar strums, lead singer Kathleen Hanna whines with jealous disdain about a girl who "thinks she's the queen of the neighbourhood". The band's emo chick aesthetic and no-boys-allowed attitude attracted a young female fan base, who sought an outlet for outrage.

'Rebel Girl', however, is hardly a predictable love song. Hanna's lyrics veer suggestively as she shrieks about impending doom: "In her kiss, I hear the revolution". As she screams shrilly, "They say she's a slut", her voice scratches out wrath so deep-rooted, directed not towards the girl but at the rumour itself. Hanna calls her supposed nemesis "a sister" and abruptly asks her to be her best friend although we all know she wants more than that.

NIGHT TERRORS
Hadis Safari
Tehran, Iran
Taken December 16, 2017
Compositing: Jack Sloop, 2023

Another howling female voice appears on Pink Floyd's The Dark Side of the Moon, released twenty years earlier. During recording sessions, the all-male psychedelic rock band invited Clare Torry, a young female singer, to improvise over an instrumental version of 'The Great Gig in the Sky'.

The track initially introduces a male voice murmuring, "And I am not frightened of dying, you know. Any time will do, I don't mind." Over an easy piano backing, Torry's voice emerges with a dramatic flourish. Wordlessly, she wails with bright clarity, her vocals rising and falling effortlessly. She sounds pained, like a woman reckoning with her mortality, wondering what the sky holds for her.

Torry recalls in a *Rolling Stone* interview that after her first take, she thought to herself, "Maybe I should just pretend I'm an instrument." After her second and final take, she only received thirty pounds. Torry states in the interview that she had no idea that she was part of Dark Side of the Moon until she saw her name printed in the credits. In 2004, Torry sued for co-writer credits and won to redeem her scream. Without her vocal portrayal of feminine anguish, the song would indeed be incomplete.

Florence + The Machine describes similar themes of mortality and female liberation in 'Choreomania' from her 2022 album Dance Fever. Vocalist Florence Welch was inspired by a medieval phenomenon called dancing plagues, in which crowds of people danced recklessly to the point of mental and physical fatigue. In 1518, the city of Strasbourg recorded an incident in which a woman known as Frau Troffea, possessed by hysteria, began to dance uncontrollably. By daybreak, up to four hundred people had joined her and danced to death.

On 'Choreomania', Welch draws parallels between these incidents and her experience of panic attacks during the COVID-19 lockdown, and explores how dancing released her from anxiety. Quiet tapping, mimicking dance steps, keeps pace with the drums. Despite the liberation she finds, Welch sees death and destruction looming as she repeats ominously, "I just kept spinning and I danced myself to death".

Like Torry, Welch reflects on her position as a woman in the rock industry: "You said that rock and roll is dead / But is that just because it has not been resurrected in your image?" Throughout the track, she uses unnatural noises, like shouting and huffing, to evoke outrage. Welch's heaving breaths form a rhythmic pattern, ringing like birdsong. As the song approaches its end, she begins to yell a warning: "Something's coming, something's coming".

Similarly, the Rolling Stones' 1969 anti-war hit 'Gimme Shelter' reflects the social disarray and violence of its era. The all-male rock band invited gospel singer Merry Clayton to guest on what Mick Jagger calls "a kind of end-of-the-world song" in a *Rolling Stone* interview. Through jarring lyrics detailing wartime brutality, Clayton's cries reach an alarming, panicked intensity. Her voice cracks mercilessly as she screams the word "murder".

Pregnant when she recorded her vocals, Clayton suffered a miscarriage the day after the session. She partially blames the physical strain of pushing the heavy studio doors and reaching the necessary high notes. According to a Guardian interview, Clayton has always associated dark memories with this single. "You had all this success with 'Gimme Shelter'", she says, "and you had the heartbreak with this song."

