



Redemption

RELATIVELY DARK BLUE NEITHER PURPLE NOR GREEN

<p>WYBC YALE RADIO</p> <p>RELATIVELY DARK BLUE NEITHER PURPLE NOR GREEN 30: REDEMPTION</p> <p>RDBNPG.COM</p> <p>EDITOR IN CHIEF PETER NEKRASOV</p> <p>DESIGNERS KYLA ARSADJAJA STEVEN RODRIGUEZ</p> <p>PHOTOGRAPHER DAWN KIM</p> <p>PRINTING NOKAUT, MX</p> <p>TYPEFACE SELECTRIC PRO BY KYLA ARSADJAJA</p> <p>RDBNPNG IS THE MUSIC MAGAZING OF WYBC YALE RADIO. THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS MAGAZINE ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHORS AND DOES NOT REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE YALE BROADCASTING COMPANY OR YALE UNIVERSITY. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING TO RDBNPNG CONTACT: ZINE@WYBC.COM</p>	<p>PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY DAWN KIM AT THE REDEMPTION CENTER 163 BOSTON POST RD, WEST HAVEN, CT 06516 (203) 937-0222</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 AVRIL SHE'S COMPLICATED LAURIE ROARK2 THE LOAN WISEMAN CONOR JOHNSON3 TAKE IT ALL OR LEAVE IT KIRAN BAUCOM4 "STOP; NOW THINK ABOUT IT": RECKONING WITH THE SAD TRANSFORMATION OF B.O.B. BRITTANY MENJIVAR5 THE BOOK OF DANIEL DAVID HURTADO6 JAIL GUITAR DOORS MILO REED7 FANTASIZING THE SIGHT OF MANHATTEN JARED BRUNNER8 THE REDEMPTION OF MR. BRIGHTSIDE JOSEPH PECK		
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

THE INITIAL IDEA FOR THE REDEMPTION ISSUE SPROUTED IN THE SPRING OF 2018, WHEN WYBC BRIEFLY SUSPENDED OPERATIONS DUE TO A LAPSE IN LICENSING PAYMENTS. AS A MEDIUM THAT IS OFTENTIMES OVERLY CONCERNED WITH ITS POSITION IN THE AGE OF STREAMS AND SCROBBLES, RADIO WAS THROWN INTO A SPIN, AND CONVERSATIONS TOOK PLACE ABOUT THE LEGITIMACY OF THE FORM. AT THE TIME THERE SEEMED LIKE A NEED TO DO SOMETHING: CHANGE THE APPROACH, MIRACULOUSLY REINVENT BROADCASTING. BUT SOMEHOW THE WHOLE THING DISAPPEARED, SHOWS RESUMED IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS, THINGS NATURALLY WENT BACK TO NORMAL. IF THERE IS ANYTHING WE LEARNED FROM THE FIASCO, IT'S THAT THE PANIC WAS IN OUR HEADS, AND THAT THERE WAS NO REAL NEED FOR THE GREAT REDEMPTIVE EVENT. THINGS JUST RESOLVED ON THEIR OWN, MADE UP FOR THEMSELVES, WITHSTOOD THE TEST OF TIME. THIS IS RADIO'S CONSTANT PREDICAMENT: RADIO IS DOOMED, BUT IT'S ALSO NOT GOING ANYWHERE ANYTIME SOON.

EVERYONE LOVES A GOOD REDEMPTION STORY, AND IT'S MY HOPE THAT THIS ISSUE WILL SERVE AS A KIND OF REDEMPTION IN ITSELF. THIS ALL HAPPENED SO LONG AGO—AVRIL LAVIGNE'S SK8R GRRL PERSONA, B.O.B'S FLAT EARTH CONSPIRACIES,

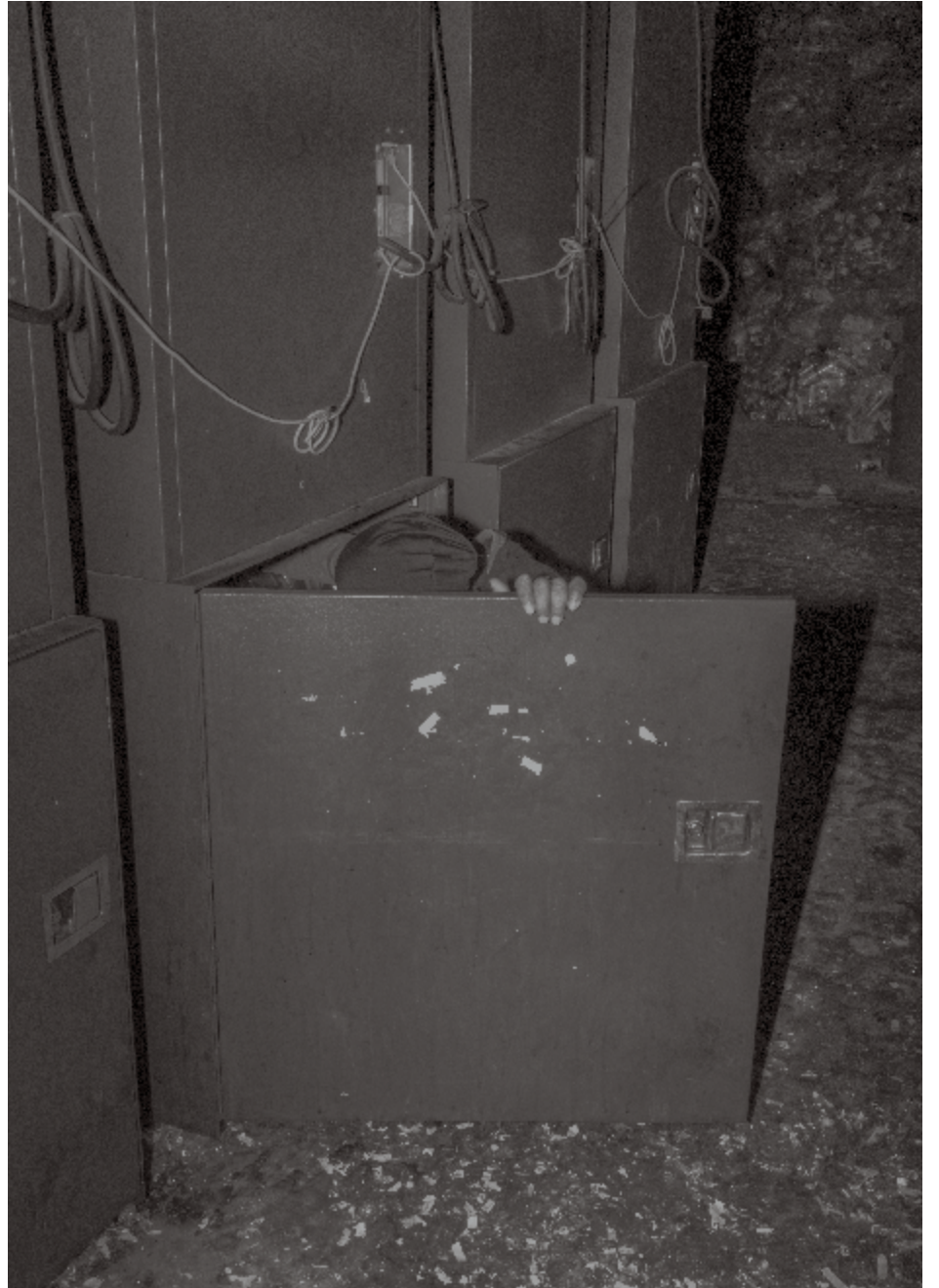
RADIO'S SHUTDOWN—THAT I'M SURE YOU MUST HAVE FORGOT ALL ABOUT IT. IT'S SOME OLD DOORS WE'RE KNOCKING ON. WE DIDN'T HAVE TO BRING IT BACK UP, BUT WE DID SO THAT'S ON US AND MAYBE MUSIC JOURNALISM IS EVIL FOR IT. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO TROUBLED FIGURES LIKE KANYE, WE LIKE THEM SO MUCH THAT WE WANT THEM TO SUCCEED, TO TAKE BACK THEIR NARRATIVE. AND WHEN THEY DO, IT HAS TO BE SOMEONE'S JOB TO, YOU KNOW, NARRATE.

AND SO WHAT IS THE FATE OF ALL THINGS DEAD? WILL FIDGET SPINNERS, CHILLWAVE, AMERICAN FOOTBALL MAKE EXCITING RETURNS IN 2019? MAYBE THEY'LL BE BACK WITH A BANG. LET'S NOT FORGET, CASSETTE SALES GREW 23 PERCENT LAST YEAR, RIVERS CUOMO MADE IT BIG WITH THE TOTO COVER, AND MGMT PUT OUT A SYNTHPOP RECORD.

BUT MAYBE THOSE GUYS WERE NEVER REALLY GONE. NO GOOD THING EVER DIES, AND PERHAPS EVERYTHING ELSE IS PAST THE POINT OF REDEMPTION. BUT YOU NEVER REALLY KNOW. MAYBE B.O.B HAS RECORDED THE GREATEST ALBUM EVER AND HE'S JUST NOT LETTING ANY OF US HEAR IT.

RADIO IS DEAD, LONG LIVE RADIO,

PETER



AVRIL, SHE'S COMPLICATED

LAURIE ROARK

IT'S 2004. I'M FIVE YEARS OLD AND SITTING IN THE BEDROOM OF MY BEST FRIEND'S TEENAGE SISTER. HER WALLS ARE COVERED IN POSTERS, AND SHE HAS A STACK OF CDS AS TALL AS I AM. MY FRIEND PICKS HER FAVORITE FROM THE STACK AND PUTS IT IN THE CD PLAYER. AVRIL LAVIGNE'S HEARTBROKEN VOICE SINGS OUT TO US: WHY'D YOU HAVE TO GO AND MAKE THINGS SO COMPLICATED?

LAVIGNE TURNED 34 ON SEPT. 27, 2018. SHE'S RELEASED FOUR ALBUMS SINCE THE TEENAGE MELODRAMA OF HER BREAKOUT SINGLE "COMPLICATED" ON LET GO IN 2002. TWO YEARS LATER, WITH UNDER MY SKIN (2004), LAVIGNE FULLY DEVELOPED THE GRUNGE PERSONA FOR WHICH SHE IS SO WELL KNOWN. IN "MY HAPPY ENDING," SHE SINGS OF LOST LOVE WITH THE SAME RAW TEENAGE EMOTION OF "COMPLICATED," CLEAR ELECTRIC GUITAR RESOUNDING BEHIND HER EMOTIONAL VOCALS. FROM THE OUTSET OF HER CAREER, LAVIGNE WAS DEFINED BY HER LOOK: WIDE SKATE PANTS, A TANK TOP, AND A NECKTIE. WHILE LAVIGNE'S MUSIC STRAYED LITTLE FROM THE OTHER POP OF THE PERIOD, HER FASHION CHOICES DEFINED HER AS A MEMBER OF THE COUNTERCULTURE. LAVIGNE WAS A GRUNGE, PUNK, SKATER, AND SOMETIMES GOTH, GIRL WITH WIDE MUSICAL APPEAL. LAVIGNE WAS THE FEMALE COUNTERPART TO BLINK-182. SHE WAS THE ANTI-BRITNEY SPEARS. SHE WAS POP-PUNK.