A contemporary end-of-the-world vision unfolds in another 2020 pandemic release, Phoebe Bridgers' 'I Know the End'. The folk ballad paints a desolate sketch of armageddon in a world that looks dangerously familiar to ours. Over quiet piano, Bridgers describes a scene: "Windows down, scream along to some 'America First' rap-country song /A slaughterhouse, an outlet mall, slot machines, fear of God". The announcement of Judgement Day's arrival breaks the calm before the storm. Ceremonial trumpets, eerie strings, and odd crashing sounds brawl with Bridgers' screams. The last few seconds end with a solitary raspy breath.

The apocalypse is coming, and these women are its harbingers. Their screams unlock a shared vision of the end; a story of chaotic destruction that is really an attempt to understand the present. The guttural sound of feminine rage and terror crosses boundaries of time and genre. Yet the hysteria of women is nothing if not sound.


WHIT

THE CASE AGAINST THE BLEND

MIA ROMANOFF

Playlists are my love language. Whether my friend calls me to complain about a musical, logistical, or emotional problem, they are likely to be met with me asking, "do you want a playlist?" It's how I share new artists I'm passionate about, provide comfort for struggling friends, and perpetuate my agenda that experimental Russian music is the best solution to stagnating study sessions. I am obviously not the pioneer of this response; the practice of crafting unique lists of songs for those you care about is an old one. From making custom mixtapes, to burning CDs, to Spotify playlists, sharing music has always been a labour of love and a dedication of time.

Despite the constant evolution of music listening technology, the tasks of curation and sharing have been turned on their head in recent years, creating a multifaceted landscape of problems. While Spotify has made the endeavour of playlist curation easier, faster, and more accessible, they have also created a multitude of playlist features that kill the very essence of the task of creating a playlist for yourself and others. These features include personalised 'Discover Weekly' playlists, which are mass produced mood- and genre-based playlists, and now, 'Spotify Blends,' where you and friends can ask Spotify to make you a playlist that puts together songs based on your listening habits. While these features are all very convenient and sometimes lead to great discoveries, the processes they're replacing are the aspects of discovering and listening to music that build community. When new music is delivered to you, it feels like an unnecessary chore to go to the record store, read music magazines, or even ask friends for recommendations.