WHEN LAVIGNE RELEASED THE BEST DAMN THING IN 2007, SHE ALTERED HER LOOK AND SOUND SHARPLY, DONNING PINK HIGHLIGHTED HAIR AND AN UPBEAT POP SOUND. IN "GIRLFRIEND," LAVIGNE'S INFLECTION SHIFTS FROM THE SOMBER TONES OF "COMPLICATED" TO UPBEAT CONFIDENCE. THIS SHIFT IN LAVIGNE'S PUBLIC PERSONA AND MUSICAL STYLE IS SO STARK THAT FANS DEVELOPED A CONSPIRACY THEORY AROUND IT. THESE FANS BELIEVE THAT LAVIGNE, DEPRESSED UNDER THE INTENSE PRESSURE OF FAME, COMMITTED SUICIDE IN 2003. TO CONTINUE PROFITING OFF THEIR POP-PUNK PRINCESS, ARISTA RECORDS ALLEGEDLY REPLACED HER WITH A BODY DOUBLE NAMED MELISSA, A DOPPELGÄNGER IN ALL BUT PERSONALITY. WHILE THE MELISSA THEORY IS WILDLY UNLIKELY, IT DOES BEG THE QUESTION: WHO IS AVRIL LAVIGNE? IS SHE REALLY THE SENSITIVE AND CONFIDENT SONGWRITER OF THE IMPASSIONED LYRICS OF SONGS LIKE "I'M WITH YOU" FROM LET GO: "ISN'T ANYONE TRYIN' TO FIND ME? / WON'T SOMEBODY COME TAKE ME HOME?" OR IS SHE THE ENTHUSIASTIC POPSTAR CALLING, "LET ME HEAR YOU SAY HEY, HEY, HEY!" IN THE BEST DAMN THING'S SELF-TITLED TRACK?

IN BOTH GOODBYE LULLABY (2011) AND HER SELF-TITLED LP (2013), LAVIGNE ASSERTED TRIUMPHANT PARTY POP AS HER NEW SONGWRITING STYLE, RELEASING

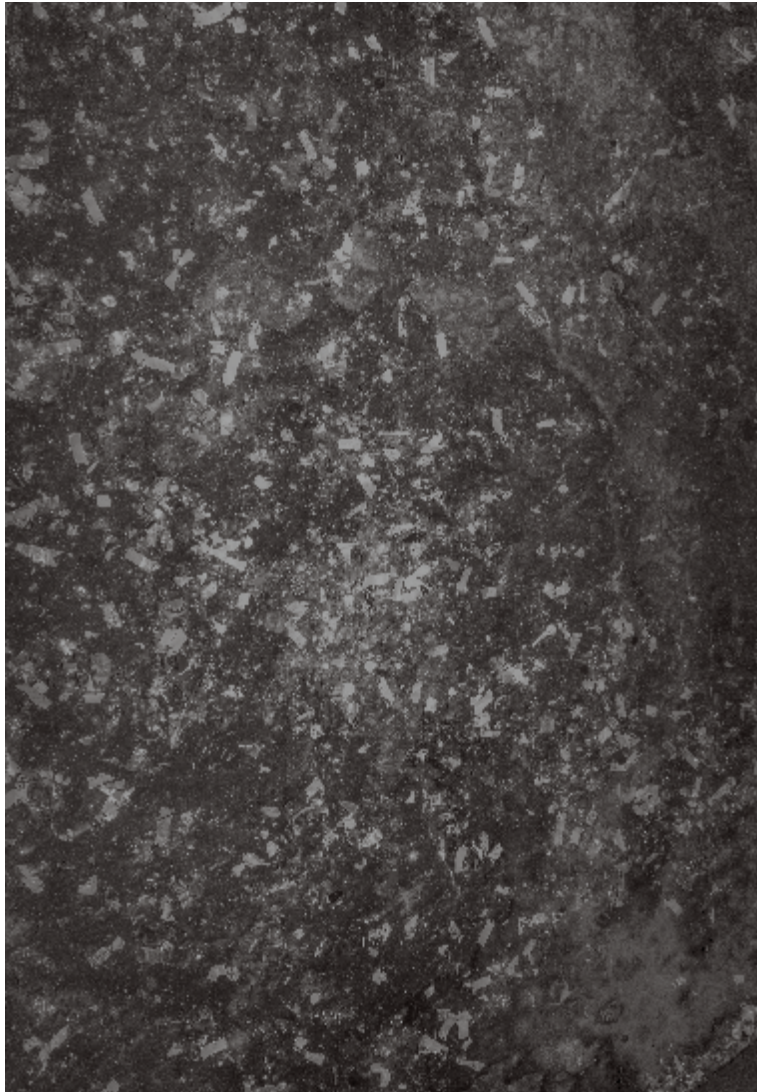
UPBEAT POP TRACKS INCLUDING, "WHAT THE HELL" AND "HERE'S TO NEVER GROWING UP." LAVIGNE'S ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT FOLLOW THE MATURITY WE MIGHT EXPECT FROM ARTISTS AS THEY AGE. SHE'S TURNED FROM INTIMATE, LYRICAL ROCK BALLADS TO UPBEAT, IMPERSONAL DANCE SONGS. PERHAPS LAVIGNE IS RESPONDING TO TRENDS IN POP MUSIC. MAYBE SHE WAS NEVER AS PUNK AS SHE LED US TO BELIEVE IN HER EARLY DAYS AS AN ARTIST. BUT WHEN I LISTEN TO AVRIL LAVIGNE'S "HELLO KITTY," I CAN'T HELP BUT MISS THE OLD AVRIL—AUTHENTIC OR FABRICATED.

IN SEPTEMBER 2018, LAVIGNE BROKE A RELEASE HIATUS OF OVER FIVE YEARS. THREE YEARS PRIOR, SHE WAS DIAGNOSED WITH LYME DISEASE, AND HER NEW SINGLE "HEAD ABOVE WATER" IS AN EMOTIONALLY-CHARGED COMEBACK. SHE SINGS OF HER STRUGGLE WITH RECOVERY: "I CAN'T SWIM THE OCEAN LIKE THIS FOREVER / AND I CAN'T BREATHE." WHILE "HEAD ABOVE WATER" NODS TO LAVIGNE'S EMOTIONAL EARLY WORK, LAVIGNE NO LONGER HAS THE SIGNATURE POP-PUNK WHINE OF A TEENAGER BUT, RATHER, THE CLEAR AND HEADSTRONG VOICE OF A WOMAN TRYING TO SURVIVE. "HEAD ABOVE WATER" SOUNDS MORE COUNTRY THAN POP-PUNK, PIANO REPLACING GUITARS AND DRUMS, AND IF I HAD NOT KNOWN IT WAS LAVIGNE SINGING, I WOULDN'T HAVE RECOGNIZED HER HEAVILY-AUTOTUNED VOICE. WHAT "HEAD ABOVE WATER" REPRESENTS IS LAVIGNE'S LACK OF STEADY GROWTH THROUGH HER CAREER; INSTEAD OF DEVELOPING AS A SONGWRITER, SHE SEEMS TO HAVE JUMPED BETWEEN STYLES. BUT WHILE I'M NOT A FAN OF HER NEW STYLE, "HEAD ABOVE WATER"'S EMOTIONAL COMEBACK STORY IS BOUND TO MAKE IT A POPULAR HIT, JUST AS "COMPLICATED" WAS, AND THAT'S THE TRUE POWER OF OUR CANADIAN POP-PUNK PRINCESS. SHE KNOWS HOW TO MAKE A HIT, AND SHE DOESN'T HAVE TO WEAR A TANK TOP AND TIE TO DO IT.

INITIALLY PUBLISHED IN THE SEPTEMBER 28, 2018 EDITION OF THE YALE HERALD.



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THE LONE WISEMAN

CONOR JOHNSON

IT BEGINS WITH A SOLO ELECTRIC GUITAR, THE TWANGING SOUND VIBRATING BACK AND FORTH AS IF IT WERE TUNING IN AND OUT OF FOCUS ON AN OLD RADIO. THE FIRST FIVE STRUMS ARE THE SAME DISCORDANT PITCH, BURROWING INTO THE MOST PRIMAL PART OF YOUR SKULL. YOU STAND THERE, ENRAPTURED, AS THIS BLARING YET MELODIC SOUND CONTINUES TO INTENSIFY.

THEN, FRANK OCEAN BEGINS TO SING. “WISEMAN CLOSES MOUTH / MADMAN CLOSES FIST / YOUNG MAN SHOWS HIS AGE / JUDGE MAN NAMED IT SIN.” THE VOICE CUTS CLEAR AND PURE ABOVE THE VIBRATO OF THE GUITAR, ALSO BURROWING INTO YOUR SKULL BUT LESS HARSHLY, A BORE HOLE MADE WITH LOVE. AS THE SONG BUILDS UP AROUND HIM, WITH STRINGS AND SYNTHS COALESCING INTO A CRESCENDO, OCEAN’S VOICE REMAINS STEADY, A SINGLE ROCK JUTTING OUT FROM THE CRASHING DIN OF THE SURROUNDING WAVES.

AS THE SONG FADES OUT, A MUTED SYNTH UNDERLIES OCEAN’S MYSTERIOUS, QUESTIONING, THOUGHT-PROVOKING LAST WORDS: “I BET YOUR MOTHER WOULD BE PROUD.” IT ENDS AS ABRUPTLY AS IT BEGAN, THE ECHO OF THE FINAL GUITAR STRUM STILL RINGING IN YOUR EARS AS YOU REALIZE THERE IS NOTHING MORE TO HEAR. YOU FEEL CHILLS, A COMBINATION OF NOSTALGIA AND LONELINESS AND PAIN AND BEAUTY AND AWE, PRIMAL EMOTIONS THAT OVERWHELM YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM.

YOU CLICK THE BACKWARDS WHITE ARROWS, AND THE EXPERIENCE BEGINS ANEW.

WISEMAN IS NOT A POPULAR SONG. THIS IS NOT BECAUSE IT IS BAD – PLENTY OF GOD-AWFUL SONGS ARE POPULAR – BUT PROBABLY BECAUSE OCEAN, WHOSE REAL NAME IS CHRISTOPHER BREAUX, NEVER OFFICIALLY RELEASED IT. HE ORIGINALLY CREATED THE SONG FOR QUENTIN TARANTINO’S 2012 MOVIE DJANGO UNCHAINED, A MATCH SEEMINGLY MADE IN HOLLYWOOD HEAVEN. BOTH WORKS TOUCH ON THEMES OF RAW, PRIMITIVE SURVIVAL, ANALYZING THE SAVAGE OUTER BOUNDARIES OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE, BUT IT IS CLEAR OCEAN DOES A BETTER JOB. AS ONE REVIEWER PUT IT: “[WISEMAN] IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF A THREE-MINUTE SONG SAYING MORE THAN A NEARLY THREE-HOUR MOVIE.”

OCEAN, WHO IS QUEER, ALSO CRITIQUES MASCULINITY IN WISEMAN, REFLECTING ON SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS AND THE IMPACT THEY HAVE. DJANGO, HOWEVER, PROMOTES MANY OF THE NORMS OCEAN CHALLENGES, AN INDICATOR THAT THIS HOLLYWOOD MATCH MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN SO PERFECT AFTER ALL. UNSURPRISINGLY, TARANTINO ULTIMATELY CUT THE SONG FROM THE FINAL PRODUCT, CLAIMING THERE WAS NOT A PROPER SCENE FOR IT AND THAT QUICKLY INSERTING OCEAN’S TRACK WOULD “CHEAPEN HIS EFFORT.”

IT SEEMED AS IF OCEAN’S POETIC MASTERPIECE WOULD NEVER MAKE ITS WAY TO THE LIGHT OF DAY, A FORGOTTEN RELIC LEFT TO SLOWLY SINK TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA. OCEAN IS NOT THE TYPE OF MUSICIAN TO GIVE ANYONE INSIGHT INTO HIS CREATIVE PROCESS OR PERSONAL LIFE. HE IS ONE OF FEW SUPERSTARS WHO VALUES PRIVACY AND ABSENCE IN AN ERA OF UBIQUITY, HIS NAME SCRUBBED FROM TABLOID HEADLINES DOMINATED BY STARS OF A SIMILAR CALIBER.

ALSO, AS A SELF-ADMITTING PERFECTIONIST, OCEAN IS UNLIKELY TO DISSEMINATE ANYTHING TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT DOESN'T PRECISELY FIT HIS ORIGINAL INTENT. SINCE THE SONG WAS INTENDED TO BE PAIRED WITH DJANGO, OCEAN WOULD SEEMINGLY KEEP WISEMAN UNDER WRAPS, HOBBLING BY ITSELF.

NEVERTHELESS, OCEAN PERSISTED, BELIEVING THE SONG TO BE STRONGER THAN THE MOVIE IT WAS DESIGNED TO FIT. A FEW MONTHS AFTER THE RELEASE OF HIS WILDLY SUCCESSFUL 2012 ALBUM CHANNEL ORANGE, HE POSTED THE TRACK TO HIS TUMBLR BLOG, SUMMARIZING HIS THOUGHTS INTO ONE SUCCINCT COMMENT: "DJANGO WAS ILL WITHOUT IT."

OCEAN STRUCTURES THE LYRICS OF WISEMAN TO CORRELATE WITH THEIR MEANING - A SONG THAT DISCUSSES PRIMEVAL INSTINCT MUST SPEAK LIKE PRIMEVAL INSTINCT. HE ONLY USES TWO ARTICLES ("A," "THE") THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE SONG, OPTING FOR ELOQUENT CAVEMAN TALK. YOU CAN IMAGINE THE LYRICS PAINTED ON A WALL SOMEWHERE IN SOUTHERN FRANCE, OR ON THE WALL OF AN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM. MOST SENTENCES ARE COMPOSED OF MAYBE FOUR WORDS.

BUT THE LYRICS ARE BEAUTIFUL, RIFE WITH STRIKING LINES AND ALL THAT OTHER LITERARY JAZZ THAT MAKES MEANING OUT OF SUBTLETY AND COMPARISON. DURING THE BRIDGE, OCEAN SINGS, "THE BEAST WILL CRAWL THIS EARTH / THEN FALL IN THE DIRT TO FEED THE CROWS / THEY'LL RIP APART HIS FLESH / TILL ALL THAT'S LEFT IS GLORIOUS BONE." IT IS THE CYCLE OF LIFE, SUNG IN A NOSTALGIC TONE THAT SIMULTANEOUSLY PRAISES AND CONDEMNS THE VICIOUSNESS OF NATURAL SELECTION. THESE LYRICS ALSO SUBTLY DISCUSS MASCULINITY; OCEAN REFERENCES THE "BEAST" MEN ARE EXPECTED TO BE RIPPED APART BY THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE METAPHORICAL CROWS UNTIL ONLY A PALE SHADOW REMAINS. HE SINGS WITH A HEARTBROKEN PASSION THAT ONLY COULD COME FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

EVEN THE SECTIONS OF THE SONG THAT DON'T MAKE SENSE ARE BEAUTIFUL. DURING THE BRIDGE, WHEN OCEAN'S VOICE SOARS ABOVE A SUDDENLY QUIET SMATTERING OF PIANO AND GUITAR, HE SINGS, "MAYBE HEARTS WERE MADE TO PUMP BLOOD / MAYBE LUNGS WERE MADE FOR FLOOD." THE LAST LINE OF THE TWO ALWAYS STRUCK ME. EVEN AFTER MY 100TH LISTEN, AFTER TOSSING AROUND VAGUE NOTIONS OF FREE WILL AND BASAL FUNCTION IN MY HEAD AND AFTER VAINLY RESEARCHING POSSIBLE MEANINGS, I STILL HAVE NO IDEA WHAT EXACTLY OCEAN IS TRYING TO SAY. APPARENTLY OTHER PEOPLE AGREE - IT IS THE ONLY LYRIC IN THE SONG WITHOUT A CORRESPONDING GENIUS ANNOTATION. PERHAPS IT IS INTENTIONALLY NONSENSICAL, MEANT TO TEMPORARILY STARTLE THE LISTENER AND SHARPEN THEIR FOCUS. PERHAPS IT HAS A PRIVATE MEANING ONLY OCEAN CAN FULLY UNDERSTAND. LIKE OCEAN HIMSELF, THE LYRIC IS SHROUDED IN MYSTERY, AN ENIGMA THAT ONLY PIQUES EVEN MORE INTEREST.

PEOPLE ARE ALSO INTERESTED IN FRANK OCEAN BECAUSE OF HIS UNIQUE POSITION IN THE MUSIC WORLD. ALTHOUGH HE IS CLASSIFIED BY MOST CRITICS AND FANS AS AN R&B SINGER (OCEAN HIMSELF HATES THIS LABEL), HE IS A PROMINENT PART OF THE LA-BASED RAP COLLECTIVE ODD FUTURE AND FEATURES ON NUMEROUS RAP SONGS. OCEAN REVEALED THE FACT THAT HE IS GAY OR BISEXUAL FOLLOWING THE RELEASE OF CHANNEL ORANGE, WHICH INCLUDED A NUMBER OF LYRICS HINTING AT HIS SEXUALITY. OCEAN DID THIS THROUGH A TUMBLR POST, WRITING "4 SUMMERS AGO, I MET SOMEBODY. I WAS 19. HE WAS TOO."

AS ONE OF A MINISCULE POOL OF QUEER MEN IN THE HIP-HOP WORLD, OCEAN IS THRUST INTO THE SPOTLIGHT, EXPECTED TO SPEAK ON A WHOLE NUMBER OF RELATED ISSUES. HE SHIES AWAY FROM PUBLIC COMMENTARY, BUT OCEAN DOES BRING UP THE THEME OF TOXIC MASCULINITY - AN ISSUE OF PARTICULAR PROMINENCE IN THE HIP-HOP WORLD - NUMEROUS TIMES IN HIS SONGS. HIS MOST RECENT ALBUM, BLONDE, IS SPELLED "BLOND" ON THE COVER, EMPHASIZING THE FLUIDITY OF GENDER WITHIN A WORLD THAT SEES "BLOND" AS MASCULINE AND "BLONDE" AS FEMININE. ON THE SONG "BAD RELIGION," OFF CHANNEL ORANGE, OCEAN SINGS "THIS UNREQUITED LOVE / TO ME IT'S NOTHING BUT A ONE-MAN CULT / AND CYANIDE IN MY STYROFOAM CUP / I CAN NEVER MAKE HIM LOVE ME." IN NUMEROUS VIDEOS, INCLUDING FOR THE SONG "NIKES," OCEAN'S FACE IS PAINTED WITH A COMBINATION OF GLITTER AND STRIKING BLACK EYELINER.

NOWHERE IS THIS THEME MORE PRONOUNCED, HOWEVER, THAN ON WISEMAN. THE WORD "MAN" IS USED 14 TIMES IN THE FIRST 14 LINES OF THE SONG, AS OCEAN DESCRIBES WISE MEN, WEAK MEN, STRONG MEN, GOOD MEN, SAD MEN, AND MANY OTHERS. AT ONE POINT, OCEAN SINGS, "SAD MAN CANNOT CRY IN PLACE WHERE MAN CAN SEE / NEVER WITNESSED FATHER WEEP / THE OLD MAN THOUGHT IT WEAK." OCEAN IS DEMONSTRATING HOW ENVIRONMENT BREEDS A CULT OF MASCULINITY, PASSED DOWN FROM FATHER TO SON TO GRANDSON, A GNARLED, POISONED HEIRLOOM.

THE PRIMAL NATURE OF THE SONG ONLY AMPLIFIES OCEAN'S MESSAGE. HYPERMASCULINITY IS OFTEN (AND INCORRECTLY) SEEN AS A PRODUCT OF MEN'S PRIMAL NATURE - THE WAY WE WERE BORN, NOT THE WAY WE WERE TAUGHT. OCEAN, HOWEVER, CHALLENGES THIS NOTION, ARGUING THAT PRIMALITY IS EXACTLY WHY HYPERMASCULINITY IS IRRELEVANT - ALL OF THESE STEREOTYPES OF STRONG MEN AND WEAK MEN ARE PRODUCTS OF SOCIETY RATHER THAN AN OUTWARD MANIFESTATION OF SOME BASAL BIOLOGICAL PATHWAY, AND ARE THEREFORE COMPLETELY WRONG. OCEAN SINGS, "BUT STRONG MAN DON'T EXIST / NO UNDYING MAN EXISTS / WEAK MAN DON'T EXIST NO / JUST FLESH AND BLOOD EXISTS." ALL WE ARE IS FLESH AND BLOOD, RENDERING ANY POSTURING OR SOCIAL GROUPING BASED ON THEORETICAL "MANLY" CHARACTERISTICS IDIOTIC. OCEAN IS A WELCOME VOICE OF CHANGE IN AN INDUSTRY

OFTEN DOMINATED BY TOXIC MASCULINITY. MANY RAPPERS HAVE COME UNDER CRITICISM FOR THE USE OF HOMOPHOBIC SLURS IN THEIR SONGS. MANY RAP SONGS IN GENERAL ARE DEFINED BY SEXUAL DESIRE, A DIFFERENT KIND OF SUPPOSEDLY CARNAL INSTINCT. THE GIST IS OFTEN THE SAME: MAN SEES WOMAN AT CLUB, TALKS ABOUT WANTING HER, ETC. IN A HETERONORMATIVE CULTURE WHERE MASCULINITY RELIES ON NOTIONS OF SEXUAL PROWESS, THESE SONGS REINFORCE STEREOTYPES OF MEN CONSTANTLY THINKING ABOUT SEX WITH WOMEN. BUT THEY HAVE FUNDAMENTAL, CRUCIAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT WHAT BEHAVIOR IS INHERENT AND GENOMIC, AND WHAT IS CULTURALLY PASSED DOWN. OCEAN IS RIGHT WITH WISEMAN – BASAL INSTINCT IS ABOUT SURVIVAL, ABOUT PRIMATES SHARPENING TOOLS IN JUNGLES AND DEAD BEASTS BEING FED ON BY CROWS, NOT SOME PATHETIC EXCUSE TO JUSTIFY HARASSMENT. WISEMAN CHALLENGES, RATHER THAN REINFORCES, STEREOTYPES OF WHAT MEN ARE SUPPOSED TO BE, BREAKING THE OFT-REPEATED DICHOTOMY OF STRONG VS. WEAK AND OTHER LABELS MEN ASSIGN EACH OTHER. MEN AREN'T WEAK BECAUSE THEY CRY AND EXPRESS EMOTION, BUT THEY AREN'T STRONG EITHER: THEY SIMPLY ARE. OCEAN ARGUES THAT MEN SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO BE WHATEVER THEY WANT – THERE IS NO ONE “RIGHT” WAY FOR A MAN TO ACT.