COLLAGE 4
Camille Crozat
2022

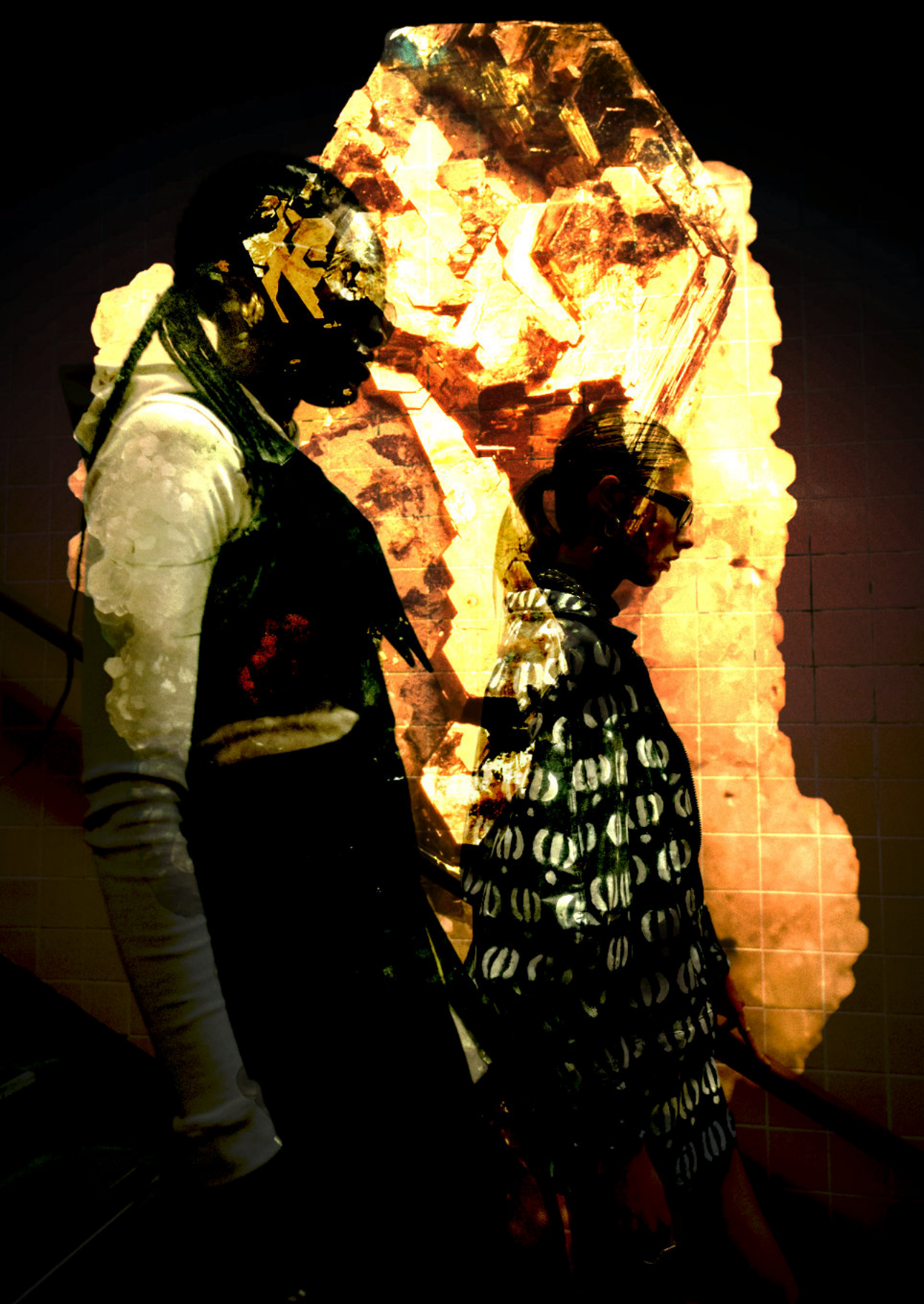
The problem persists with Spotify's playlists that are meant to reflect a certain mood. With specific mixes such as Surf Rock Sunshine, My life is a movie, IRLANGEL, and even Sad Missouri Mix, it's now easy to turn your mind off and listen to whatever has been chosen for you by the algorithm gods. Again, it is not as if people have always had to carefully select their own music, but with radio, being passive did not remove you from a larger community. In fact, being resigned to the picks of the DJs and limited to a select few channels, means that mindlessly listening to the radio is tied to discovery and more importantly, another person. Because of this, radio, unlike curated playlists, contributes to a larger and involved culture around music. Ultimately the question becomes: what do we give up when we let algorithm curated playlists become the default? How does thoughtless perfection prevent music from being a centering force for community building?

Despite my qualms with 'Discover Weekly' and mood or genre playlists, the most egregious of these playlist features has to be 'The Blend.' As the algorithm jams songs that each party listens to into a playlist that is both disappointing and constantly changing, what should be a communal experience feels like a lacklustre compromise.

The first summer my older sister had her driver's licence, she would pick me up from work everyday and immediately the fights about the music would ensue. Eventually the arguments became so insufferable that we sat down and made a playlist full of songs we each loved that the other could tolerate. It was a long and ongoing process with songs being added, taken off, and aggressively skipped as the summer went on. Despite how time consuming the task was, it was the process of combining our music tastes that gave the playlist value. There should be fights and concessions, because making a joint playlist should be about creating a soundtrack with someone else for a shared experience. 'The Blend' attempts to painlessly merge people, which is perhaps why it fails. To listen to a song for the sake of another person, even if you despise it, is a show of love. If nobody has picked the song, let alone fought for it, the skip button feels far too easy to hit.