ALTHOUGH TARANTINO NEVER USED WISEMAN IN HIS MOVIE, A 2015 FILM CALLED SOUTHPAW DECIDED THE SONG WOULD BE PERFECT FOR ITS SCRIPT. SOUTHPAW IS ABOUT A BOXER NAMED BILLY WHO LOSES HIS CAREER AND WIFE IN AN ALTERCATION, BUT EVENTUALLY USES BOXING TO COME BACK AND RECONNECT WITH HIS DAUGHTER. THE MOVIE IS RIFE WITH STINKY MASCULINITY. ITS POSTER IS A JACKED JAKE GYLLENHAAL WITH RACHEL MCADAMS SITTING ON HIS LAP, AND THE ULTIMATE LESSON OF THE FILM SEEMS TO BE THAT FIGHTING IS AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO WARD OFF YOUR PROBLEMS THAT OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF FIGHTING. IT'S AN IRONIC AND SOMEWHAT DEPRESSING TWIST THAT WISEMAN, A SONG THAT SO POIGNANTLY TACKLES THE PITFALLS OF HYPERMASCULINITY, WAS OFFICIALLY RELEASED IN THE CONTEXT OF A WORK THAT ONLY AUGMENTS WHAT THE SONG SEEKS TO REDEFINE.

THERE IS A SINGULAR LINE OCEAN REPEATS THROUGHOUT WISEMAN, A CHORUS COMPOSED OF ONE JARRING LYRIC SOUTHPAW'S WRITERS SHOULD HAVE PAID ATTENTION TO: “I BET YOUR MOTHER WOULD BE PROUD.” OCEAN IS EXQUISITELY SARCASTIC. HIS VOICE IS A PIERCING DART, MAKING THE LISTENER REFLECT ON MASCULINITY BY ASKING A DEEPLY DISCONCERTING AND PERSONAL QUESTION: WHAT WOULD YOUR MOTHER THINK? THE SONG VANISHES INTO OBLIVION AFTER 3 MINUTES AND 52 SECONDS, BUT THE QUESTION LINGERS LONG AFTER THE LAST STRUM HAS FADED AWAY.



TAKE IT ALL OR LEAVE IT

KIRAN BAUCOM

I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THE ALBUM TO DROP WITH HALF-BATED BREATH ALL SUMMER. IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE HERE MONTHS AGO, BACK WHEN IT WAS STILL CALLED PUPPY AND BACK BEFORE THE BAND HAD BEEN HIT BY SEXUAL ABUSE ALLEGATIONS LEVELLED AGAINST FOUNDING MEMBER AMEER VANN. THOSE ACCUSATIONS ARRIVED VIA TWITTER THREAD IN THE MIDDLE OF MAY. BY THE BEGINNING OF JUNE, AMEER HAD BEEN KICKED OUT OF THE GROUP, THE REMAINING DATES OF THE US TOUR HAD BEEN CANCELLED, AND PUPPY'S RELEASE WAS DELAYED INDEFINITELY. THE NEXT FEW MONTHS OFFERED HAPHAZARD GLIMPSES OF THE BAND'S NEW DIRECTION: THE RELEASE OF FOUR NEW SINGLES, THE SUDDEN REINSTATEMENT OF THEIR TOUR DATES, AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT PUPPY HAD BEEN SCRAPPED FOR A NEW ALBUM, TITLED THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES.

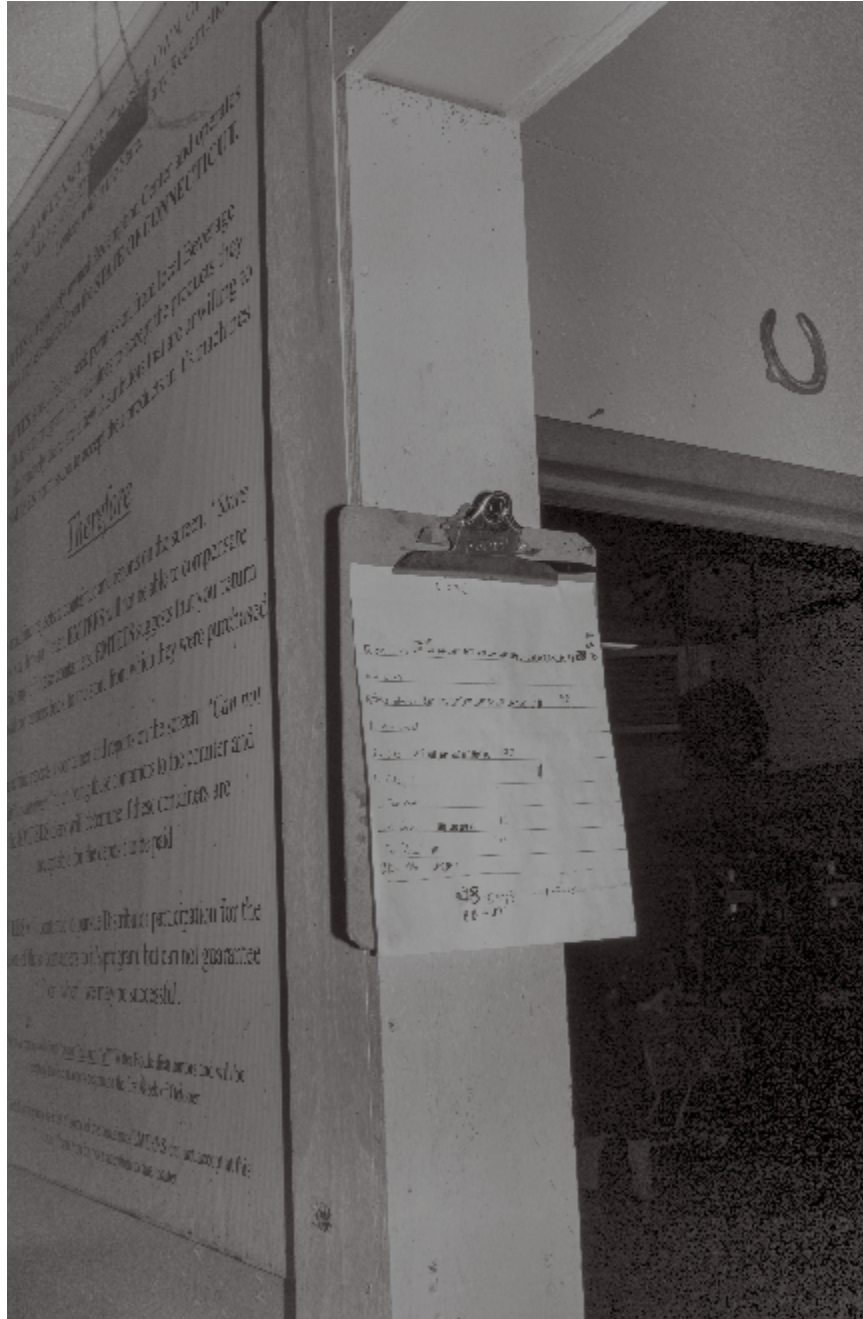
BY SEPTEMBER, THE TUMULTUOUSNESS OF THE SUMMER HAD LEFT ME UNSURE OF WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS LONG-AWAITED PROJECT. AFTER YET ANOTHER CHANGE, IT'S CALLED IRIDESCENCE NOW, WHICH, OF ALL THE PROPOSED NAMES FOR THIS FOURTH ALBUM, AT LEAST FEELS THE MOST HONEST. THERE'S A KIND OF UNDEFINABLE ENERGY THAT COLORS BROCKHAMPTON'S SOUND, A LIGHT THAT IS UNDENIABLY VIBRANT BUT ALSO UNCEASINGLY CHANGING, IMPOSSIBLE TO PIN DOWN. TO A CERTAIN DEGREE, THIS QUALITY CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE STRUCTURE OF THE GROUP ITSELF. 'AMERICA'S FAVORITE BOYBAND' IS A SPRAWLING 14-MEMBER COLLECTIVE OF LYRICISTS, PRODUCERS, AND DESIGNERS. WITH SO MANY AND SUCH DISPARATE VOICES REPRESENTED, THE GROUP'S MUSIC CANNOT BUT BE EVER-CONTRADICTORY AND CONSTANTLY EVOLVING. BUT THE STRENGTH OF 2017'S SATURATION TRILOGY LAY EXACTLY IN THE GROUP'S ABILITY TO WEAVE TOGETHER THE MULTITUDE OF ITS MEMBERS' VISIONS TO PRODUCE SOUNDS THAT ARE BOTH DISTINCTLY STRIKING AND INTERNALLY COHESIVE.

WHEN I FIRST SIT DOWN AND LISTEN TO IT THE FRIDAY AFTERNOON OF ITS RELEASE, THIS IS MY GREATEST DISAPPOINTMENT: ALL OF THE SIMPLE SUBTLETY AND CAREFULLY COMPLEX COHESION THAT MADE ME FALL IN LOVE WITH SONGS LIKE 'GOLD,' 'SWEET,' 'STUPID,' AND EVEN THE SUMMER SINGLE '1999 WILDFIRE' WERE MISSING. TOO MANY OF THE SONGS ARE SIMPLY OVERWHELMED BY SOUND, AND DISCORDANT ONES AT THAT: AGGRESSIVELY DISTORTED BASS KICKS, SIREN WAILS, REVING ENGINES, AND THE DARK HUM OF A SYNTHESIZER ALL OVERLAY AND CLASH INTO ONE ANOTHER TRACK AFTER TRACK. FROM 'NEW ORLEANS' TO 'BERLIN' TO 'DISTRICT' TO 'J'OUVERT' TO 'VIVID,' THE CONSTANT GRIND OF NOISE MAKES PALPABLE THE VOCALISTS' EMOTIONAL CHAOS, BUT IT ALSO CONSTANTLY THREATENS TO OVERWHELM AND DROWN OUT THE ALREADY CROWDED VERSES.

BY FAR THE MOST EMOTIONALLY IMPACTFUL MOMENTS OF THE ALBUM COME WHEN THE SOUND IS STRIPPED DOWN TO ITS BARE ESSENTIALS AND THE DEFTLY CURATED BARS OF THE SIX MAIN LYRICISTS ARE GIVEN SPACE TO SHINE THROUGH. THE EMOTIONAL CENTER OF THE ALBUM COMES HALFWAY THROUGH ON 'WEIGHT,' WHICH KEVIN ABSTRACT OPENS WITH A PAINFULLY HONEST AND VULNERABLE TESTIMONY ABOUT THE ANXIETIES OF FAME, HIS CONCERN FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH OF HIS FELLOW BANDMATES, AND HIS STRUGGLE COMING TO TERMS WITH HIS QUEERNESS IN HIGH SCHOOL. KEVIN'S VERSES, AS WELL AS THOSE THAT FOLLOW FROM JOBA AND DOM MCLENNON, ARE FRAMED WITHIN A SIMPLE YET EVOCATIVE BLEND OF STRING INSTRUMENTALS, RICH PIANO CHORDS, AND A RESERVED DRUM BREAK. IT OFFERS A SHARP CONTRAST TO MERLYN WOOD'S PULSING ANGER IN THE PRECEDING 'WHERE THE CASH AT' AND THE DESTRUCTIVE CHAOS THAT FOLLOWS IN 'DISTRICT.'

BUT, WHERE ON FIRST LISTEN THIS DISTINCTION FELT CHAOTIC AND INCONGRUOUS, I'VE GOTTEN CLOSER TO UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATING IT THE MORE I REPLAY THE ALBUM. THE SUMMER THAT GAVE BIRTH TO IRIDESCENCE WAS, AFTER ALL, THE MOST TURBULENT AND DISORIENTING THAT THE BAND HAS EVER EXPERIENCED AS A GROUP. IT WOULD SEEM AN ACT ALMOST AMOUNTING TO BETRAYAL FOR THEM TO RELEASE A PROJECT THAT DIDN'T REFLECT THAT. IRIDESCENCE ISN'T SO MUCH AN ATTEMPT TO PROVE THE GROUP'S ARTISTIC ABILITIES AND POTENTIAL FOR MASS APPEAL IN THE WAKE OF LOSING AMEER AS IT IS A JUSTIFICATION OF ALL THEIR CONFLICTED FEELINGS IN THE WAKE OF THAT LOSS.

IN THE FIRST VERSE OF THE FINAL TRACK, 'WEIGHT,' KEVIN RAPS IN A STEADY VOICE TINGED WITH SOMETHING LIKE MELANCHOLY: 'YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY I DO WHAT I DO, SO LET ME DO IT / GET THE HELL ON, LET ME DO IT, GET THE HELL ON, LET ME DO IT.' THE SONG IS MY FAVORITE FROM THE ALBUM, IN PART BECAUSE I THINK IT FINALLY STRIKES THAT PERFECT BALANCE OF RAW ENERGY AND RESERVED CONTROL, BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF KEVIN'S WORDS. THEY OFFER AN INVITATION TO TRUST HIM, TO BELIEVE IN THIS BAND IN ALL OF ITS MULTI-COLORED COMPLEXITY, AND TO FOLLOW THIS JOURNEY THROUGH TO THE END. THE FINAL OUTRO ENDS WITH BOTH A NOD TO BROCKHAMPTON'S PAST AND A LOOK TO THEIR FUTURE: 'YOU ARE NOW ABOUT TO EXPERIENCE / THESE ARE THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES.'



“STOP; NOW THINK ABOUT IT”: RECKONING WITH THE SAD TRANSFORMATION OF B.O.B

BRITTANY MENJIVAR

SOCIAL EXPERIMENT: GRAB SOME FRIENDS AND START UP A NOSTALGIC CONVERSATION ABOUT THE KINGS AND QUEENS OF POP RADIO IN THE EARLY 2010S. IF YOU CHAT FOR LONG ENOUGH, B.O.B’S NAME IS BOUND TO COME UP. “OH, MAN; WHERE IS THAT ICONIC RAPPER NOW?” SOMEONE WILL INEVITABLY ASK. IN CASE YOU DON’T ALREADY KNOW THE DISHEARTENING ANSWER, HERE IT IS, STRAIGHT FROM WIKIPEDIA: “B.O.B IS AN OUTSPOKEN BELIEVER THAT THE EARTH IS FLAT.” THAT’S RIGHT—OUR OWN BOBBY RAY SIMMONS JR. IS NOW THE KIND OF MAN WHO GOES ON ABSURD TWITTER RANTS AND CALLS HIMSELF FLAT EARTH BOB.

“DO YOU MISS B.O.B?” IS DEFINITELY NOT A QUESTION I EVER EXPECTED TO BE ASKING MYSELF IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 2018. YET A FEW WEEKS AGO, WHEN ONE OF HIS SONGS CAME UP ON SHUFFLE DURING A STUDY SESSION AND MY FRIENDS AND I INSTINCTIVELY SANG ALONG, THE TRAGEDY OF HIS ABSENCE FINALLY DAWNED ON US. B.O.B’S GOOFY, LAID-BACK APPEAL WAS A BOON TO POP RADIO; UNFORTUNATELY, MANY OF US DIDN’T APPRECIATE HIM UNTIL HE FELL OFF THE FACE OF THE (VERY SPHERICAL) EARTH. IT IS TIME TO BEG B.O.B TO ABANDON HIS FALSE SCIENCE

AND REDEEM HIMSELF; IT IS TIME TO RECKON WITH WHAT WE HAVE LOST, AND WHAT MUST BE REGAINED.

I’M ONLY GOING TO TALK ABOUT B.O.B’S SINGLES HERE, BECAUSE I DON’T THINK MOST PEOPLE’S SCHEMA OF B.O.B’S MUSIC GOES BEYOND THEM. TO GET A GLIMPSE OF THE JOVIAL, JOCULAR IMAGE B.O.B PROJECTED THROUGH SAID SINGLES, ONE NEED ONLY TAKE A LOOK AT HIS COLLABORATORS. MOST NOTABLY, HE’S WORKED WITH THE CHEEKY ROMANTIC BRUNO MARS, THE PUNKY GIRL NEXT DOOR HAYLEY WILLIAMS, AND THE NERDY WEEZER FRONTMAN RIVERS CUOMO. NONE OF THESE ARTISTS ARE PARTICULARLY IMPOSING; RATHER, THEY’RE THE TYPE OF PEOPLE YOU CAN EASILY PICTURE LAUGHING AND SMILING WITH. THIS MAKES PERFECT SENSE, AS B.O.B MADE MUSIC TO LAUGH AND SMILE TO.

EXHIBIT A: “NOTHIN’ ON YOU,” BOBBY RAY’S BREAKOUT HIT. THE SONG BEGINS SOFTLY, SWEETLY: BRUNO MARS IS CROONING ABOUT HIS UNSHAKEABLE DEVOTION TO THE GIRL HE’S SEEING, WITH PIANO AND BACKUP VOCALS FOR ACCOMPANIMENT. THEN B.O.B LEAPS IN, AN UNKNOWN COMING OUT OF NOWHERE, ECHOING BRUNO’S WORDS IN EMPHATIC SHOUTS. WHEN THE CHORUS ENDS, HE GETS REAL: “I KNOW YOU FEEL WHERE I’M COMING FROM/REGARDLESS OF THE THINGS IN MY PAST THAT I’VE DONE,” HE SAYS BEFORE LAUNCHING INTO A MONOLOGUE ABOUT THE “NONSENSE” ON HIS “CONSCIENCE.” DO WE REALLY KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT B.O.B’S HISTORY? NO, BUT HE’S SO SINCERE THAT WE CAN’T HELP BUT PRETEND WE DO, JUST TO BUY INTO THIS GOOD FELLOW’S GOOD RUSE.

AFTER B.O.B LAYS DOWN THAT BIT OF TRUTH, HE SERVES US SOME FUN AND GAMES. HE INTERJECTS OFTEN IN THE FORM OF BACKING VOCALS, SHOUTING THINGS LIKE, “HEY!” “HA-HA,” AND “WHY?” HE TELLS THE OBJECT OF HIS AFFECTION, “YOU GOT ME FROZE LIKE A NINTENDO 64,” ENDEARINGLY WINKING AT THOSE WHO FEED OFF OF ‘90S KID NOSTALGIA. MOST FASCINATINGLY, HE DELIVERS THE METAPHOR, “YOU’RE MY WONDER WOMAN; CALL ME MR. FANTASTIC. STOP; NOW THINK ABOUT IT.” WHAT IS THERE TO THINK ABOUT HERE? THE FACT THAT WONDER WOMAN AND MR. FANTASTIC ARE FROM COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FICTIONAL UNIVERSES (DC VS. MARVEL) AND HAVE THUS NEVER INTERACTED? THE COMPARISON IS DEEPLY PUZZLING—BUT THAT’S JUST ANOTHER PART OF THE ENTERTAINING MYSTERY THAT IS B.O.B.

IF YOU NEED MORE EVIDENCE OF B.O.B’S PECULIAR PROWESS, LOOK NO FURTHER THAN “MAGIC.” THE INTRO—“HI, MY NAME IS BOB, AND I APPROVE THIS MESSAGE” SAYS IT ALL. THROUGHOUT THE SONG, WITH BEAUTIFUL ABSURDITY, HE CLAIMS THAT HE’S ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH FELLOW 2000S/2010S STAR CRISS ANGEL (WHICH WE COULD NEITHER CONFIRM NOR DENY AT THE TIME OF PUBLICATION) AND COMPARES HIMSELF TO ARETHA FRANKLIN. TOO COCKY? NOT SO FAST—ON THE GRAMMY-NOMINATED TRACK “AIRPLANES,” HE DISCUSSES HIS HUMBLE ROOTS, LONGING FOR THE TIME “WHEN [HE] WAS TRYING TO GET A TIP AT SUBWAY.” IN 2010, WHEN THIS SONG WAS RELEASED, THERE WAS NOTHING VAGUELY OFFENSIVE NOR OBJECTIONABLE ABOUT HIM. HE WAS A RAPPER WHO EMPLOYED INACCURATE COMIC BOOK ALLUSIONS AND MAGIC TRICK METAPHORS; THERE WAS NO REASON NOT TO LOVE HIM.

STILL, ALL THINGS MUST COME TO AN END, AND SLOWLY, B.O.B’S CLOUT BEGAN TO DWINDLE. HE HAD A MINOR SUCCESS WITH 2012’S “SO GOOD” AND “BOTH OF US” (FEATURING TAYLOR SWIFT), BUT CAME UNDERGROUND LUXURY, HIS THIRD LP, HE WAS NO LONGER IN THE NEWS.

THEN CAME THE FLAT-EARTHER PHASE.

WAS IT A HOAX GONE TOO FAR, A PLOY TO REGAIN ATTENTION? WE MAY NEVER KNOW--BUT WHAT WE DO KNOW IS THAT IN 2016, B.O.B TWEETED SOME PHOTOS THAT HE BELIEVED PROVED THE FLAT-EARTH HYPOTHESIS WITH THE CAPTION “NO MATTER HOW HIGH IN ELEVATION YOU ARE—THE HORIZON IS ALWAYS EYE LEVEL... SORRY CADETS.” THESE POSTS CREATED SUCH AN UPROAR THAT NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON CONTACTED B.O.B TO CORRECT HIM, IN A TURN OF EVENTS THAT FELT AS SURREAL AS THAT ANCIENT CROSSOVER EPISODE BETWEEN LILO AND STITCH AND KIM POSSIBLE. STILL, B.O.B WOULDN’T BUDGE. “IF MY TWEETS ARE RATTLING THE TINY LITTLE CAGES OF YOUR REALITY... THE UNFOLLOW BUTTON IS RIGHT THERE,” HE PROCLAIMED, ADDRESSING HIS FOLLOWERS AT LARGE. BECAUSE LIFE IS NOW A FARCE, THIS EPISODE CULMINATED WITH A DISS TRACK BATTLE BETWEEN B.O.B AND NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON’S NEPHEW STEPHEN (WHICH DESERVES AN ARTICLE OF ITS OWN, BUT THAT’S A DIGRESSION FOR ANOTHER DAY).