It is not that there are no benefits to these playlist features. They allow small artists to reach large audiences and sceptical listeners to passively find new music. I would be lying if I claimed I didn't find some of my favourite songs or artists from 'Discover Weekly', or that checking 'Blends' with my friends didn't lead to some fascinating conversations. At its core, it's not that Spotify playlists are evil, but rather that they can negatively impact community building when used indiscriminately, or as a replacement for connection. Spotify is showing no signs of stopping with new features, so it is up to users to prevent these features from turning playlists from an experience of sharing and discovery into one of isolation. Curating music, both for personal playlists and to share, while often overlooked, is vital to creating personal connections to music and to creating bonds with others. By investing time, energy, and passion into the curation process music is able to build community between listeners and most importantly, sharers.

SUBWAY
Women: Kevin Laminto
Crystal: USGS
Taken October 28, 2019



TINY TELEPHONE & THE ANALOGUE IDEALOGUE

OLIVER FRANK

1997 was a hard year to be a 30-channel Neve 5300 Series Mixing Console. 1997 was a hard time to be any piece of old school, analogue recording equipment. There were newer, sexier pieces of gear to be had. Pro Tools was taking over the recording industry. Digital audio workstations were a game changer for music producers, making it easy to modify, mess with, and record sound. On its face, this change was a good thing; music was getting easier to make. But, without many people noticing, something was sacrificed.

Since the advent of recorded music, producing a high-quality physical recording of music has been expensive. In the beginning of the twentieth century, phonographs – which bear more resemblance to an alchemical apparatus than a modern recording device – were used to cut sound directly onto wax cylinders. Eventually, the recording industry moved to magnetic tape, which, while more convenient and higher fidelity than going directly to wax, was prohibitively expensive if your name wasn't some scary sounding abbreviation like EMI or UMG. Record labels were the gatekeepers of this technology, and only allowed access to a select few.

TELEPHONE
Elena Koycheva
Taken: August 12, 2018

In the mid 1990s, this paradigm began to shift. Riding the increases in processing power, the music industry rapidly adopted digital hardware. An easier, more streamlined recording process enabled large artists to produce records with less studio time and more flexibility. It also opened the door for smaller artists to innovate and iterate rapidly, without needing to spend six months' rent to make a record. Close listeners, however, began to notice a distinct shift away from the warmth and colour that classic records were known for, and towards a glossier, slicker sound. To some, this was progress. To others, it sounded hollow, corporate, and soulless.

1997 was also a hard year to be an artist in San Francisco. Rent was rising every year, and tech companies were beginning to clear out longtime residents. John Vanderslice was one of these artists, and he, like the rest of them, was broke. After convincing a landlord to rent to him and engaging in some shenanigans with the utility company, he was able to secure a small warehouse space for him and his friends to make art in. Vanderslice dreamt of a different future, one in which people might still value the sound of analogue in all its warm, fuzzy glory. Additionally, he wanted to make analogue recording technology accessible to anyone who could scrape together a couple hundred bucks. To this end, he opened the Tiny Telephone recording studio. At its centre, a Neve 5300 Series Mixing Console.

In hindsight, the success of Tiny Telephone seems obvious. Access to vintage analogue equipment at a fraction of the price of major studios, not to mention the community that came with it, was something hard to come by. But at the time, people told Vanderslice that he'd never succeed charging so little, with such outdated equipment. But to raise prices would have gone against Vanderslice's philosophy, and Tiny Telephone's raison d'être. Throughout its history, Tiny Telephone was booked nearly year round, with even large bands struggling to book time in the studio. It became a hub for some of indie rock's most seminal acts, including Death Cab for Cutie, the Mountain Goats, Sleater Kinney, and Deerhoof. If you listen to their records, you'll hear a humanity that is lacking from a lot of records made contemporaneously.

John Vanderslice is an ideologue and a purist. To put it in his words: "Digital is fucking terrible." Whether that's actually true is murky. J Dilla used a fully digital Akai MPC 3000 to make his records. King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard uses Ableton Live, a digital audio workstation, to create their cutting edge, warm, low-fi prog rock. But in some ways, it's not important that Vanderslice is "right", whatever that would mean. What matters is that the art his studio has produced over the last two decades is beautiful, and his insistence on analogue is an essential piece of that puzzle.