THE CRAZINESS DIDN’T STOP THERE. IN 2017, WANTING SOME EVIDENCE TO SHOVE IN THE FACES OF DETRACTORS, B.O.B STARTED A GOFUNDME CAMPAIGN (“SHOW B.O.B THE CURVE”) TO RAISE A MILLION DOLLARS. WITH THIS FUNDING, HE SAID, HE WOULD “PURCHASE AND LAUNCH MULTIPLE WEATHER BALLOONS AND SATELLITES INTO SPACE, FOR EXPERIMENTAL

EXPLORATION.” AT THE TIME OF PUBLICATION, HE’S ONLY REACHED \$6,919.

FOR A WHILE, IT SEEMED LIKE THE CHAOS HAD CALMED DOWN. THEN B.O.B CAME BACK WITH AN EVEN MORE OUTRAGEOUS STATEMENT—HE DOUBTED THE EXISTENCE OF AMERICAN SLAVERY. THERE IS A GREAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FUNDAMENTALLY MISUNDERSTANDING THE EARTH’S PHYSICS AND CASUALLY BRUSHING ASIDE A TRAGEDY THAT PERMANENTLY AFFECTED THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE UNITED STATES. B.O.B’S SKEPTICISM PREFIGURED SIMILARLY CONTROVERSIAL STATEMENTS MADE BY KANYE WEST—FOR EXAMPLE, HIS “SLAVERY SOUNDS LIKE A CHOICE” COMMENT ON TMZ. DO MANY PEOPLE HAVE SO LITTLE SENSE THAT THEY’LL LOOK TO CELEBRITIES FOR INFORMATION REGARDING SCIENCE AND HISTORY? PROBABLY NOT—BUT THE FACT THAT STARS LIKE B.O.B ARE SO VOCAL ABOUT SUCH MISGUIDED OPINIONS IS JUST AS ALARMING AS IT IS AMUSING, AS IT REFLECTS THE LESS THAN IDEAL STATE OF OUR NATION AT THE MOMENT. 2010 ISN’T TOO FAR AWAY, IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS, BUT GIVEN THE GENERAL UNREST IN THE AIR THESE DAYS—PLUS THE FACT THAT THOSE WHO LISTENED TO B.O.B IN MIDDLE SCHOOL ARE NOW CRITICALLY THINKING COLLEGE STUDENTS—IT’S EASY TO VIEW IT AS AN IDYLIC AGE, A PARADISE LOST. PERHAPS, THEN, TO LONG FOR THE OLD B.O.B IS TO LONG FOR A TIME WHEN IT WAS EASIER TO BOUNCE ALONG IN STARRY-EYED OBLIVION, THINKING OF THINGS LIKE THE NINTENDO 64; WHEN ABSURDITY WASN’T A REGULAR PART OF THE DAILY NEWS CYCLE.

B.O.B IS STILL PUTTING OUT MUSIC, BUT WHO’S LISTENING? ALTHOUGH IT’S STILL A PLEASURE TO RETURN TO HIS CLASSIC HITS, IS DENIAL OF BASIC SCIENCE AND HISTORY COMMANDS FAR MORE ATTENTION THAN HIS RECORDS DO AT THIS POINT. BOBBY RAY—ARE YOU READING THIS? WHAT ARE YOU REALLY TRYING TO GAIN AS FLAT EARTH BOB? STOP; NOW THINK ABOUT IT.



THE BOOK OF DANIEL

DAVID HURTADO

IT'S THE END OF TIMES.

THE CALDERA SUPER VOLCANO IN YELLOWSTONE IS READY TO BLOW. ENDLESS WINTER IS ON THE HORIZON AS THE WESTERN UNITED STATES IS PREDICTED TO BE CONSUMED BY VOLCANIC ASH. UNABLE TO ADAPT TO RAPID CHANGES IN THE ENVIRONMENT, CROP FAILURES WILL LEAVE MILLIONS WITHOUT FOOD.

AS WETLANDS IN THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES DISAPPEAR BY THE ACRE, AN OIL RIG IN THE GULF OF MEXICO LEAKS 700 BARRELS OF OIL EACH DAY (SINCE 2004)¹

MONUMENTAL HIGHWAYS, MINES, AND FACTORIES CREATE VIOLENT GASHES IN OUR NATURAL LANDSCAPES. ECOSYSTEMS ARE COLLAPSING AND CORAL REEFS ARE BEING PETRIFIED.

THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS PLAYED OUT ACT I IN CALIFORNIA OLD GROWTH FORESTS WITH A PROTAGONIST OF FLAMES. YET, DESPITE THE BIBLICAL NATURE OF THE DRAMA UNFOLDING IN THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE, WHEN ASKED TO THINK ABOUT REDEMPTION AND THE STATUS OF THE HUMAN RACE I WONDER: IS THERE REDEMPTION FOR KANYE WEST?

IT'S DIFFICULT TO THINK ABOUT THE WORD "REDEMPTION" AND LEAVE OUT MR. WEST, WHOSE VOLATILE BEHAVIOR HAS LONG PLACED THE ONUS OF ABSOLUTION UPON AN UNSHAKEABLE FANBASE. ROCKING A MAGA HAT AND YEEZY SNEAKERS IN A CONTROVERSIAL MEETING WITH DONALD TRUMP, KANYE MAY HAVE FINALLY PUSHED HIS MOST LOYAL FANS (MYSELF INCLUDED) TO BELIEVE HIS LONGTIME CRITICS.²

KANYE IS A SINKING SHIP AND AS THE VESSEL FLOODS BURSTING LIGHT BULBS RELEASE THE LAST BITS OF ELECTRICITY— AN ENTERTAINING "I LOVE IT" MUSIC VIDEO AND A HALF-BAKED 'YE'. BUT UNFORTUNATELY THE SHORT-CIRCUITRY ISN'T BEING PRODUCED BY DAFT PUNK (A-LA-YEEZUS). THE "I LOVE IT" VIDEO IS A TESTAMENT TO THE GENIUS THAT BROUGHT KANYE WHERE HE IS. IT IS A MEDITATION ON PRESENCE AND PERSONA, BUT THE OVERSIZED SILHOUETTES AND SPIKE JONZE VISUALS MAKE IT FEEL LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN A GLORIFIED APPLE AD OF DANCING EMOJIS (ALBEIT A GOOD ONE). THERE IS LITTLE INTEGRITY IN KANYE'S RECENT WORK OR HIS STUNTS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE.

SOME MIGHT DESCRIBE THE WARM EMBRACE OF TRUMP AND KANYE AS THEY DRAG AMERICAN SOCIETY INTO THE MARIANA TRENCH POETIC. A MIRROR IMAGE OF FALLING EMPIRES. AND AS I WATCH OUR COMMANDER IN CHIEF CONTINUE HIS STEADY DESTRUCTIVE MARCH: CLAIMING NATIONAL LANDS FOR OIL DRILLING, DROPPING CLIMATE TREATIES, AND FUELING RACIAL VIOLENCE I'M STILL CURATING PLAYLISTS AND TRYING TO DECIDE IF KANYE DESERVES A PLACE ON THEM.

IS IT FINALLY TIME TO CANCEL KANYE? IS MY ABSENTEE BALLOT IN THE MAIL? HAVE WE, AS A NATION, COME TO A MOMENT OF RECKONING WITH BOTH THE STATE AND OUR BELOVED POP-STARS? WHEN AN EMPIRE COLLAPSES, WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH THE RUINS?

HOW DO WE TRANSITION FROM NIHILISM AND ABSURDITY BACK TO MEANINGFUL PLAY? WE LOOK BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS SIMULTANEOUSLY AND THROW A SINGALONG ON IT. TYLER AND A\$AP'S JOYFUL SAMPLE OF "KNOCK-KNOCK" FOR POTATO SALAD IS A FITTING RESPONSE TO THE FALL OF NATIONS. WHILE THE WORLD BURNS, TYLER AND A\$AP DECIDED TO PLAY IN THE SAND (ASH). THEIR CAREFREE RAPS ON AN OLD KANYE BEAT REMIND ME THAT ITS ALRIGHT TO BE PLAYFUL DESPITE THE HEAT. THAT GOOD ARTISTRY STILL EXISTS AND THAT KANYE'S LEGACY WILL FOREVER BE ENDLESSLY COMPLICATED.

IT'S POSSIBLE THAT "YANDHI" WILL BE KANYE'S MAGNUM OPUS ALBUM, LAYERED WITH BRILLIANT SAMPLES, TOP TIER PRODUCTION, WIT, AND CRITICAL SELF-EXAMINATION— BUT KANYE HAS BEEN ABSOLVED BY HIS FANS AND MUSIC TOO MANY TIMES. NO ONE'S GOING TO REDEEM KANYE AT THIS POINT, NOT EVEN KANYE. INSTEAD, I'M WAITING FOR PRINCESS NOKIA TO WIN THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE, BROCKHAMPTON TO CLAIM A SERIES OF SENATE SEATS, AND A TRANSGENDER SOUNDCLOUD RAPPER TO SAVE THE CORAL REEFS. I'M PREPARING FOR CALDERA TO BLOW AND AMERICA TO BE THE NEXT POMPEII, WITHOUT REDEMPTION BUT HAPPILY SO. AN ALLEGORY FOR THE NEXT INTELLIGENT SPECIES.

LIKE POTATO SALAD, I'M CONTENT TO CELEBRATE THE PAST AND MEDITATE ON THE ABSURDITY OF THE PRESENT. MAYBE I'LL LEAVE A CHANEL BAG BURIED DEEP IN THE DESERT— SO THAT THE INHERITORS OF THE EARTH HAVE A RELIC TO DANCE AROUND WHEN THEY FIND A CRACKED IPHONE 7 LOOPING MY FINAL PLAYLIST, VOYAGER II.³ I'M STARTING TO THINK THAT REDEMPTION IS A PIPE DREAM BUT WE MIGHT AS WELL ENJOY THE FALL.



¹ <https://wapo.st/2SuGgYB>

² <http://www.tzm.com/2018/05/02/tmz-live-kanye/>

³ <https://voyager.jpl.nasa.gov/golden-record/whats-on-the-record/music/>

JAIL GUITAR DOORS

MILO REED

“LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT WAYNE AND HIS DEALS WITH COCAINE.”

THIS IS THE OPENING LYRIC TO THE SONG JAIL GUITAR DOORS WRITTEN BY THE FAMOUS BRITISH PUNK BAND, THE CLASH. HOWEVER, WHEN THIS SONG CAME OUT, WAYNE KRAMER’S DRUG DEALING LIFE AND PRISON SENTENCE WERE MOSTLY BEHIND HIM. WHAT DIDN’T GET LEFT IN THE MC5 GUITARIST’S PAST WAS THE BURNING ANGER HE HAD TOWARDS AUTHORITY, INJUSTICE, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT. THESE FEELINGS DID NOT ONLY STAY WITH HIM, BUT WERE AMPLIFIED AND DIRECTED AT THE PEOPLE WHO TOOK AWAY OVER TWO YEARS OF HIS LIFE.