Today, analogue is back, and it doesn't seem to be going away. The Suzuki Omnichord, a handheld analogue synthesiser, currently sells for around £800, after it blew up on TikTok. Just a decade ago, you could pick one up for £100. The Neve mixing console that was used at Tiny Telephone for so many years sold for ten times what Vanderslice paid for it. Although the newest generation of musicians have access to limitless digital tools, many have discovered that limitations are an important part of the art-making process.

Of course, no amount of prescience on Vanderslice's part could stop the gleaming terminator skeleton of the market. In 2020, Tiny Telephone's original location closed its doors. The landlord that had protected it for so many years could not protect it forever. This has been the fate of many of San Francisco's collective art spaces, as tech companies price them out of existence. Tiny Telephone's impact on the recording industry, however, will stand for far longer, due to both the records produced over its 23 years of operation, and the thousands more it will inspire.

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ZAMROCK: CREATING A CULTURE

COSI LOVEGROVE-LEAK

The relationship between music and government has historically been antagonistic. The idea that a musical movement full of psychedelic sounds, genre bending, and government protest could be the direct result of the wishes of government officials seems unfathomable. In the wake of the Zambian revolution of 1964, however, the Zambian government decided that a complete rejection of Western culture was needed to create a national identity. The country was surrounded by colonised nations threatening its newly won independence. Additionally, television and radio broadcasted Western culture into Zambia, which to the new government seemed antithetical to the project of creating a national identity. President Kenneth Kaunda instituted a law which mandated that ninety-five percent of music on the radio had to be Zambian (5). Zambian musicians reacted by creating a genre all their own. This style was influenced by the psychedelic rock of the sixties and seventies, but it was decidedly Zambian, mixing traditional folk music and Zambian instruments and vocals with western musical styles (2).

CULTURE IN THE ROUGH

Woman: Joren Aranas

Crystal: Irina Iacob

Taken: September 14, 2018

EARLY HISTORY:

The music culture of Zambia before the revolution was diverse. Each of the 73 tribes that lived in the territory we know as Zambia had distinct musical styles. Workers arriving from across Africa and Asia in response to the copper mining boom brought their own musical styles. European music gained popularity, from Spanish guitar and gospel brought by Christian missionaries to Western rock like Buddy Holly, the Rolling Stones, and Jimi Hendrix heard over the radio waves. These styles mingled at gatherings known as 'beer parties' or 'sundowns' where people would come together to drink beer by the gallon and listen to music (2). People formed bands, and although instruments were hard to come by, missionaries had brought guitars and pianos, and some even built their own guitars. These bands played covers of rock songs. The rock movement coincided with a growing protest movement with its own patriotic folk music (5). Folk musicians like Alfred Mapiki, John Lushi, and Bartholemew Bwalya became famous by travelling the country and playing alongside politicians at rallies. It was a beautifully symbiotic relationship, because the musicians got to play to large audiences, while also strengthening the independence movement (2).

After independence, Kenneth Kaunda and the United National Independence Party promoted their vision of Zambian politics alongside Zambian Humanism, a philosophy similar to pan-Africanism (5). Zambian Humanism was a socialist, nationalist movement which emphasised African agency and culture. This philosophy bore new policies mandating 95% of the music on the radio had to be Zambian, which motivated the bands that had been playing covers and folk music to create a genre of their own.

WITCH (We Intend to Cause Havoc) is one of the most famous early bands to come out of the movement (4). Their first two records, Introduction and In the Past, are reminiscent of the western rock they were inspired by: topics included girls, smoking weed, and having a good time. The genre was born in Lusaka and other city centres where, in light of independence and an improved economy, people could hang out, party, and enjoy music (2). In 1973, Kaunda added a new policy that albums had to contain some patriotic songs. The direct introduction of politics into the music changed the genre irrevocably (5). Writing patriotic songs inspired political music which not only supported the nation, but also criticised and commented on social and political life.

CREATING A SOUND:

Zamrock is immediately recognizable. The fuzzy guitar lines and lyrics in English, Bemba, Nyanja, or other regional languages create a distinctive sound. Western influences mix with kalindula, a musical style characterised by an up-tempo rhythm and the kalindula bass guitar, in addition to homemade guitars and drum sets . These inputs vary by artist; some adopt a stronger folk influence, some incorporate blues, and others play more stripped-down. Fundamentally, however, it is the characters that make the genre.

Frontmen like Paul Ngozi of Ngozi Family (my introduction to Zamrock), Rikki Ililonga of Musi-O-Tunya, and Keith Mlevhu pioneered the genre, often playing all or most of the instruments in recordings. Ilionga and Musi-O-Tunya are, in some sources, credited with the invention of the genre. They added African rhythms and saxophones and trumpets alongside psychedelic guitar riffs, creating a uniquely Zamrock sound, and invoking Afrobeat stylings (3). Ngozi is another innovator of the genre. His band was one of the first to be categorised as Zamrock. Their funky psych rock sound and fuzzy guitars under Ngozi's distinctive voice is what many picture when they think of Zamrock (2). Ngozi himself was a character, often playing guitar with his teeth on stage. Ngozi Family is also known for having played their music in South Africa during apartheid which, while risky, clearly demonstrated their revolutionary chops (5). Ngozi's new sounds and poignant social commentary gained him and his band fame in the 70s.

Writing patriotic songs spurred thought about politics in general. Bands like The Peace and Gaula Band were more political. The Peace's Black Power is especially notable for how it echoes the sentiments of the Black Power movement in the United States. Cosmos Zani's Humanism adopts sentiments from Zambian Humanism (5). Some of the music, including several songs by Gaula Band, which were more overtly critical of the regime, were subject to censorship, but for the most part social commentary was permitted (2). Beyond social commentary and political content, however, many songs were simply about chasing girls and hanging out (5). When we think of countries freed from colonialism, we focus on politics, tragedy, poverty, and violence. But listening to Zamrock, I hear personhood, agency, flaws, and joy.

THE FALL AND REBIRTH OF ZAMROCK:

Following independence, Zambia gained control of the copper mines which were previously owned by foreigners. Unfortunately, the price of copper fell at the end of the 1970s, bringing on a massive economic crisis (4). Wealthier residents fled, leaving massive national debt and poverty in their wake. Kaunda was ousted and the AIDS epidemic began to ravage the population. Strict curfews were instated, yet some tried to keep the scene alive, holding shows in houses where people would stay all night. In the midst of such tragedy, however, music was largely thrown by the wayside. Many recordings were slowly destroyed by time, meaning that much of the music made during this era has been lost (4). Fortunately, a revival beginning in the early 2000s has reignited Zamrock's popularity, both in Zambia and across the world (1).

Eothen Alapatt – better known as Egon – with his record label Now-Again Records, has helped to revive Zamrock for a modern audience. He and his label were in the business of finding obscure and eccentric music and Zamrock fit the bill. He came across a bootleg of Africa by Amanaz, and it immediately resonated with him (1). He tracked down recordings from WITCH, Ngozi Family, Amanaz, Rikki Ililonga, Musi-O-Tunya, and more. Many of the recordings were badly damaged: some were melted, scratched, and broken from being stored in poor conditions. Others had to be dug out of a hole in the dirt. Along with others equally passionate about reviving Zamrock, Egon worked to salvage the recordings. He also got in contact with some surviving members of Zamrock bands to get their permission to release their music and tell their stories. Now-Again Records reissued many records and created anthologies like The Story of Zamrock and the Welcome to Zamrock! volumes, along with a book of the same title detailing the history. Original recordings are nearly impossible to find, and those that do exist are expensive and poor quality (5). Egon and Now-Again Records have made these sounds accessible to a new generation of listeners around the world.

The music culture of this tiny country during these decades was singular and incredible. Zambia had a population of five million, yet contained a music culture which rivalled Nigeria's, a country twelve times the size. These innovative artists screamed to be heard, and in telling their stories they created an artistic movement that documented the first years of culture in a newly liberated nation.

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