THE TWO YEARS THAT THE LEGENDARY AXE-MAN SPENT BEHIND BARS FOR DRUG CHARGES IN THE FEDERAL PENITENTIARY IN LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY, ADDED A NEW SPARK TO THE REBELLIOUS FIRE THAT HAD CONSUMED KRAMER’S ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT YEARS. BEFORE HE WAS INDICTED, KRAMER WAS A PART OF ONE

OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL AND REVOLUTIONARY ROCK GROUPS IN MUSIC HISTORY. MC5 TRANSFORMED THEIR MICHIGAN HOME AND THEN THE ENTIRE PUNK AND COUNTER-CULTURE MOVEMENT FOREVER. KRAMER AND HIS BAND USED FAST, LOUD, POLITICALLY CHARGED, AND AT SOME POINTS VOLATILE MUSIC TO EXPRESS THEIR UTTER DISGUST WITH THE WORLD. PREVIOUSLY TABOO TOPICS LIKE DRUGS AND SEX BECAME SYMBOLS OF THE COUNTER-CULTURE REVOLUTION AS THE MEMBERS OF MC5 YELLED AND SANG TO WAVES OF INTOXICATED AND ANGRY TEENS AROUND AMERICA. MC5 WERE A REVOLUTION AND NO ONE WAS SAFE FROM THEIR WRATH. KRAMER AND THE REST OF THE ‘WHITE PANTHERS’, AS THEY CALLED THEMSELVES AND THE MEMBERS OF THE REBELLION, ATTACKED EVERYTHING FROM TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN VALUES TO THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION. UNSURPRISINGLY, THE BAND WAS NOT WELL RECEIVED BY THE MORE CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY AND EVEN BECAME A PROBLEM FOR THE GOVERNMENT AFTER THEIR LIVELY CONCERTS INSTIGATED MASSIVE RIOTS

IN CITIES LIKE CHICAGO. DRUGS AND VIOLENCE LED COUNTLESS MC5 FANS TO BE ARRESTED DURING CONCERTS AND FESTIVALS. NOT EVEN THE BAND MEMBERS THEMSELVES WERE SAFE FROM BIG BROTHER. KRAMER AND HIS REVOLUTIONARY ALLIES WERE CONSISTENTLY HARASSED BY THE POLICE AND MANY OF THE MEMBERS SPENT TIME IN JAIL. IN 1975, THE FORMER MC5 GUITARIST WAS CAUGHT SELLING COCAINE TO AN UNDERCOVER POLICE OFFICER AND WAS PULLED AWAY FROM THE EXPLOSIVE COUNTER-CULTURE, PUNK ROCK SCENE. KRAMER NOW HAD TO FIND A WAY TO EXPRESS HIS ANGER AND OVERFLOWING CREATIVITY WITHIN THE CONFINES OF A CELL.

TO TRY AND EXPRESS HIS ARTISTIC SPIRIT WHILE INCARCERATED, KRAMER PLAYED IN A PRISON BAND AND EVEN BEGAN EXPERIMENTING WITH JAZZ MUSIC ALONGSIDE BE-BOP TRUMPETER AND FELLOW INMATE, RED RODNEY. AFTER PRISON, KRAMER DIDN’T MISS A BEAT (LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY), AND WAS ABLE TO RESURRECT A MUSIC CAREER AND IS STILL TOURING AND RELEASING

ALBUMS. HOWEVER, THIS MUSICAL RESURRECTION IS NOT THE ONLY INTERESTING REDEMPTION KRAMER FOUND AFTER PRISON.

THE CONTEMPT HE HELD TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT NEVER WENT AWAY. PRISON DID NOT REFORM KRAMER BECAUSE OUR PRISON SYSTEM IS NOT SET UP TO REFORM.

“PRISON TIME DOESN’T HELP ANYONE, THE WAY WE APPROACH PUNISHMENT IN AMERICA.”

OUR CURRENT JUDICIAL SYSTEM RESTS ENTIRELY ON AN AUTHORITARIAN APPROACH TO PUNISHMENT. WHILE IT MAY BE EASIEST TO JUST ALLOCATE CERTAIN SENTENCES TO CERTAIN CRIMES, IT IS NOT A SUCCESSFUL FORM OF REHABILITATION. THERE IS NO CORRELATION BETWEEN TIME SPENT IN PRISON AND THE EXTENT THAT A PRISONER IS ABLE TO REINTEGRATE POSITIVELY INTO SOCIETY. THE FEAR OF GOING BACK TO PRISON MAY BE ENOUGH FOR SOME EX-CRIMINALS TO FIX THEIR WAYS, BUT MANY PRISONERS MERELY REVERT RIGHT BACK TO A LIFE OF CRIME BECAUSE THEY SEE NO OTHER OPTIONS. PRISONS MAKE UP A MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRY AND U.S PRISONS ALONE MAKE UP

22 PERCENT OF THE ENTIRE WORLD’S INCARCERATED POPULATION. THIS IS WHERE BUSINESS AND MORALITY COLLIDE. THE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE IN PRISONS ARE NOT ALL DANGEROUS CRIMINALS. IN FACT, THE MAJORITY OF PRISONERS ARE SERVING SENTENCES FOR CRIMES LIKE DRUG POSSESSION AND NON-VIOLENT OFFENSES. THESE PEOPLE CAN BE REHABILITATED. INSTEAD THEY ARE INCARCERATED AND BRUTALIZED IN PRISON AND MANY TIMES CAN NOT RECOVER AFTER LIFE IN A CELL. THE SIMPLE FACT IS THAT AMERICA’S JUDICIAL SYSTEM IS REGRESSIVE AND COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. HOWEVER, PRISONS ARE NOT GOING TO GO AWAY (NOR SHOULD THEY), AND ANY POSITIVE PRISON REFORM IS A MERE FANTASY IN OUR CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE. THIS IS WHERE PEOPLE LIKE KRAMER COME IN TO SUPPORT AND INNOVATE PRIVATELY, THROUGH THEIR OWN METHODS, TO SHOW PRISONERS ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF REHABILITATION.

TODAY, KRAMER IS JUST AS ANGRY AS HE WAS WHEN HE WAS KICKING OUT THE JAMS, SHUFFLING ACROSS THE STAGE WITH HIS SCREECHING GUITAR AND SHAKING HIS



UNRULY MANE OF HAIR. HOWEVER, NOW HE HAS FOUND ANOTHER METHOD OF EXPRESSION. KRAMER CURRENTLY WORKS FOR JAIL GUITAR DOORS (FITTINGLY NAMED AFTER THE SONG WRITTEN FOR WAYNE), A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION WHICH PROVIDES MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS TO PRISONS THAT ARE OPEN TO ATTEMPTING REHABILITATION THROUGH SONGWRITING.

“IT HAS ALLOWED ME TO GIVE A VOICE TO AN ANGER THAT HAS BUILT UP FROM THE TIME I WAS RELEASED, AS I WATCHED MORE AND MORE PEOPLE LIKE ME GO TO PRISON – AND FOR MORE SEVERE SENTENCES THAN I GOT.”

NOW WAYNE DOESN'T NEED A STAGE TO MAKE HIS BELIEFS KNOWN. STARTING WITH A LIFE FILLED WITH DRUG ADDICTION AND CRIME, KRAMER NOW TAKES POSITIVE ACTION TO FIX THE ISSUES HE SEES IN THE WORLD. THROUGH JAIL GUITAR DOORS, PRISONERS HAVE THE ABILITY TO PLAY INSTRUMENTS THEY MAY NOT HAVE EVEN BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS WHILE FREE. THIS FORM OF REHABILITATION PROMOTES A WAY OF EXPRESSION FOR PRISONERS THAT DOES NOT MANIFEST IN VIOLENCE AND ACTUALLY ENCOURAGES COOPERATION AND CREATIVITY.

MANY PEOPLE VIEW THE PUNK MOVEMENT AS A MOB OF UPSET ADOLESCENTS THAT WANT TO YELL AND SCREAM WHILE LAUNCHING THEIR BODIES AT EACH OTHER TO A LIGHTNING-FAST BACKING TRACK OF UNINTELLIGIBLE WAILS AND DISTORTED GUITARS. HOWEVER, LEGENDARY PUNK GROUPS LIKE THE THE STOOGES AND MC5 SOUND MORE LIKE YOUR TYPICAL 60S ROCK BAND THAN ANY PUNK BANDS FROM THE LAST THREE DECADES. THE DIFFERENCE WAS IN THE SUBJECT OF THE SONGS AND HOW THEY WERE DELIVERED. THE BANDS AND THE MUSIC THEY PLAYED WERE IN YOUR FACE, OPINIONATED, AND UNAFRAID. THIS NEW SOCIAL GROUP OF 'PUNKS' WERE UNSATISFIED, UPSET AND FED-UP. THE MUSIC AND THE CULTURE BECAME A SAFE HAVEN FOR THESE SOCIAL REJECTS. THE PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T QUITE FIT IN ANYWHERE, HAD NOWHERE TO GO OR JUST REJECTED THE WAY OF LIFE THEY WERE PRESENTED, NOW HAD A COMMUNITY IN WHICH THEY COULD FREELY EXPRESS THEMSELVES AND THEIR BELIEFS. KRAMER WITNESSED THIS FIRSTHAND. HE SAW THE POWER THAT MUSIC COULD HAVE AND ITS ABILITY TO BRING PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE TOGETHER, UNITED UNDER ONE CREATIVE EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS. HE SAW HOW MUSIC HELPED HIM IN PRISON AND NOW HE WORKS TO SHARE THIS GIFT WITH PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD. THE PRISON SYSTEM IS BROKEN AND WHILE WAYNE KRAMER MAY NOT HAVE HIS BAND OF BROTHERS, YOUTHFUL ENERGY, OR AUDIENCES OF CHARGED FANS, THE PUNK IN KRAMER IS STILL KICKING AND SCREAMING INSIDE HIM AND YOU BETTER BELIEVE THAT HE IS NOT GOING TO START BACKING DOWN NOW. TO KRAMER THE REVOLUTION IS STILL ALIVE; ONLY ITS ENEMIES HAVE NEW FACES.

IT'S TIME TO KICK OUT THE JAMS MOTHERFUCKERS.

WAYNE KRAMER IS STILL TOURING WITH THE WHAT IS LEFT OF THE MC5 AND IS CURRENTLY CELEBRATING THE BAND'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY.

6



FANTASIZING THE SIGHT OF MANHATTAN

JARED BRUNNER

“I’M STILL COLD,” LEELAH MUTTERED BITTERLY, WATCHING THE SNOW FALL OUT OF THE WINDOW OF THE 3 O’CLOCK TRAIN BACK FROM THE CITY. “COLD AND DISAPPOINTED.”

I COULDN’T BLAME HER: WE WERE ON OUR WAY BACK FROM ONE OF THE BIGGEST LET-DOWNS IN OUR MANY YEARS OF CONCERT-GOING TOGETHER, NOT ONLY BECAUSE OUR EXCITEMENT HAD BEEN SO HIGH, BUT BECAUSE EVERYTHING POSSIBLE SEEMED TO HAVE GONE WRONG.

I HAD BOUGHT THE TICKETS MONTHS BEFORE IN ANTICIPATION OF THIS DAY—OUR FIRST METAL SHOW TOGETHER, DEAFHEAVEN, WHOSE MUSIC HAD ENOUGH EQUAL ELEMENT BRUTALITY AND SWEETNESS THAT IT SERVED AS THE PERFECT ENTRYWAY FOR US INTO THE METAL SCENE. I HAD BEEN A FAN FOR A FEW YEARS BY THEN, BUT THE ONE DAY I HAD PUT “DREAM HOUSE” ON IN MY CAR TO SHOW HER WHAT ALL THE FUSS WAS ABOUT, SHE SEEMED TO ALL AT ONCE FALL IN LOVE WITH THE BAND. LITTLE DID I KNOW HOW MUCH SHE WOULD PLAY THAT SAME SONG OVER AND OVER AGAIN IN THE MONTHS TO COME, IN TIMES OF ANXIETY AND THOSE OF ECSTASY. WE HAD DAYS WHEN WE WOULD BE HOME STUDYING TOGETHER AND I’D WATCH HER SUDDENLY STAND UP FROM HER PAPERS, WANDER ACROSS THE ROOM, SLIDE MY SUNBATHER RECORD OUT OF ITS CRATE, AND ASK ME TO PLAY IT WHILE WE STUDIED, THOUGH I THINK WE’D INEVITABLY GET DISTRACTED BY IT. IN EFFECT, THIS CONCERT HAD BECOME SOMEWHAT OF A BEACON IN THE FUTURE WHICH COULD GET US THROUGH THE TOUGHER TIMES OF THE SCHOOL YEAR.

BUT THE CLOSER THE CONCERT CAME, THE MORE WE SHOULD’VE KNOWN IT WAS DOOMED. A WEEK BEFORE, WE GOT A TROUBLING NOTIFICATION: THE FORECAST CALLED FOR AN UNEXPECTED MID-MARCH BLIZZARD TO PRACTICALLY FREEZE US OFF THE MAP FOR THE WHOLE WEEK. OUR ENTIRE PLAN, MONTHS IN THE MAKING, HAD BEEN THROWN INTO UNCERTAINTY. BUT HOW COULD WE MISS THIS SHOW OF ALL SHOWS OVER SOME WEATHER? WE FIGURED IT WOULD PASS, AND DECIDED TO BRAVE IT. IT WAS WORTH IT FOR THE MUSIC.

BY THE TIME THE TRAIN HAD DROPPED US OFF IN BROOKLYN, HOWEVER, THE TEMPERATURE HAD DROPPED AND THE SNOW WAS STARTING TO FALL. AND WHEN I SAY LOW TEMPERATURE, I DON’T MEAN IT WAS JUST A CHILLY DAY OUTSIDE—THAT WAS CERTAINLY WHAT WE WERE EXPECTING, BUT BOY DID WE MISS THE MARK.

THE PLAN HAD BEEN TO PICK UP SOME FOOD ON THE WAY THERE, BUT WHEN WE LEFT THE STORE, WE FOUND THE SUN HAD GONE DOWN AND WE HAD NOWHERE TO EAT IN THE SNOW. SETTling ON SOME BENCHES IN THE PARK, WE ENDEAVORED TO FINALLY CONSUME THE BOUNTY WE HAD PURCHASED, WARM CHICKEN TENDERS AND FRENCH FRIES TO MATCH. ONLY THING IS, IN THE WALK LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO SIT, THEY HAD PRACTICALLY BEEN RE-FROZEN! AT THE VERY LEAST, THEY WERE BITTER TO THE TASTE, AND I STARTED TO FEEL MY HANDS GO COMPLETELY NUMB AS I TRIED TO EAT THEM. THIS WAS A BAD SIGN, WE STILL HAD AN HOUR TO THE CONCERT AND I WAS FEELING PINS AND NEEDLES ALL OVER. I FIGURED WE WERE JUST A FEW MINUTES FROM CANNIBALIZING EACH OTHER IN THE STORM, SO WE DECIDED WE’D TRY TO SEE IF THE VENUE WAS OPEN EARLY.

TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, WHEN WE ACTUALLY GOT INTO THE CONCERT, WE WERE REWARDED WITH LONG DELAYS AND A SLEW OF OPENING ACTS WITH WHICH WE WERE UNFAMILIAR. IN ALL HONESTY, WE WERE HARDLY PAYING ATTENTION TO THESE ISSUES IN OUR EXCITEMENT, BUT WE WEREN’T CHECKING THE TIME EITHER. THE NIGHT WAS GETTING LATER, AND MUCH COLDER.

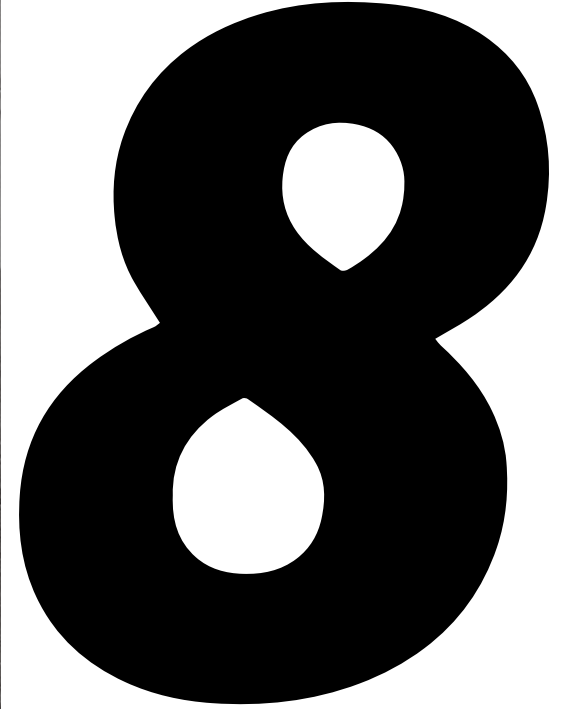
THEN, DEAFHEAVEN TOOK THE STAGE. JUST THEN, IN THAT FIRST WARBLING SCREAM OF GUITAR AND RUMBLING ROAR OF DRUMS, EVERYTHING, THE POTENTIAL FROSTBITE AND ALL, HAD BEEN REDEEMED. WE THREW OURSELVES INTO THE PIT AND, WITH THE REVERBERATIONS OF THE BASS CRAWLING UP OUR SKIN, WE ABSORBED ALL THE PURE POWER AND BEAUTY THAT THE SONG HAD TO OFFER.

AND THEN IT ENDED.

I CHECKED MY PHONE: IT WAS ALMOST TWO O’CLOCK IN THE MORNING. THE LAST TRAIN OF THE NIGHT WAS LEAVING IN THIRTY MINUTES, AND WE HAD A TWENTY MINUTE WALK. ONE BEAUTIFUL SONG INTO THIS CONCERT THAT WAS SHAPING UP TO BE EVERYTHING WE HAD DREAMED OF, IT WAS TIME TO LEAVE.

SO THERE WE WERE, BUNDLED UP ON A QUIET LAST TRAIN HOME FROM MANHATTAN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, WATCHING THE REST OF THAT CONCERT BLINK OUT IN THE DISTANCE IN SOMBER DISAPPOINTMENT. I MADE ANOTHER PLAN THAT NIGHT—THE NEXT TIME DEAFHEAVEN CAME TO TOWN, I’D SCOOP UP THOSE TICKETS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND WORK OUT EVERY LAST DETAIL TO PERFECTION—NEXT TIME, WE’D HAVE THE PERFECT NIGHT WE HAD PLANNED FOR.

AND NOW, WITH EACH OF US IN COLLEGE WITH POSTERS SIGNED BY THE BAND HANGING UP IN OUR ROOMS, I CAN SAY WE DID.



THE REDEMPTION OF MR. BRIGHTSIDE

JOSEPH PECK '21

NOBODY GAVE MUCH OF A DAMN WHEN THE KILLERS STARTED PERFORMING THE LAS VEGAS CIRCUIT BACK IN THE EARLY 2000S. EVEN BRANDON FLOWERS, IN ALL HIS GORGEOUS GLORY, COULDN'T WIN OVER THE GOOD FOLKS OF THAT DRUG ADDLED CITY. THEN, IN 2004, MR. BRIGHTSIDE HIT THE BIG TIME. IT CHARTED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, AND WHY NOT, ITS GROOVY BEAT HAS A LITTLE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE. ALTHOUGH, EVEN WITH THE INITIAL SUCCESS OF THE SONG AND ITS ACCOMPANYING ALBUM, HOT FUSS, NO ONE COULD HAVE PREDICTED THE LEVEL MR. BRIGHTSIDE WOULD REACH. IN THE UK TOP 100, IT WENT STRAIGHT TO NUMBER ONE AND, EVER SINCE, THERE HAS NOT BEEN A SINGLE YEAR IT HAS NOT FEATURED IN THE CHARTS. TO THIS DAY, IT HAS CHARTED A TOTAL OF 166 TIMES AND, ONLY LAST YEAR, FINISHED A MARATHON RUN OF 35 CONSECUTIVE WEEKS.

YOU'RE NOT REALLY SUPPOSED TO LIKE MR. BRIGHTSIDE IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN UPHOLDING THOSE INDIE, SAD BOY VIBES. JUST LIKE ANY MAC DEMARCO SONG, MR. BRIGHTSIDE IS A TUNE THAT SHOULD BE LEFT IN YOUR HIGH SCHOOL DAYS, TO AVOID LOOKING LIKE SOMEONE WHO ONLY STARTED LISTENING TO MUSIC PROPERLY LAST CHRISTMAS, WHEN

YOUR MOTHER BOUGHT YOU THAT NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC ALBUM. BUT IN REALITY, SUCH AN IMAGE OF ALTERNATIVE, EDGY PURITY IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP UP, PARTICULARLY WHEN THE SWEET AND SULTRY TONES OF BRANDON FLOWERS ARE COMING AT YOU THROUGH THE SPEAKERS. WHO CAN RESIST DANCING WHEN THOSE FIRST NOTES KICK IN, INSPIRING EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US TO COMIN' OUT OF MY CAGE AND I'VE BEEN DOING JUST FINE.

THERE IS NOT A MORE UNIFYING SONG FOR THE 21ST CENTURY MAN. THAT QUIET GIRL WITH THE BANGS YOU'VE BEEN TRYING TO DATE? LOOK AT HER NODDING HER HEAD SUBTLY, PRETENDING NOT TO SEEM INTERESTED WHEN REALLY SHE'S LOVING EVERY WORD. THE REPUBLICAN BOY IN YOUR SECTION WHO YOU DIDN'T THINK HAD A SOUL? WELL, THOSE TUNES ARE CLEARLY TOUCHING SOMETHING. THAT AWFUL FRAT BOY WHO YOU WISH WASN'T SO AWFUL? LOOK AT HIM DANCING AROUND LIKE A LOVEABLE IDIOT, MAYBE FRIENDS CAN BECOME ENEMIES A ER ALL. IN THOSE SHORT 3 MINUTES AND 44 SECONDS, PEACE IS RESTORED.

AND WHY NOT? THE SONG PRESENTS A TIME OLD STORY OF LOVE AND LOSS THAT IS RECOGNISABLE TO ANYONE WHO COULD EVER LISTEN TO IT. SOMETIMES OUR STOMACHS DO GET SICK, AND JEALOUSY TRULY DOES TURN SAINTS INTO THE SEA. WOW, WISE WORDS MR. FLOWERS. SO LET'S EMBRACE MR. BRIGHTSIDE, BECAUSE WE ALL LOVE IT EVEN IF WE SAY WE DON'T.



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